

ÐÆT WÆS GŌD CYNING: SOCIAL ETHOS IN OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council  
of Texas State University-San Marcos  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

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San Marcos, Texas  
May 2005

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the product of six years of pondering, research, and bewilderment. I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Tim D.P. Lally for all of the encouragement and advice that he has given me throughout our friendship. I also would like to thank my mother, Rose Armistead, for the Biblical leads and praying. Without her help, I would still be thumbing through The New Testament.

I would also like to thank the members of my thesis committee. I am indebted to Dr. Morrison. Her edits and advice have helped me in ways that words cannot express. To Dr. Parkin-Speer and Dr. Laird I owe thanks for the suggestions with my writing while in their seminar courses as well as the newfound appreciations for *Coriolanus* and the astrolabe.

I also wish to thank Kathryn Holmes. Your gifts—the page points, Johnson’s *Dictionary*, and the coffee—have been invaluable.

Finally, I thank Stephanie Holmes. Your love, friendship, encouragement, hot meals, Scrabble games, and coffee have helped me in ways that I cannot express. Thank you for helping me actualize a goal seven years in the making.

This manuscript was submitted on 25 March 2005.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: ANGLO-SAXON SOCIAL ETHOS AND LITERATURE

Defining social ethos, the fundamental communal value system of a people, within Old English literature is a process that requires an exploration into the social structures of the Anglo-Saxon mindset. This exploration is best served, perhaps, through an analysis of not only the various non-fictional works of Anglo-Saxon England such as treatises, legal and medical documents, and histories, but also the imaginative literature of the time period.<sup>1</sup> It is through Anglo-Saxon England's imaginative fiction that the social constructs of society are best revealed. Storytelling or relating the fortunes or misfortunes of another is a teaching tool that invites individuals to relate to, analyze, and learn what it is that society prescribes as proper or improper behaviors.

Whether imaginative or historical, Old English literature strikes many readers as archaic because of its social ethos. Woven within the framework of a warrior culture, Old English literature is often considered passé because of its ties to a value system that no longer exists. This value system, however, is not entirely dead to our own culture since many universal truths of human behavior transcend time, social constructs, and cultures. The writings of Anglo-Saxon society prove that the social constructs taught within its literature are very much alive. These constructs also prove to be the construction of a highly sophisticated people who placed a high value on the social responsibilities of the individual. Literature is a means by which to teach and to reinforce

those responsibilities.

Old English literature places a high value not only on society, but also on the individual who reflects society's dictates. It is the individual who will be held accountable to society's structures. Those who do not reflect society's mandates are not passed over and forgotten; rather, those who do not structurally fit within the precepts of society are used as a teaching tool of how not to perform or how not to conduct one's self. For instance, a continual Hegelian approach to teaching and reinforcing societal expectations is utilized in *Beowulf* where the narrative constructs an ethical dialectic between how a king should and should not act. This is illustrated when Hroðgar, in his cautionary speech to Beowulf, compares what a king should do for his people to the wrongdoings of Heremod. Within the framework of Hroðgar's speech, social precepts for kingship are taught and reinforced. This example also extends to those outside of the role of kingship and may be applied to those within the *comitatus*<sup>2</sup> and other roles within society. Such an understanding into how to teach and to reinforce a social ethos illustrates the sophisticated mindset of Anglo-Saxon society, nurturing a further appreciation of Old English literature and its precepts.

The concept of an individual reflecting societal precepts is not a new one. What makes this concept unique in Old English literature is the array of varying factors that exist within Anglo-Saxon society such as *wyrd*,<sup>3</sup> Christian and pagan values, and, perhaps most importantly, the warband context of a warrior culture. What emerges from these numerous factors, including the ones listed above, is a highly structured society that relies on a system of social checks through competition, war, aiding others, and internal

reflection to teach and to enforce its societal precepts. Therefore, Old English literature follows Horace's *Maxim* of literature serving a dual purpose—to instruct and to delight.<sup>4</sup> It is through the recitation of heroics and anti-heroics, of what to do and what not to do, that the individual receives instruction of Anglo-Saxon social constructs through literature.



## CHAPTER II

### *LAST-WORD: THE ABSENCE AND REMEMBRANCE OF SOCIAL ETHOS*<sup>5</sup>

Within the social strata of Anglo-Saxon culture is a preoccupation with transience. The Anglo-Saxons doted heavily on transience to the point of developing an anxiety over the issue. Though numerous references to this preoccupation can be found throughout the *corpus* of Old English literature, the transience anxiety finds itself in high concentration in the elegiac poems of the *Exeter Book*.<sup>6</sup> It is through the Anglo-Saxon warrior's anxiety that the elegiac poems function as an important tool to teach and to reinforce Anglo-Saxon social ethos. The elegiac poems can be said to serve two functions: 1) encouraging a warrior to achieve *lof* and *dom* (praise and glory)<sup>7</sup> and 2) to incite a warrior into action since the time that one spends on this earth is fleeting. Therefore, the elegiac poems are a teaching tool for Anglo-Saxon social ethos uniting the heroic—motivating the warrior to action so that one may insure that *lof* and *dom* are achieved before exiting this earth—as well as the Christian hope “for security of tenure in Heaven.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike the heroic poem that encourages action through the praise of others' heroic actions, the elegiac poems encourage action through the harsh reality that life is transitory and that the lack of heroic action will culminate in one's being forgotten. Two elegiac poems that serve as an exemplum for such action are *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. It is through the warrior's transience anxiety in hearing of the two individual exiles in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* that a warrior is encouraged to achieve *lof* and

*dom* before such a fate, at the hand of *wyrd*, befalls him.

Though *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* are both elegiac poems, it is important to note that each poem involves a lone warrior, or an exile, at the heart of its narrative. The very idea of being without one's *locus comitatus* immediately raises numerous questions since lone warriors are suspect. They might be guilty of such unheroic actions as desertion or murdering one's lord. Also at the heart of this is the truth that outside of the *locus comitatus* "lay an alien and hostile world in which even the best of men might well be incapable of establishing new relationships."<sup>9</sup>

Most of the elegiac poems that we know of are found in the *Exeter Book* and are grouped in no particular order that would signify that the group of poems belongs together due to the "practical difficulties in considering these poems as a group."<sup>10</sup> The poems do not form a coherent group within the *Exeter Book*. The poems are also not significantly noted with markers indicating either their beginnings or endings except with ornamental initials signifying either the beginning of one poem, the introduction of a new section of the poem, or the change of subject matter. The only clues to any type of coherence that the elegiac poems yield to scholars are the recurrent themes of loss, suffering, and mortality.<sup>11</sup> According to Seth Lerer, the *Exeter Book* is an instructional manual based on Latin teaching manuals and that the "wisdom poetry [found within the *Exeter Book*] has long been understood as transmitting the central tenets of a social ethos or an intellectual agenda."<sup>12</sup> In using Lerer's analysis, we can see that the intellectual agenda addressed in the elegiac poems is how a warrior is taught to achieve eternal and earthly *lof* and *dom* through the actions of the poems' protagonists.

The Anglo-Saxons coped with their transience anxiety in a two-step process—by the recognition that life on earth is short, and that one’s reputation (*lāst*)<sup>13</sup> remained in the form of the written word or oral remembrance making *lof* and *dom* a high heroic attribute for all warriors. Like Judith, who serves as a model for heroic social values, the Anglo-Saxon warrior is called to action so that *lof* and *dom* may be achieved and a *lāst-word* left in remembrance of the warrior’s actions on earth.

The Anglo-Saxons were well aware of a life after death, whether that life is remembrance of heroic actions on earth or eternal salvation in heaven. This awareness of the afterlife and of life’s brevity produced the anxiety about being remembered, placing a high importance on the social ethic of achieving *lof* and *dom*. In their awareness, the Anglo-Saxons prepared for the afterlife through their heroic actions that would be remembered either orally or through song. What the elegiac poems then suggest is that transience, alongside heroics, was a major concern for the Anglo-Saxons. For instance, in *The Seafarer* “the poet draws a careful distinction between life on earth, life after death, and the voyage or voyages of his persona which represent rejection of all secular pleasures and values of the one in search for the other.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the period that is spent on earth is but a preparation for that of eternity. Bede provides another example of the brevity of life with his flight of the sparrow in his *Account of the Conversion of King Edwin*. Outside of the mead-hall there is nothingness. The sparrow flies in through one window and is for a moment within the hall before quickly flying out into the tempest. The time spent within the hall is parallel to the time spent on earth. Immediately, as is pointed out by one of King Edwin’s men, the sparrow exits the hall as quickly as it

entered. In this example, however, when the sparrow flies out of the hall, it is into the cold winter storm. In this sense, the Christian faith overcomes transience since one will not go back out into the storm; rather, one shall pass out of the storm of life and into the kingdom of Heaven. This example can also be extended to the pagan sentiment in that the brevity of life illustrated shows that one must place high importance on being remembered so that the erasure of one's person, through the passing of time, does not occur.

Aforementioned is the use of Old English elegiac poetry as a teaching tool to teach and to enforce social ethos. Where the heroic poem entices a warrior to achieve *lof* and *dom* through high heroic action, the elegiac poem produces such a desire by showing the outcome of those who are no longer a part of a *locus comitatus*. The elegiac poems illustrate that not being a part of a *comitatus* minimizes the possibility of achieving *lof* and *dom*. This is then further illustrated through the bleak outlook of life through the eyes of an exile. For instance, the Seafarer in *The Seafarer* states that:

Gedroren is þēos duguð eal,    drēamas sind gewitene,

[...] Blǣd is gehnǣged (ll. 86-8)

[All these heroes have gone, joys departed [...] Splendor declined.]<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in *The Wanderer*, the Wanderer states that:

Ongietan sceal glēaw hæle    hū gǣstlic bið,

þonne ealre þisse worulde wela    wēste stondeð (ll. 73-4)

[The wise man naturally perceives how ghostly it will be when all the rich places of this world lie deserted.]<sup>16</sup>

In both passages, the bond that once held these men to worldly happiness is gone. The Seafarer is saddened by the dissolution of the *dugub* (group of adult warriors),<sup>17</sup> and the Wanderer observes that the rich places of the earth (the lord's hall or the mead-hall) do not last forever. All earthly happiness has an end as does the warrior as is reflected through the short form of the elegiac poem as well as the ethereal atmosphere within *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. Therefore, the elegiac poem is a lesson for teaching those who think upon earthly life as important to see that earthly happiness is temporary, unlike that of the afterlife, which is eternal. This, then, places a high importance on heroic action while on earth to achieve *lof* and *dom*.

If overcoming transience anxiety through *lof* and *dom* was a concern for the Anglo-Saxons, then it may be argued that the Anglo-Saxons also obtained remembrance through writing because "the one thing that does not die is one's reputation."<sup>18</sup> Within the *Exeter Book* exist lists and teachings that expound this principle, the whole of which reflects the mindset of Anglo-Saxon England thus solidifying if not the *lāst* of an individual, then that of society.<sup>19</sup> Remembrance through the written word is a common theme among all the literatures of the world. The written word is ultimately the only way in which man can achieve immortality since *lof* and *dom* die with one's peers. In *The Seafarer*, the Seafarer states:

Forþon bið eorla gehwām æftercweþendra  
 lof lifgendra lāstworda betst,  
 þæt hē gewyrce, ær hē on weg scyle,  
 fremum on foldan wið fēonda nīþ,

dēorum dǣdum    dēofle tōgēanes,  
 þæt hine ælda bearn    æfter hergen,  
 ond his lof siþþan    lifge mid englum (ll. 72-8)

[Therefore for every man the praise of the living, of those speaking afterwards, is the best of epitaphs, in that he should bring it about before dying, by actions on earth against the hostility of enemies, by valiant deeds against the devil, that the children of men should afterwards praise him and his glory live then with the angels.]<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, being remembered posthumously is another ontological state, and “[t]he poet of *The Seafarer*, in combining two traditions, the heroic [...] and the Christian hope for security of tenure in Heaven, is perceiving transience on two levels.”<sup>21</sup> These two levels are remembrance on earth (*lof* and *dom*) and remembrance through the written word. Remembrance through the written word is achieved by leaving tracks or a *lāst* behind. In *The Seafarer* the tracks are referred to as *lāst-word*—a reputation left behind.<sup>22</sup> This reputation is important because it serves as an example for others to follow and allows the one who has left the tracks to gain permanence or being. Only by leaving a *lāst-word* can the Anglo-Saxon obtain being centuries later.

If someone were to ask the questions: who were the Anglo-Saxons or what were the Anglo-Saxons like, the one being asked would be hard pressed to give a direct answer without referring to Anglo-Saxon literature. The reason for this is the ontological existence that is achieved through the written word. Aside from the science of archeology, little evidence about the Anglo-Saxons is available. A comparative literary

approach may help using Norse or Celtic literature, but the only primary sources that we have are the texts that the Anglo-Saxons have left behind.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the only ontological permanence that remains of the Anglo-Saxons exists in the manuscripts that have survived. Even this form of existence is not without its vulnerability to fire, misplacement, or erasure of the texts (palimpsest). So, only those *lāst*(s) that have survived have allowed certain Anglo-Saxon figures, such as Byrhtnōþ, to achieve being centuries later, immortality through the written word.

The manuscripts also have a larger function outside of that as manuscript. The manuscripts are also a *lāst*. They are a *lāst* of the Heroic Age, of the first Englishmen and of their lives. Thus, the manuscripts are the *lāst-word* for modern scholars to follow. They are the key to early England.

With the introduction of modern printing methodologies, it is hard to appreciate the effort made by the scribes of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. The concept of one's transcendence through time is no longer a problematic issue since people are now remembered not only through the written word, but also with photographs, video, and fine art. Remembrance is no longer difficult to achieve. The situation differed for the Anglo-Saxons, however, since language (oral or written) was all that was available to achieve being and to leave a *lāst-word*. Although remembrance is now easier to obtain, the one transient ideal that has not changed is the recognition of the brevity of life.

### CHAPTER III

#### *THE SEAFARER: CHALLENGING ANGLO-SAXON SOCIETAL NORMS*

Anglo-Saxon heroic societal structures are questioned within the narrative of *The Seafarer* and occupy a secondary position when compared to the Christian positing of the Seafarer. The structure of *The Seafarer* is simple enough. The narrative consists of the musings of a voluntary exile who, as scholarship supports, purposely seeks out his exiled state to save his soul. In doing so, the Seafarer voluntarily condemns himself to a life of perpetual hardship since, as an exile, he runs the risk of never finding the bonds upon which Anglo-Saxon society are structured. At a literal level, *The Seafarer* challenges heroic societal norms; however, in challenging these norms, the poem becomes a guide for saving one's soul as well as a *lāst* for the Seafarer.

Although Anglo-Saxon heroic norms are challenged within *The Seafarer*, the narrative dialectically supports an element of the heroic mindset, overcoming transience anxiety by achieving remembrance through *lof* and *dom*. In its antithesis, *The Seafarer* follows the characteristic Anglo-Saxon rhetorical practice of description by negatives in that “[p]resent misery is defined as absence of the joys of the hall.”<sup>24</sup> From the narrative, a warrior receives guidance from the Seafarer and learns three things: 1) that the joys of earth are fleeting, 2) that only things eternal will last, and 3) that only heroic action will insure *lof* and *dom*. The Seafarer's musings combine all three and, unlike the exile in *The Wanderer* whose message is to place all faith in God, conclude that it is heroic action that



will insure *þæt hine ælda bearn æfter hergen, / ond his lof sibþan lifge mid englum* “that the children of men should afterwards praise him and his glory live then with the angels” (ll. 77-8).<sup>25</sup> Therefore, in challenging preconceived Anglo-Saxon heroic societal structures by voluntarily exiling himself, *The Seafarer* incites warriors to action. In doing so, *The Seafarer* guides a warrior to achieve *lof* and *dom* at two levels—earthly and eternal.

The Seafarer’s instruction is illusive and poses many questions. The first is found in the textual translation and the interpretative findings found within various translations. For instance, three translations of *The Seafarer* yield the same result but present problems of their own, in particular translations of lines 72-78. The Old English text reads:

Forþon bið eorla gehwām æftercweþendra  
 lof lifgendra lāstworda betst,  
 þæt hē gewyrce, ær hē on weg scyle,  
 fremum on foldan wið fēonda nīþ,  
 dēorum dædum dēofle tōgēanes,  
 þæt hine ælda bearn æfter hergen,  
 on his lof sibþan lifge mid englum (ll. 72-78)<sup>26</sup>

The first translation reads:

Therefore for every man the praise of the living, of those speaking afterwards, is the best of epitaphs, in that he should bring it about before dying, by actions on earth against the hostility of enemies, by valiant deeds against the devil, that the

children of men should afterwards praise him and his glory live then with the angels.<sup>27</sup>

The image in this first translation is that of an epitaph evoking writing and the grave. A warrior is to perform heroic actions on earth so that an epitaph may be spoken of and written thereafter about a warrior's heroic deeds either upon his grave or within a chronicled history. Interestingly, evoking the image of an epitaph implies that a warrior's person and deeds will be written, though the text in this translation implies that they will only be spoken of. Even so, in this instance, it stands to reason that with the epitaph imagery, a warrior's existence is recorded twice—orally and textually. Be this at it may, a warrior's *lāst-word* is only preserved posthumously by oral or textual remembrance.

A second translation of this same passage reads:

The praise of the living pour on the dead

Flowers from reputation: plant

An earthly life of profit reaped

Even from hatred and rancor, of bravery

Flung in the devil's face, and death

Can only bring you earthly praise

And song to celebrate a place

With the angels, life eternally blessed

In the hosts of Heaven.<sup>28</sup>

The image in this translation is earthy. A hero, through heroic action, is to “Plant / [a]n earthly life of profit” and reap the “Flowers [... of] reputation.” This translation has two

significations: one, a warrior's heroic actions plant a seed that will flourish after his death and two, this planted seed shall perish as do all things of this earth. Present in this translation, more so than the first, is the Anglo-Saxon transience anxiety. Although this translation poetically captures Anglo-Saxon transience anxiety, it does not evoke writing. Furthermore, this translation claims that "death / Can only bring you earthly praise." Therefore, *lof* and *dom* are achieved only after death.

The third translation reads:

Therefore let each nobleman speak afterward,

Praise of one's reputation by the living is best.

That he should bring it about, before he must go away,

Good deeds on earth against the enemies' enmity,

Brave deeds against the Devil

That the children of men should afterward praise,

And his praise afterwards live with the angels.<sup>29</sup>

This translation takes a more literal translation of the text. It states that heroic action shall "let each nobleman speak afterward." The key word here is "afterward." This implies that praise can and does come from noblemen while a warrior is alive. Like the second translation, it lacks reference to writing. It does, however, allow a warrior to obtain *lof* and *dom* while living. It presumes that a warrior will eventually die, but this death should not signify the only instance of recognition; rather, a warrior should be allowed the praise and esteem of his lord and of his peers if his heroics merit such regard. By achieving *lof* and *dom* while living, a warrior has thwarted—if only for a brief time—

his transience anxiety. He will be remembered after death among the living, but even those who will remember him will soon pass. Thus, the existence of a warrior can only survive the passage of time through writing.

At this point, *The Seafarer*'s narrative raises an interesting idea—do *lof* and *dom* truly assure one's existence? All three translations point to a like conclusion, but the first translation is the only one of the three that acknowledges continued existence through writing. Although the first translation alludes through its epitaph image that death shall ensure a warrior's remembrance, like the second translation, it perceives this existence posthumously. The use of "afterwards" in the first translation functions as the "afterwards" of the third translation in that a warrior's actions will be remembered after those actions have been performed; however, using the term "epitaph" erases this notion since the third translation interprets "afterwards" as immediate praise upon the completion of heroic action. Therefore, all three translations illustrate the complexity of *The Seafarer*'s narrative and point to the need for multiple translations to translate the highly charged language with which *The Seafarer* is composed. With translations one, two, and three, Anglo-Saxon transience anxiety emerges within the narrative with the use of the writing image (epitaph) and the literal as well as the figurative erasing of that image (the "flowers from reputation" that will wither). It is here that *lof* and *dom* perform their own battle with palimpsest of texts and forgotten memory.

Palimpsest occurs figuratively on one level of signification in translation one since the epitaph image is oral praise. This immediately evokes the earthy image of translation two since the praise of men will pass with time, as does anything that is sown.

In other words, the “flowers of reputation” that a hero earns will wilt and die as will the memory of those who planted the “flowers of reputation.” This concept is important in that a warrior obtains *lof* and *dom* not by his person, but through his social order—his *dugup*. *Lof* and *dom* cannot exist without his *dugup*. Here, the second signification of epitaph—the written word—emerges.

The written epitaph, whether located at the gravesite or within a manuscript, is subject to palimpsest physically. Whether through a forgotten grave or the actual scraping of manuscript pages, a warrior’s *lof*, *dom*, and very existence falls prey to the passing of time. A grave can easily be forgotten, a text easily erased or burned, but this “is the best of epitaphs” since that grave may be discovered (as was the case with the Sutton Hoo archaeological site) or preserved (as in the *Exeter Book*). Even so, if *lof* and *dom* do transcend time, they do so only with the understanding that their referents and the signification they hold in relation to their referents are subject to the transcending tastes and literary *topos* of a world that is far removed from Anglo-Saxon heroic societal structures. It is no wonder, then, that the Anglo-Saxons developed transience anxiety since all of the works of mankind perish and decay.

A second question that *The Seafarer*’s narrative raises is that of voluntary exile. Within the Anglo-Saxon societal spectrum, exile is an unfavorable, even unfortunate, state of being. Unlike the romanticized construction of the lone warrior that followed in the later medieval period, the Anglo-Saxons knew that “to be deprived of one’s place [... in society is] the ultimate catastrophe that might befall an individual.”<sup>30</sup> Though a warrior’s exile may be innocent, one can date the history of exiles to Cain’s banishment

by God. Therefore, in Anglo-Saxon culture, exiles are suspect. Of interest is that this sentiment is shared by literatures of other warrior cultures such as found in the Latin and Celtic elegies.<sup>31</sup> Also of interest is that the lone warrior persona

“is one with whose concerns the audience might readily identify: forceful not only by reason or correlating so nearly to the fears of actual experience but in fulfilling a fundamental mimetic role, since the traveler, whether exile or pilgrim, is removed from his context and, deprived of his defensive network of reliance, is rendered at once vulnerable and open.”<sup>32</sup>

This is the position that the Anglo-Saxon contemporary audience finds the Seafarer and his tale of voluntary exile. In voluntarily exiling himself, the Seafarer has condemned himself twice by removing himself from opportunities to achieve *lof* and *dom* and by willingly placing himself in the position of suspicion.<sup>33</sup> Only as an exile is the Seafarer’s message taken to heart. Without the primary knowledge of an exile, the forcefulness of such a narrative would not capture the hearts and minds of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience. Through the description by negatives, the Seafarer is able to incite the warrior to high heroic action while on earth since the path of an exile should be avoided at all cost. The warrior’s societal structure is also reinforced in that a warrior is shown what life is without his *dugup* and *hlāford*.<sup>34</sup> It is here that the heroic aspect of *The Seafarer* may be left and the obvious Christian undertones rise to the surface.

There can be little doubt that *The Seafarer* poet is a Christian who tactfully infuses Christian doctrinal beliefs within the narrative. In doing so, *The Seafarer*’s

narrative challenges the heroic ideal and allows an exile to achieve *lof* and *dom* not through heroic action, but through penitent obedience to God. The Seafarer sets sail to separate himself from the evils of society. In doing so, however, the Seafarer also separates himself from all that is good in society. Even so, the comforts of society are not so great as to merit equivocal positioning with that of a true meditative life centered on God. In this light, the narrative takes on another signification—*lof* and *dom* in Heaven since life on earth is transitory and the only true eternal existence lies within God. The Seafarer ends his narrative instructing all to turn their lives to God since

Meotud meahtigra þonne ænges monnes gehygd.

Uton wē hycgan hwær wē hām āgen,

ond wē þonne geþencan hū wē þider cumen,

ond wē þonne ēac tilien, þæt wē tō mōten

in þā ēcan ēadignesse,

þær is lif gelong in lufan Dryhtnes,

hyht in heofonum. Þæs sy þām Halgan þonc,

þæt hē ūsic geweorþade, wuldres Ealdor,

ēce Dryhten, in ealle tīd. (ll. 116-124)

[God [is] mightier than any man's mind.

Our thoughts should turn to where our home is,

Consider the ways of coming there,

Then strive for sure permission for us

To rise to that eternal joy,

That life born in the love of God  
 And the hope of Heaven. Praise the Holy  
 Grace of Him who honoured us,  
 Eternal, unchanging Creator of earth.]<sup>35</sup>

The Seafarer makes it clear that the home that he leaves on earth he seeks in Heaven. There shall his weary soul find rest not with his earthly *hlālord*, but with his eternal *hlālord*. Therefore, the transience anxiety that a warrior possesses passes, as does life on earth.

Unlike the later romanticized exile or meditative persona who finds comfort within his or her exile, the Seafarer laments his position. The Seafarer speaks of his hungry soul, yet this hunger can easily be the hunger for the truth and knowledge of God. His only companions are the creatures of God where *ne ænig hlēomæga / fēasceftig ferð frēfran meahte* “No kinsman could offer comfort” (ll. 25b-26).<sup>36</sup> In his lamentation, the Seafarer indirectly instructs and incites a warrior to adhere to the societal ethos at work within Anglo-Saxon society for not all are called for such an existence as his. In fact a warrior must avoid the paths of an exile. For it seems that the path of an exile is God’s will for the Seafarer, and he feels compelled to fulfill his calling as an exile. The Seafarer states that:

Forþon him gelyfeð lyt,    se þe āh līfes wyn  
 gebiden in burgum,    bealosīþa hwōn,  
 wlonc ond wīngāl,    hū ic wērig oft  
 in brimlāde    bīdan sceolde. (ll. 27-30)



[...] who could believe, knowing but  
 The passion of cities, swelled proud with wine  
 And no taste of misfortune, how often, how wearily,  
 I put myself back on the paths of the sea.]<sup>37</sup>

Through his sufferings, the Seafarer adopts the Christ-figure topos. He suffers for the good of society. His example is, cautionary not to be mimicked but avoided, extracting the lesson learned by seeing what not to be, in this case an exile absent of his *dugub*. His earthly *lāst*, *lof*, and *dom*, are that of his narrative in the *Exeter Book*—his eternal, in Heaven with his Lord. Therefore, the Seafarer stresses the importance of *lof* and *dom* not only in Heaven, but also on earth. A warrior is to learn that in his quest for *lof* and *dom*, he is to never forget his true eternal purpose, his eternal Lord. Both instances can co-exist in *The Seafarer*. This differs from *The Wanderer* where the Wanderer laments his position within society and can only offer a message of hope in eternity since he has lost his *dugub* to war. The Wanderer realizes that his joy on earth is gone and can never be regained, whereas the Seafarer purposely removes himself from the joys that the Wanderer so desperately longs for.

## CHAPTER IV

### *THE WANDERER*: UNITING PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN SOCIAL DIALOGUES

Where *The Seafarer* offers instruction in both Anglo-Saxon heroic and Christian societal structures through the voice of a voluntarily exiled seafarer, *The Wanderer* adopts the same thematic thread through three voices, each in a different position. In *The Wanderer*, the central speaker is a warrior who has lost his *dugub* and cannot see beyond his plight and philosophically contemplates his new wisdom of the transitory nature of the works of man. Like the Seafarer, the exile in *The Wanderer* also “contrasts the cold and friendlessness of the sea to the warmth of fellowship of land.”<sup>38</sup> The difference between both narratives, however, lies in the space that each speaker occupies as an exile. Where in *The Seafarer*, the speaker voluntarily exiles himself from society to save his soul, in *The Wanderer*, the speaker’s exile is forced upon him since his *dugub* is “long since dead.”<sup>39</sup> Within the narrative, the Wanderer never mentions the state of his eternal existence. His wisdom focuses on his earthly plight and condition within society. The center of his existence—the hall, his lord, and *comitatus*—is gone. The Christian undertones of *The Wanderer* come not from the Wanderer, as is the case with *The Seafarer*, but from *The Wanderer* poet who forms a dialectical relationship between Anglo-Saxon pagan heroic and Christian social dialogues.

By dialectically setting two distinct narratives—the pagan heroic and the Christian—in opposition to one another, *The Wanderer* poet constructs a similar narrative

to that of *The Seafarer* in that *The Wanderer* also instructs a warrior in both pagan heroic and Christian social structures. The fundamental difference between both narratives is that where the Seafarer perceives that *lof* and *dom* can exist on two levels—earthly and eternal—*The Wanderer* poet glosses the earthly and focuses on eternal salvation, eternal *lof* and *dom* through the voice of a disembodied narrator whose narrative literally and figuratively encompasses the pagan heroic dialogue of *The Wanderer*. The disembodied Christian voice of *The Wanderer* poet bears no influence on the Wanderer's narrative. The focus of *The Wanderer* poet within the poem's narrative is that a life without focus on the eternal is equivalent to the desolate existence that the Wanderer travails. *The Wanderer* poet in allowing the Wanderer to tell his tale of exile illustrates this. This is not to say, however, that the narrative is void of its instruction in obtaining earthly *lof* and *dom* since *The Wanderer* is simultaneously a dialogue on heroic instruction and the importance of earthly *lof* and *dom*. Following a characteristic of elegiac poetry, *The Wanderer*'s instruction is through negatives for here, all that the Wanderer has known, all of the people who could bestow *lof* and *dom* upon him, are gone. The Wanderer states he has

Oft ic sceolde āna    ūhtna gehwlyce  
 mīne ceare cwīpan.    Nis nū cwicra nān  
 þe ic him mōdsefan    mīnne durre  
 sweotule āsecgan. (ll. 8-11a)

[...] drunk too many lonely dawns,

Gray with mourning. Once there were men

To whom [... his] heart could hurry, hot

With open longing. They're long since dead.]"<sup>40</sup>

The contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience would have understood that the plight of the Wanderer is to be avoided at all costs—though one cannot prevent what *wyrd* decrees. Therefore, high heroic action is encouraged since to travel the path of an exile, as the Wanderer does, places the warrior in an abject position within Anglo-Saxon heroic and societal structures. A warrior, to appease his transience anxiety, is to perform high heroics to insure that *lof* and *dom* are bestowed upon him thus insuring some type of existence within the annals of earthly existence. What *The Wanderer* offers, then, is succor to those who may find or are experiencing the earthly loneliness of the Wanderer.

Though *The Wanderer*'s Christian undertones posit the pursuit of eternal existence within God's precepts over that of the earthly, it is important to note that the Christian dialogue of the poem encompasses its pagan heroic dialogue with the use of a frame narrative. In using a frame narrative, *The Wanderer* poet ensures that the pagan heroic dialogue co-exists with the Christian dialogue. In doing so, *The Wanderer* poet adopts a realistic point-of-view since the epistemic shift from pagan to Christian social values could not have occurred immediately.

Like *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer* poetically unites the pagan heroic with the Christian idea of tenure in Heaven; however, where *The Seafarer* unites pagan and Christian social dialogues simultaneously through its narrative, *The Wanderer* does so with its poetical construction. Within *The Wanderer*'s narrative frame exist three tiers that function as different voices within the narrative.

The first voice within *The Wanderer*'s frame occurs between lines 1-7 and then again between lines 111-115 of the narrative. This voice is disembodied and functions as a voiceover. It is philosophical, sophisticated, and Christian. The narrative opens with Voice One and closes with Voice One. It is with this voice that *The Wanderer* poet instructs a warrior in Anglo-Saxon Christian values. This instruction is not clear, however, until lines 111-115 where Voice One concludes *The Wanderer*'s narrative:

Swā cwæð snottor on mōde, gesæt him sundor æt rūne.

Til biþ se þe his trēowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal nǣfre his torn tō rycene

beorn of his brēostum ācȳþan, nemþe hē ær þā bōte cunne

eorl mid elne gefremman. Wel bið þām þe him āre sēceð,

frōfre tō Fæder on heofonum, þær ūs eal sēo fæstnung stondeð.

[So says the sage in his heart, sitting alone with his thought.

It's good to guard your faith, nor let your grief come forth

Until it cannot call for help, nor help but heed

The path you've placed before it. It's good to find your grace

In God, the heavenly rock where rests our every hope.]<sup>41</sup>

Voice Two is the narrative of the Wanderer and occurs between lines 8-110.

Voice Two is the voice of experience that speaks to the quality of life lived in exile with a concurrent wise perspective. Voice Two reflects the warrior's attitude of acceptance, judgment, and grimly held hope. It is a dispassionate angle. Although the Wanderer accepts *wyrð*'s decree upon his life, he laments his fate in that within his position in society, the likelihood of joining or finding another *dugub* to replace the one that he has

lost is unlikely since numerous questions to his unfavorable position within society now blanket his existence. *Lof* and *dom*, hall joy, and gift giving are now heroic societal norms that are foreign to the warrior as he will be a foreigner to any *comitatus* that he encounters. Voice Two is the pagan dialogue that is encompassed by the Christian position of Voice One.

Voice Three occupies a unique position within *The Wanderer*'s narrative in that it simultaneously occurs within the boundaries of Voice Two between lines 92-110. This voice is the Wanderer's register of loss and can be interpreted as a third voice in that the tone and philosophical position of this voice signify a shift in point-of-view. Voice Three consists of the philosophical positing of the Wanderer if a warrior were to see ruins of the works of men. Voice Three also alludes to Noah and the Flood referring to the "old giants" destroyed by God in that flood. With Voice Three, *The Wanderer* poet begins the shift from the pagan dialogue of Voice Two to the Christian dialogue of hope in God of Voice One. By alluding to Noah and the Flood, *The Wanderer*'s narrative begins the shift in its point-of-view from the pagan dialogue of the Wanderer to the Christian predilection of *The Wanderer* poet. In doing so, all three voices merge, uniting the pagan heroic and Christian dialogue.

Without Voice Three, the frame narrative would seem odd in that the Christian message of placing one's faith in God would be abrupt and reduce the poetical artistry of the narrative since the first voice would then be intrusive; whereas at the beginning of *The Wanderer*, it is introductory and detached from the action within the Wanderer's lamentations. Voice Three is the crux of *The Wanderer*—the new structure where pagan

and Christian dialogues meet to form a new understanding of Anglo-Saxon society. This is a new society that can hold onto its pagan past while embracing the new structure of Christianity.

Like *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer* is an instructional tool for teaching and reinforcing Anglo-Saxon heroic and Christian societal structures. Although both structures are stressed either directly or indirectly within *The Wanderer*'s narrative, of importance is that the Wanderer never mentions God. The Christian undertones of *The Wanderer*'s narrative are the construction of a Christian poet whose tolerance and, perhaps, own conversion to Christianity acknowledges and infuses an understanding and an acceptance of the importance that the Anglo-Saxons held for the earthly structures of *lof* and *dom*. This illustrates the sophistication of the Anglo-Saxon mindset. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon Christian poet tolerates and advocates the uniting of pagan and Christian social structures through the construction of complex poetry such as *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*, the later medieval mindset seems to distance itself from its pagan background. Perhaps this intolerance stands as a possible reason for the later medieval wars waged in the name of God by the Church.

## CHAPTER V

### ON GOD'S BEHALF: *JUDITH* AND INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL ETHOS

*Judith* comes to us as one of the fifteen books of The Apocrypha—pre-Christian books of the Bible “that Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Eastern churches accept wholly or partially, as canonical Scripture.”<sup>42</sup> Whether to accept *Judith* as canonical Scripture seems irrelevant for its eventual translation into Old English since it was accepted as canonical in the Anglo-Saxon period. The importance of the Old English *Judith* lies not in its Scriptural value, which I do not wish to undermine, but in the value that the Old English *Judith* serves as an instructional tool for Anglo-Saxon societal structures, in particular, the ethos of a warrior. Judith is a model that a warrior should use as a guide to mould himself despite her gender. In risking life and body, Judith selflessly comes to the aid of her people disregarding her position in society as both a woman and a virgin in the Old English translation.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, the Old English *Judith* may be regarded as sexless since she models the ethos of a warrior and not that of a woman, though she uses her physical beauty to her advantage. Simultaneously, Judith illustrates the notion that all are capable of heroics regardless of sex, age, or social status. She is a warrior who follows not only an earthly king, but a Heavenly King as well. In this regard, Judith serves a dual purpose as a model for Anglo-Saxon and Christian social values.

The Apocryphal text provides a detailed account of King Nebuchadnezzar's vengeful war and of how Judith comes to save her people. The construction of the Old



English *Judith* is interesting since it is a fragment. It is also likely that the Old English version of *Judith* did exist in its entirety at one time since it begins not only *in media res*, but also mid-sentence. The importance of the Old English *Judith*, however, lies not in the poem's construction, but in its context according to theme—in this case, a warrior's social ethos—since the poem follows *Beowulf* in what is now known as the *Beowulf* Manuscript.<sup>44</sup> In this light, *Judith* becomes an instructional tool that reinforces the social dictates of warrior culture, in particular, that of an individual warrior. At the same time, *Judith* serves the function of being a story of importance and delight because of its thematic focus—heroic action.

Although Judith exemplifies the social precepts of a warrior, poetic high regard is given to King Nebuchadnezzar's warriors for the very sake that they are warriors. Following a consistent characteristic of Old English literature, warriors are not necessarily evil if found on the side of opposition; rather, all warriors are held in high regard for the sake that they are warriors. It is the poor decisions or ethical practices made by a king that ultimately reflects upon the king and his warriors. In this sense, all warriors, including the king, are held in some sort of respect for the nature of their position within society—in this case, that of warriors. Be that as it may, *Judith's* narrative is that of a Christian voice and Judith, though a Hebrew woman, is shrouded with the veil of Christianity. King Nebuchadnezzar is evil since his social ethos is not in alignment with that of Christian Anglo-Saxon society. There is a respect for the warrior, but this respect goes no further once a social structure opposed to that of Anglo-Saxon society is added to Nebuchadnezzar's warriors. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar's general,

Holofernes, who is a great warrior, is referred to as evil since he represents the will of a king whose will, in turn, stands converse to that of Judith, her people, and their God.

Within *Judith*'s narrative arises the Hegelian dialectic mentioned above.

Holofernes is described as a leader who is a tyrant, an undesirable moniker according to Anglo-Saxon society. Upon entering the gates of Bethulia, the triumphant Judith presents Holofernes' head to her people exclaiming:

Hēr ġē māgon sweotole, siġerōfe hæleð,  
 lēoda ræswan, on ðæs lāðestan,  
 hǣðenes heaðorinces hēafod starian,  
 Hōlofernus unlyfigendes,  
 þe ūs monna mǣst morðra ġefremede  
 sārra sorga, ond þæt swýðor ġýt  
 yrcan wolde; ac him ne ūðe God  
 lengran līfes, þæt hē mid lǣððum ūs  
 eġlan mōste. (177—185a)<sup>45</sup>

“See, leaders of this people, triumphant  
 Warriors, see this heathen's skull,  
 Lifeless, ugly, Holofernes'  
 Head, he who of all men  
 Brought us the greatest pain, a butcher  
 Who meant to continue his slaughter, our torment,  
 But God ended his life, gave death

To an enemy who had lived only to injure us.” (ll. 177-185a)<sup>46</sup>

At this juncture, Judith becomes a leader of her people since her act of heroism outweighs that of any other among her people. She is the bravest of warriors among them. Even so, Judith acknowledges that her strength and courage comes from her King, “the Lord of Creation” (ll. 187b).<sup>47</sup> Once Judith assumes her important military role among her people, she immediately calls upon her fellow warriors to “prepare for battle” (ll. 187a).<sup>48</sup> Judith’s social function then shifts into inciting her fellow warriors into *berserkr* fury.<sup>49</sup> The outcome is the annihilation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s army.

As a model for Anglo-Saxon social values, *Judith*, though not quite as complex as its predecessor in the *Beowulf* Manuscript due to its length, serves its function well as an instructional tool. Within the text, one is instructed in how to act during times of adversity. Judith, with only her servant, successfully infiltrates the Assyrian’s camp and beheads their leader, ensuring that morale among the Assyrians will be low when her people are ready to strike. Through her actions, Judith achieves *lof* and *dom*—the praise and esteem of her people. Therefore, it stands to reason that *Judith*, though Biblical in its origin, should be included in the *Beowulf* Manuscript since it is a story of high heroics and a model of Anglo-Saxon social values.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MARCH TO HEOROT<sup>50</sup>

The episode in *Beowulf* beginning with Beowulf's battle against Grendel's mother and ending with Hroðgar's cautionary speech to Beowulf (ll. 1251-1784) helps structure the dialogue that begins to sever the ties between the pagan heroic and the Christian social value systems within *Beowulf*. This epistemic shift allows a change in focus within *Beowulf*'s narrative from the pagan heroic dialogue to that of the Christian warrior illustrated through Beowulf's cleansing of Heorot and Hroðgar's speech. In this perspective, Beowulf's arrival in Denmark functions as a metaphor for the Christian hope of salvation, thereby acting as an instructional tool for teaching a warrior how to achieve eternal *lof* and *dom*.

The changed focus is important in that, unlike *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*, *Beowulf*'s narrative demands a complete acceptance of Christian social values rather than a blending of the pagan and the Christian perspectives. Within the narrative, once Beowulf has brought the new "covenant" to the Danes, the acceptance of pagan social values is targeted as an old structure that has been replaced and must therefore be destroyed. An example of this is the *Beowulf* poet's treatment of Unferð and other non-heroic and thereby bad kings found within the numerous digressions of the narrative. As noted earlier, this shift cannot happen immediately, and it is no surprise that the narrative does not fully stress the shift until Beowulf's second battle.

The march to Heorot is a march into the hearts and minds of Denmark. Beowulf's coming is much like that of Christ's. Beowulf comes to cleanse Heorot and thereby Danish society with salvation from evil and a new hope for the future. In this light, the Danes can be interpreted as the Jews who did not believe in Christ's message. This is not to say that all Jews did not believe in Christ since there is ample Biblical evidence that Christian Jews did exist. Be this as it may, I want to look at Hroðgar and his court not as God-fearing Jews, but as simply God-fearing people without evoking other structures such as Hebrew social constructs into the structure at hand.

So far, a cross-examination of short Old English poetry has illustrated the interlacing of the pagan heroic and the Christian social constructs. For instance, with the Old English *Judith*, Christian heroic values are taught and illustrated through the actions of Judith. The values of society that a warrior is expected to follow are illustrated through Judith's selfless heroic action. Although the Old English *Judith* is Biblical in its nature, *Judith's* text allows for the fusion of pagan heroics with the, if not Christian, then the monotheist belief system centered on God. While it is true that Judith and her people are Hebrew, in the following analysis of two episodes in *Beowulf*, I would like to step back from signifying Hroðgar and his court as Hebrews or Christians and view the Danes, if possible, as a people who know of a monotheistic God but are neither Hebrew or Christian.

In order to construct this structure, a better explanation is needed. Viewing the Danes as a God fearing people without the veils of Judaism or Christianity is a difficult concept to build upon since one must search for a people or an example of the existence

of others who did believe in the Hebrew God and yet were neither Hebrew nor Christian. At least two examples exist within the Scriptures. Both of these examples can be found in the book of Acts and are centered on the missionary journeys of Philip and Paul.

The first example is found in Acts 8. The text reads:

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” He said, “unless someone explains it to me?” (Acts 8:26-31)<sup>51</sup>

Important within this episode is that someone who is not Hebrew or Christian is nevertheless knowledgeable of the Scriptures and of God. After Philip’s initial encounter with the believing Ethiopian, he then begins to expound the Christian doctrine to the Ethiopian ending in the Ethiopian’s acceptance of Christ and baptism in the Spirit.

The second example is also found in the book of Acts. Beginning in Acts 17:22, Paul, who is speaking with the Greeks in Athens, stumbles upon an altar erected to an unknown god. After Paul sees this altar he,

[stands] up in the meeting of the Areopagus and [... says]: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked

carefully at the objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:22-23)<sup>52</sup>

As in the first example with Philip and the eunuch, people who are not Hebrew or Christian are knowledgeable of God but do not have the language to proclaim who He is. From this point in the narrative, Paul goes on to teach the Athenians of God and of salvation through Christ.

Within both of these examples exists the structure that I want to construct for Hroðgar’s court. Within a search for an enlightened understanding of this structure, a stumbling block emerges—what is the name of a religion that worships God and is practiced by a people who are neither Hebrew nor Christian? An important concept emerges with this question. Perhaps the reason for having an altar dedicated to an unknown god is not a plea of ignorance on the Greeks’ part. Ignorance also does not figure into the example with the Ethiopian who did not understand the book of Isaiah. Perhaps, the unknown god simply cannot be named and therefore the system of faith that worships this unknown god cannot be named—the stumbling block. Certainly terms such as Judaism and Christianity make classification and an understanding of systems of faith easier to comprehend, but these identifying terms entail specific detailed histories of their own and are therefore of little help in finding a word or a name to append to the structure that Hroðgar’s court will be constructed within. Therefore, I offer the following as an understanding of this structure: if a monotheistic religion centered on the Hebrew God as the deity that one is to worship demands that no other gods are to be placed before

Him, and if God is the Alpha and the Omega, then all other gods are subservient to the Hebrew God and therefore only God exists at the head of this structure. Therefore, there cannot be a name for this monotheistic religion because there is not a god to compare to the Hebrew God within this structure.

To further explain this concept, I turn to Saussure's language theory. According to Saussure, language is made up of signs. Each sign is comprised of a signifier and a signified. In this structure, the sign is the word for the religion that worships God devoid of the veils of Judaism or Christianity. On one side of this analysis, the signified is given but the signifier is missing resulting in no sign, no word to label this religion. On the other side of this analysis, the negative relationship that exists between words also does not exist. Within the various guises or signs that signify the worship of the Hebrew God—Christianity, Judaism, Protestantism, or Catholicism—there is not a sign (the nameless religion) to contrast these signs with. Without this negative comparison, there cannot be a sign for the nameless religion. Therefore, linguistically there cannot be a name for this religion.

Although Saussure firmly believes that ready-made ideas do not exist before words, if one believes that God is the beginning and the end, then God is also language and therefore a sign. Where the trouble between the various guises of worshipping God begins is where one tries to define and to construct signs that label and govern the value system centered on worshipping the Hebrew God. It is man-made constructions that bring about the breakdown of this nameless religion. Because of this, the seed of evil can be planted within the hearts of the faithful. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Danes, who



are knowledgeable of God, find themselves the victim of evil—Grendel and his Mother—and are in need of a savior. In this sense, Beowulf's coming is much like Christ's in that he brings to a believing people a new sense of hope and opportunity for tenure in heaven.

The Unferð Episode of *Beowulf* will look at Unferð within the pagan heroic structure not as a foil to Beowulf, but as an aid and therefore a necessary component to prepare Beowulf for his battle with Grendel. Within the conclusion's analysis, Unferð's sinful nature outside of the Christian heroic will illustrate how Unferð is the evil presence that is the cause of the plague of attacks on Heorot. In this light, the Christian heroic structure, Unferð is the evil seed that invites evil into the heart of Denmark. Hroðgar, though he has been a good king, is weakened, perhaps because of age, and allows such an evil—in this case pagan sentiments—to exist within his court. Important here is the shift from pagan to Christian heroics. Beowulf, who signifies the coming of Christ within *Beowulf's* narrative, saves what has gone awry. Although Unferð structurally fits within the pagan heroic dialogue, he does not in the Christian.

## CHAPTER VII

### *BEOWULF*: THE UNFERÐ EPISODE

Unferð, Hroðgar's *pyle*,<sup>53</sup> has "seldom rested easily in the annals of *Beowulf* scholarship."<sup>54</sup> Since the nineteenth century, debates concerning Unferð's position within Hroðgar's court have produced tensions among *Beowulf* scholars. An interest in the "troublesome" *pyle* who sits at Hroðgar's feet remains a topic of much debate.<sup>55</sup> While some scholars argue that Unferð is not a troublesome *pyle*, but a witty retainer who is held in high regard by Hroðgar, the Unferð episode has a further signification with its position within the *Beowulf* text.<sup>56</sup> While agreeing with recent scholarship that forgives Unferð for verbally attacking Beowulf, the Unferð episode is can also be interpreted as an attack on paganism by the *Beowulf* poet. In this light, an understanding of Unferð and his motivation(s) for verbally attacking Beowulf is needed. In doing so, a better understanding of Unferð emerges illustrating the Anglo-Saxon tolerance of pagan social heroic norms and the uniting of those norms with Christian social values as is seen in earlier Old English poetry such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. This understanding also shows the growing shift in later Anglo-Saxon Christian values in that Unferð symbolizes the growing intolerance of the of pagan heroic within Anglo-Saxon culture. Be this as it may, the Unferð episode serves a more important function as a tool to teach fundamental Anglo-Saxon societal values. Even this consensus only glosses Unferð's signification within *Beowulf* for the Unferð episode is a key to the complexity of *Beowulf*

and the multiple dialogues that exist within the narrative outside of the pagan/Christian dyad. Although Unferð is a murderer, looking at Unferð in the broader social perspective illustrates his importance within Hroðgar's court and therefore Danish society. Early English law provided allowances for one to either work off or pay off the debt of murder. Be this as it may, Unferð does serve at Hroðgar's feet indicating that his position within Danish society is of high importance.

Unlike the Hegelian construction within *Beowulf* where the actions of a bad king such as Heremōd are paralleled against Beowulf's good heroic actions, the Unferð episode constructs Unferð's position as a necessary structure within the narrative. Although Unferð is guilty of fratricide, a slight on his character by the *Beowulf* poet, his action—verbally assaulting Beowulf—within Hroðgar's court is heroic nonetheless. By isolating Unferð within the boundaries of Hroðgar's court, Unferð emerges as a key to Beowulf's victory over Grendel. The *Beowulf* poet glosses this importance, and because of this, Unferð emerges as the troublesome *pyle* that many view him as.

The general consensus of Anglo-Saxon scholarship accepts that *Beowulf* originated within a pagan background. Much has also been written on the monsters and the significations of their existence within the narrative.<sup>57</sup> Also highly commented on are Beowulf's heroic undertakings and the Hegelian thesis/antithesis dyads within the narrative's three principle battles and numerous digressions. To fully understand and appreciate the Unferð episode, it is important to note that *Beowulf* is not Christian in its origin. The narrative's background is pagan. Not until much emendation and the eventual transcription of *Beowulf* into the manuscript now housed at the British Library,

did *Beowulf* begin to take on its Christian veil. Problems with dating the *Beowulf* Manuscript also add to the misinterpretation of the Unferð episode since the one edition of *Beowulf* is of a later date than poems such as *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. Also, it has been reasoned that the sole edition of *Beowulf* is a copy of a copy.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it is quite possible that a prejudicial Christian tone was taken when transcribing the surviving edition of *Beowulf* thereby showing a growing intolerance for the pagan heroic within Anglo-Saxon society. It is with this understanding that it is possible to see Unferð not as a foil to Beowulf, but as an important component to Beowulf's victory. Up to this point in the narrative, Beowulf's reputation is only visually established through the description given upon the Geats' arrival in Denmark through the display of the gold helmets, array of spears, and other weaponry. In all of the events that lead up to the Unferð episode, Beowulf has not shown either Hroðgar or Danish society the prowess of his arm in battle. All that is known of Beowulf is through the narrative's description and the two challenges—the coastguard and Wulfgar—that verbally force Beowulf to make an account of himself.

Beowulf's progression to Heorot is significant for understanding not only Unferð, but also the *Beowulf* poet's intention for attacking Unferð. Beowulf's journey also functions as a symbolic journey into the heart (Heorot) of Danish society. The march to Heorot begins with the Geats' landing on Denmark's shore. Upon their arrival, the Geats thank God for their safe journey and are challenged by the coastguard. The coastguard's challenge is easily met and Wulfgar, who then gives his report to Hroðgar, challenges Beowulf a second time once Beowulf has arrived at Heorot. Wulfgar's challenge lies

near the center of Danish society's problems in that Wulfgar reports Beowulf's arrival to Hroðgar. Hroðgar is an aged king who cannot protect his people from an evil that is set to destroy Heorot and thereby Danish society. At Hroðgar's feet sits Unferð who occupies an important place not only in Heorot, but also in literature since the evil counselor "is a common literary device employed to account for errors made by otherwise good rulers without compromising their greatness."<sup>59</sup> Within Unferð, sits the evil seed that has been planted within Danish society. What this seed is remains unknown; however, Unferð symbolically represents this seed because of his fratricidal guilt. Because an evil counselor advises Hroðgar, he can be forgiven since all fault is placed upon Unferð. Be this as it may, Hroðgar is still guilty of some form of evil since Beowulf observes that "Grendel could not have wrought such havoc unless the seeds of spiritless discord were already present in [...] Denmark."<sup>60</sup> The *Beowulf* poet plants the seed of discord (a possible translation of Unferð's name) within Unferð. In doing so, Unferð becomes a source of criticism for the *Beowulf* poet on paganism since Beowulf is an obedient warrior, whose value system may be interpreted as Christian, who travels the sea to save a "heathen" people from evil. In this case, the evil is Grendel who is almost invited to attack since the seeds for his evil (murder) reside within Unferð, who counsels Hroðgar at court, the source of power and leadership within Danish society. Therefore, Unferð is tainted with evil since he has not only committed an evil act that links him to Grendel and therefore Cain, but Unferð also perpetuates the literary *topos* of the evil counselor. Even so, understanding that much of *Beowulf*'s pagan background remains within the poem's narrative can still save Unferð's reputation. To do so, there

are two ways of understanding Unferð: one is in the context of Norse flyting,<sup>61</sup> and the second is in the warband context. Each context is a piece of a whole and is symbiotically related, which helps to understand Unferð's actions in relation to Beowulf and Hroðgar in lines 499-606 of *Beowulf*.<sup>62</sup> Beginning with an overview of Norse flyting will explain how Unferð's verbal attack is a function of his role at court and of his culture.

# I

Linguistically, the origin of Norse flyting comes from two uncommon Norse terms: *senna* (true) and *mannjafnaðr* (man-comparison).<sup>63</sup> Both terms are legal in their origin—*senna* being “a verbal effort on the part of one person to prove the guilt of another, and *mannjafnaðr* as an effort on the part of surviving relatives to assess the cash value of slain men.”<sup>64</sup> Both terms have metamorphosed into what scholars now translate and interpret as *senna* meaning an exchange of insults and *mannjafnaðr* meaning an exchange of boasts.<sup>65</sup> Carol Clover adds a third term, *nið*<sup>66</sup> (sexual defamation), to both terms and states that *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* are no longer used as separate terms. Clover writes that both terms are commonly “applied inconsistently and without qualification.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, what were once two distinct classes—*senna/mannjafnaðr* and *nið*—has become one that scholarship has labeled as flyting.<sup>68</sup>

Flyting is a unique event that “consists of an exchange of verbal provocations between hostile speakers in a predictable setting [...] The boasts and insults are traditional, and their arrangement and rhetorical form is highly stylized.”<sup>69</sup> Since flyting is a uniquely individualized event between both opponents, there cannot be an epitome to serve as a paradigm. The verbal exchange between Unferð and Beowulf is an example of

flyting because of its highly stylized language and its predictable setting. To recognize the cues, which would have been accessible to the Anglo-Saxon audience, that flyting was appropriate and about to occur, Clover lists five guidelines or categories which must be followed and which would have been recognized by the audience during a flyt. The guidelines are: setting, contenders and dramatic situation, structure, content, and outcome.<sup>70</sup>

There are two formulaic settings in flyting: one is indoors within a hall, and the other is outdoors by a body of water. Flyting may occur either spontaneously or may be “introduced as an entertainment” during feasting.<sup>71</sup> In the Unferð episode, flyting occurs spontaneously within Heorot when Unferð suddenly breaks in with:

Eart þū se Bēowulf    se þe wið Breca wunne,

on sīdne sǣ    ymb sund flite?

Ðær git for wlence    wada cunnedon

ond for dolgilpe    on dēop wæter (ll. 506-509)<sup>72</sup>

[Are you the Beowulf who strived against Breca on the broad sea? Where you two, because of pride, competed on the sea and made trial of the waves for a foolish boast in the deep water.]<sup>73</sup>

Though Unferð's taunts do not occur as part of the hall joy, the occasion for Beowulf's arrival to Heorot is nonetheless a joyous one since he is to be the warrior who will finally vanquish Grendel.

Secondly, the contenders in flyting are usually paired off into male/male or male/female dyads.<sup>74</sup> Clover notes that female/female flyting rarely occurs and is usually

in the form of the “quarrel of the queens.”<sup>75</sup> Also, the contenders may or may not know each other. The latter usually involves a “traveling hero entering unfamiliar territory and hence subject to hostile interrogation [...] Flytings of this sort [...] open with an identification: an exchange of stylized questions and answers which establish name, paternity, and credentials.”<sup>76</sup> It is in this atmosphere that Unferð and Beowulf contend in their verbal duel. Unferð, by immediately calling out to Beowulf with “Eart þē se Bēowulf,” establishes the need for Beowulf to account for himself.<sup>77</sup> Clover notes that the mockeries that newcomers are exposed to are “so common a feature in the literature that we may wonder whether it does not in fact reflect the actual Germanic etiquette.”<sup>78</sup> Both contenders are engaged in war when flyting commences. It is a war to verbally outdo the other where words are used as weapons that cut as keenly as battle-swords. Flyting is won only “by the articulate marshaling of superior evidence, and combat is [in the form of] the working metaphor.”<sup>79</sup> Beowulf triumphs over Unferð since he uses Unferð’s fratricide as a metaphor for Grendel’s murders. Beowulf also solidifies his victory by establishing Unferð’s less than perfect military record. With this, Danish society’s weaknesses are revealed in the unheroic acts of a warrior who is so close to the heart and mind of the king.

Clover’s third guideline pertains to the structure of flyting. Flyting is usually a standard sequence of Claim, Defense, and Counterclaim. The Claim and Counterclaim consist of boasts, insults, vows, and curses. The Defense usually “involves concessive clauses (‘that may be, but’).”<sup>80</sup> Within the Unferð episode the three criteria apply. First, Unferð makes his claim:



Eart þū se Bēowulf    se þe wið Breca wunne,  
 on sīdne sǣ    ymb sund flite?  
 Ðær git for wlence    wada cunnedon  
 ond for dolgilpe    on dēop wæter  
 aldrum nēþdon    ne inc ænig mon  
 ne lēof ne lāð    belēan mihte  
 sorhfullne sīð    þā git on sund rēon. (ll. 506-512)

[Are you the Beowulf who strived against Breca on the broad sea? Where you two, because of pride, competed on the sea and made a trial of the waves for a foolish boast in the deep water. Nor could any man, neither friend nor foe, dissuade either of you from the perilous venture when you two rowed on the sea and risked your lives. There you two covered the sea current with your arms and measured the sea-ways.]<sup>81</sup>

Next, Beowulf makes his Defense by stating:

Hwæt, þū worn fela,    wine mīn Unferð,  
 bēore druncen    ymb Breca spræce,  
 sægdest from his sīðe.    Sōð ic talige  
 þæt ic merestrenge    māran āhte  
 earfeþo on ȳpum    ðonne ænig oðer man. (ll. 530-534)

[You have drunk a large amount of beer, my friend Unferð, and have spoken of Breca's adventure. I maintain the truth in that I possessed the greater strength on the sea, endured the greater of hardships on the waves than any other man.]<sup>82</sup>

Finally, comes Beowulf's Counterclaim. He states:

Nō ic wiht fram þē  
 swylcra searonīða secgan hȳrde  
 billa brōgan. Breca nǣfre gīt  
 æt heaðolāce ne gehwæper incer  
 swā dēorlīce dǣd gefremede  
 fāgum sweordum (ll. 581b-586a)

[I have never heard a recounting of you in such a skillful contest with fighting swords. Neither Breca nor you have ever, in battle-sport, accomplished so brave a deed with shining swords.]<sup>83</sup>

The fourth category pertains to the content of flyting. Again, flyting consists of boasts, threats, vows, and curses, but is it also a repertory of insults which fit into the following categories: appearance, acts of cowardice, heroic failure, trivial or irresponsible behavior, failings of honor, alimentary taboos, and sexual irregularities.<sup>84</sup> While Unferð is not guilty of many of the acts listed, which are the basis of the insult categories, he is guilty of “fratricide” and heroic failure. Evidence of Unferð's fratricide is sparse. Research usually alludes to the fratricide in an offhand manner. Although Beowulf states: “You have killed [your] only kindred, kept your blade / for those closest in blood; / you're a clever man, Unferth, / but you'll endure hell's damnation for that” (ll. 587-589), by following R.D. Fulk's analysis of Unferð's name, Unferð is a common Germanic name possibly rooted in legend.<sup>85</sup> There is no solid proof of the story surrounding Unferð's fratricide. Therefore, Unferð's fratricide will remain unspoken of

since there is not a case as to why Unferð would occupy such a high position within Danish society if guilty of such an act. Furthermore, without the story of Unferð's fratricide, condemnation falls upon Unferð's head since there is not a counterclaim to this event, leaving him the subject upon which to place all negativity toward paganism. Nevertheless, Beowulf checks Unferð by mentioning these two "truths" about him (fratricide and a lack of heroic action), which results in his defeat. Even so, the very mention of Unferð's fratricide remains a frustrating detail among the various insults and boasts because it is not the "most flamboyant provocations that win the flyting, but the most accurate ones."<sup>86</sup>

The fifth and final category of flyting is the outcome. Most critics seem "uniformly attached to the idea that flytings end in violence [...] This is not so; posturings and threats to that effect are commonplace, but they belong to the genre and are not to be taken literally as prefatory remarks."<sup>87</sup> As illustrated, flyting is combat with words not weapons; it is a spoken war. If the loser in flyting wishes to seek redresses, this becomes another matter. The end result, however, of the Unferð episode is Beowulf silencing Unferð.

The idea of Beowulf silencing Unferð is interesting. Of note is the continual use of "silent" as a metaphor for death. Following Clover's analysis, if flyting is a war with words, then death must also be in the form of a word(s). Therefore, Unferð is silent because Beowulf has metaphorically killed him with speech. Like death, silence is a void. There is no longer any sound or being in death since the one who is silent is not making the use of language his own. Using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language,

language belongs to no one when it is not used. Unferð becomes silent and no longer uses language. In doing so, Unferð can no longer exist because his existence to the reader is in the form of language. Without being able to hear (or read) Unferð's voice, he does not exist. Beowulf is successful in battle because he has metaphorically slain Unferð with language.<sup>88</sup>

For the *Beowulf* audience, flyting would have been anticipated before Unferð addresses Beowulf because the traditional scene is set: the hall, drinking, and excitement over Beowulf's arrival. But to fully understand Unferð's verbal attack, questions of Unferð's position (the *þyle*'s position within the court), his responsibility as a spokesperson (duties), and his reasons for showing malice (if indeed, it is malice) toward Beowulf must be addressed. To do so, Unferð must be viewed in the second context that is symbiotically related to flyting—the warband context.

## II

Critics are hard pressed to find agreement in regard to Unferð's nature. Some critiques label him as a "mere jester," or as a "blustering mean-spirited coward."<sup>89</sup> The process of linguistically defining Unferð's name has also drawn some scholars to define interesting definitions such as: "Mar-peace" or "Hun-spirited." One critic, R.D. Fulk, has shed light into the quest for finding a meaning of Unferð's name by stating that:

The linguistic evidence is complex, but it is not ambiguous, and once its implications are recognized, the various literary details of the character and position of Unferth that should have played a role in the critical discussion all

along assume considerable significance. The conclusion to a detailed study of the name and the character must be that none of the interpretations yet proposed is very plausible. The name cannot mean ‘not-peace’, or reflect in any other way on Unferth’s character. Rather, the name is a normal Germanic hero’s name, and so [...] Unferth has as firm a basis in legend as any other character in the poem.<sup>90</sup>

Because Unferð is a normal Germanic name, the allegorical hunt for meaning is no longer plausible. In the wake of Fulk’s analysis, scholarship has taken a turn in thinking that favors Unferð. Unferð is now seen as a part “of the heroic world’s gritty reality in which a good flyting did not necessarily mean earnest enmity [... He] is also an honorable man, a leading warrior in Hrothgar’s *comitatus*, and a ‘speaker’ or ‘privileged spokesman’ for the king.”<sup>91</sup>

By understanding Unferð as a “privileged spokesman,” one is still not lead to a clear indication of what Unferð does at court or what his title signifies.<sup>92</sup> From the poem, we are told that Unferð is a *þyle*. This information, however, is not given until line 1165b: “Swylce þær Unferð þyle”. One who is unfamiliar with *Beowulf* will not have any indication of Unferð’s position at court aside from the information that is given in line 500: “þe æt fōtum sæt frēan Scyldinga” (he sat at the feet of the Lord of the Scyldings). Although Unferð’s court title, *þyle*, is not given in the reader’s initial narrative encounter, two indicators that allude to his importance are given: one, he has a position in Hroðgar’s court, and two, he sits at the feet of Hroðgar (a place even a beloved *þegn* such as Æschere does not occupy).<sup>93</sup> Only by fully understanding the

warband context can one learn to appreciate the importance of the *þyle* and see Unferð's position not as a lowly one, but one of honor.

According to Michael Enright, "scholars rarely question the practical organizational requirements of [... the warband] in 'gritty reality,' and [that] a good deal of *Beowulf* scholarship [...] seems to lack bite."<sup>94</sup> Enright feels that *Beowulf* scholarship "discusses the characters of the poem without analyzing their roles in the harsh, security-conscious, predatory military organization to which they belong."<sup>95</sup> According to Enright, this "is especially true of Unferð, whose role and office of *þyle* [...] become easier to understand once the *comitatus* context is more fully realized."<sup>96</sup> Therefore, the *þyle* is a position that must be held by one who is capable of handling the violent environment that surrounds courtly life. Drawing on Enright's conclusions on the nature of courtly life (the harsh atmosphere, the security-consciousness, and the predatory military mindset), Unferð appears to be if not a warrior par excellence, then at least a man who is able to endure such a life. This implies that Unferð is not a court jester or a lowly person, but a man of honor who sits at the feet of his liege lord. Therefore, the *þyle* in the Anglo-Saxon court is a person of more eminence than what scholars have previously argued.

Linguistically, the term *þyle* comes from the Old Norse *þulr*.<sup>97</sup> In Old Norse, the *þulr* occupied a seat in the hall as a special orator with a connection to the king.<sup>98</sup> In the Old Norse court, the *þulr* was knowledgeable in magic, mantic knowledge, and the Odinic religion.<sup>99</sup> In the Odinic belief system, a warrior who sacrificed a king to Odin was given the title of *þulr* while the god was called a *fimbulþulr* ("mighty *þulr*") who

appeared as an “orator, a poet, and a warlord.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the *pulr* is normally linked to “a warlike or warband context, to eloquence, wisdom, and Wodanistic service.”<sup>101</sup> This leads to another problem. It is suggested that most of the negative responses to Unferð’s curt speech come from the *pyle/pulr* association being taken too literally.<sup>102</sup> If one were to step back from the Old English/Old Norse comparative approach and turn, by way of experiment, to Old Irish sources, then a better understanding of Unferð’s position emerges.<sup>103</sup>

Like the Norse and the Anglo-Saxons, the Irish possessed their own warband. Within Old Irish literature, there are many parallels to the Old English *pyle* and the Old Norse *pulr*. One Old Irish literary figure that closely parallels Unferð is Sencha mac Ailella.<sup>104</sup> By using Sencha as a comparative parallel, one finds that a *pyle* is “not simply a delegate [... but a] speaker [... with] the duty of counseling the king.”<sup>105</sup> With such duties, the speaker “must be a dominant warrior who sits near the king.”<sup>106</sup> This role entails that a speaker serves a military position as well. The speaker, on behalf of the king, must speak loudly and eloquently to the company of men. Thus, the speaker’s position at the feet of his lord and Unferð’s at the feet of Hroðgar. This has further signification. If Unferð speaks on Hroðgar’s behalf to Danish court, then Unferð can also be seen as the voice of the king and a source of power. Therefore, Unferð cannot be a lowly person within the Danish court.

If the *pyle* is the one who announces to the court the king’s wishes, then Unferð is justified in initiating a flyting competition with Beowulf. As is suggested earlier, flyting is a war with words. Flyting is also surrounded with notions of the real world, which are

interpreted differently by both competitors who are flyting. Taking this information to be true, Unferð, by flyting with Beowulf, is fulfilling Hroðgar's wish for Beowulf to do his utmost against Grendel. Unferð is playing the role of psychologically training Beowulf for warfare by taunting him. In his taunting, Unferð is making Beowulf emotionally ready for battle. This high state of intensity for battle is called *berserkr* fury. Therefore, Unferð's taunts are not a malicious attack, but the will of the king. This is why Hroðgar is silent and does not reprimand Unferð for verbally attacking his courtly guest.

### III

Even if one accepts the interpretation that Unferð is fulfilling Hroðgar's wishes by raising Beowulf to *berserkr* fury, why does the *Beowulf* poet wait in naming Unferð's position until line 1165b? Also, since the audience would have been able to understand the cues before the flyting began, would the audience have been able to assume Unferð's position from where he sat, or has the *Beowulf* poet purposely withheld Unferð's title so that the audience would have a negative opinion of Unferð because of his verbal attack? It seems that the latter question is the more plausible since without knowing Unferð's position in Hroðgar's court, he may well be a jester or fool.

Having established the role and the position of the speaker, one can now leave the comparative approach between Old English and Old Irish literature to find the root of the animosity that the *Beowulf* poet has for Unferð. Unsurprisingly, the root of the *Beowulf* poet's hostility is embedded in religion. In leaving the comparison between Old English and Old Irish literature, it is important to note that both insular societies had "divergent modes of accommodating the pagan heritage."<sup>107</sup> Within the English kingdoms,



Christianity “quickly [...] won the allegiance of the elite and gained the upper hand over traditional poets and other carriers of non-Christian learning [...] This is why we have the almost proverbial search for Anglo-Saxon paganism.”<sup>108</sup> Therefore, Unferð is targeted by the Christian *Beowulf* poet not because he is an anti-hero, but for his pagan sentiments.<sup>109</sup> Unferð becomes a symbol of paganism and therefore evil within Hroðgar’s court. Because of this signification, Unferð is the discord within Hroðgar’s court and the evil seed that nurtures Grendel’s hatred of the Danes and the joys within Heorot. Once planted, the evil seed grows into what then becomes Grendel’s nightly attacks on Heorot.

By accepting that the *Beowulf* poet targets Unferð, one sees Unferð not as a blundering buffoon or a court jester. For unknown reasons, the *Beowulf* poet has produced a negative influential opinion of Unferð leading many readers to fall prey to the poet’s artistic manipulation of the facts. Some scholarship notes that the *Beowulf* poet purposely tries to “mar” Unferð’s status because Unferð is a symbol of England’s pagan past. According to Enright:

Every hard-fought transition breeds a sophist. In Ireland [...] overt paganism lasted far longer than in England. The Christian poet regards Unferth as an advocate of paganism and [...] his hostile opinion determines his approach and colors his characterization of the speaker. In such a case, the speaker’s high status might well be underplayed and his behavior deliberately depicted as equivocal or unworthy—this notwithstanding the fact that enough information is still provided to determine his original significance.<sup>110</sup>

By delaying to name Unferð's position for 600 lines, the *Beowulf* poet artistically produces an aversion toward Unferð that is difficult to abandon when his position is named. The *Beowulf* poet, out of doctrinal sentiment, has purposely neglected to produce an accurate portrait of Unferð to the reader. Because of the *Beowulf* poet's deletion of any credible references to Unferð, the reader is shocked at Unferð's sudden verbal attack. Unferð, however, is not evil, unkind, or malicious in his attack. He is performing his duty and cannot be held accountable for the carrying out of that duty. The continuous aversion of Unferð's identity by the *Beowulf* poet demonstrates the "conscious policy of the church, which largely monopolized literacy."<sup>111</sup> The church monopolized literacy in the succession of Christianity over paganism. This is illustrated with the negative signification placed on Unferð. According to Enright, much of the struggle in the complicated process of religious transformation is concealed and the pagan viewpoint is pushed aside.<sup>112</sup> Also, it is widely accepted by scholars that the literate were affiliated with the church and that the manuscripts remained within the walls of the monasteries. Therefore, it was easy for the church to monopolize literacy and to push pagan learning aside.

Unferð is a victim of prejudice once the truth of his position surfaces. Although many scholars have academically attested to Unferð's troublesome nature, this result stems from not looking at Unferð in totality and by viewing him through the interpretative Christian veil of the *Beowulf* poet. Once the poet's interpretative veil has been removed, Unferð emerges as an honorable and eminent figure in Hroðgar's court.

Though much on Unferð has been left unsaid, scholarship that views Unferð in the warband context is minimal. Until more studies have been conducted, Unferð will continue to remain a slave to popular opinion because he will always be seen as the troublesome *pyle* who maliciously attacks Beowulf without cause.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Beowulf's arrival in Denmark holds a larger societal significance outside of Heorot's cleansing. Beowulf's arrival is a metaphor for the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity.<sup>113</sup> Many variables lead to this conclusion and most are found within Hroðgar's court. The key is discovering and making sense of Unferð and his position as well as how Hroðgar would allow a person guilty of murder hold such an important position within his court. Although I agree that the *Beowulf* poet harshly judges Unferð because he symbolizes not only a pagan past, but also an evil presence within the Danish court, I have read that there are concessions in the form of monetary payment that would have granted Unferð some type of forgiveness. Whether or not this payment is both legal (monetary) and spiritual (monitory) is the kernel that I am searching for. This journey has not been easy, but I will offer the logic behind it.

Evils of the world are necessary. Beginning with Judas to the quasi-pagan or Christian writings of the *Beowulf* poet, evil must co-exist with the good in order for salvation to cleanse the heart. For without evil, the Saussurian minimal pair cannot co-exist. How can good be known as good without evil? This dichotomy offers a unique position for the person(s) or beast(s) that occupy the dividing line between good and evil. The numerous references to evil in the Christian doctrine and writings were well known among Anglo-Saxon writers and poets and were adopted into the literature and are, in

many cases, the focal point of the literature itself such as the Biblical writings and Bede's *The Conversion of King Edwin*. The following is a list of ideas that are being developed and will be applicable to a detailed analysis of Beowulf's second battle and Hroðgar's cautionary speech, which seems to be the turning point within the narrative. Within these episodes of *Beowulf* exist parallels between the Bible and *Beowulf* thus lending *Beowulf* scholars a means by which to interpret the poem as a secularized rendering of the New Testament. Although much scholarship focuses on interpreting *Beowulf* within the structure of the Old Testament, Beowulf functions more as a Christ-like figure with his coming and bringing of a new hope. Two parallels that lead to this conclusion are that *Beowulf* opens with a succession of kings as the New Testament opens with a succession of families, and that the narrative ends with the foretelling of the Geat's end, as does the New Testament with the Apocalypse.

To begin, there is the question behind the utility of Unferð and his function within the narrative. Could it have been possible for Beowulf, following Nordic practice, to be incited to action without flyting? In short, does Unferð mentally prepare Beowulf for his battle against Grendel? Secondly, there is the seed of evil (Unferð) that invites evil (Grendel and his mother) into Heorot. Again, Unferð is the key. Without Unferð, the narrative is devoid of a reason for Grendel's attacks. Although Grendel is angry because of the hall-joy in Heorot, the seed of evil is planted deep into the heart of Heorot. Unferð, in occupying such a high position within Danish courtly life, is the weak point in the heroic framework of Hroðgar's court. He is not heroic, and he is a murderer.

Hroðgar also occupies a difficult position within the narrative. Within *Beowulf*'s numerous digressions, poor kings are usually evil or guilty of non-heroics. Good kings are, in turn, Christ-like. Where does this leave Hroðgar? Hroðgar is a good king since Denmark has prospered under his rule; however, now that he cannot protect his people against Grendel, is Hroðgar necessarily bad? It is here that I view Hroðgar and his thanes as the non-Hebrew or Christian worshipers of God who are in need of salvation. Their salvation lies in *Beowulf*.

These are only a few of the questions that have recently materialized. Although much of this is still being sorted out, in concluding with these ponderings, the central focus of Horace's *Maxim*—literature instructing and delighting—remains key, for it is literature that remains the central vehicle with which to ascertain Anglo-Saxon societal norms. From the elegiac poems to the heroics of *Judith* and *Beowulf*, Anglo-Saxon England has left a clear, although, at times, incomplete glimpse into a world whose remnants remain within the social fabric of our own society. The Anglo-Saxons have achieved their goal in leaving *lāsts* for one to follow thus assuring that for centuries later, their thoughts, habits, and practices have continued to have the *lāst-word* with readers. It is without question that the continued interest in Old English literature solidifies *lof* and *dom* for a society whose social ethos continues to remain influential.

Be that as it may, it is interesting to know that when I first saw the *Beowulf* Manuscript, I was surprised to discover that the jewel of the British Library was a much smaller and less flamboyant manuscript than imagination and anticipation had painted. After walking from Earl's Court to King's Cross St. Pancras on a rather warm March

morning in 2002, I arrived at the British Library rather worn and winded. When I stepped into the library, I flew up the stairs in anticipation and excitement because I was to finally see the *Beowulf* manuscript whose title poem I spent fourteen weeks translating. I entered the collection room and turned the sharp left corner where the first manuscript that I saw was the *Canterbury Tales*. I then looked to the immediate left of the *Canterbury Tales* and there sat *Beowulf*.

My first feeling was of bewilderment. It was a rather small manuscript. It was not exciting to look at really. Aesthetically, the manuscript was disappointing compared to the flashy illuminated manuscripts that it rested next to. Most visitors quickly glossed over it and moved on. A young boy by me listened to something with a pair of headphones on and kicked me a little as the fit in the room was rather tight. I was pleased, nonetheless, since it made the poem real to me and helped me to understand that the Anglo-Saxons were human, not mythical persons from a past that no longer existed. It was at that moment when Old English literature earned *lof* and *dom* from me.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Ethos* is used throughout as the characteristic spirit or prevalent tone of sentiment of a people or community. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 426.

<sup>2</sup> *Comitatus*: a body of companions, a retinue of warriors or nobles attached to the person of a king or chieftain. The status or relationship of such a body to their chief. *OED*, 538.

<sup>3</sup> *Wyrd*: what happens, fate, fortune, chance, an event with the special idea of that which happens by the determination of Providence or fate, what happens to a person, a personification of Fate. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1954) 1287-1288.

<sup>4</sup> Martha Fletcher Bellinger, "The *Maxims* of Horace," *A Short History of the Drama* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927) 89-90. Found at TheatreHistory.com, 2002, 5 March 2005, <<http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/horace002.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> *Lāst-word*: a report, reputation. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 622.

<sup>6</sup> Elegiac poetry may also be found within larger heroic pieces such as *Beowulf* where a warrior may lament his fate or foretell the inevitable outcome of future events.

<sup>7</sup> *Lof*: praise, glory, a song of praise. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 645. *Dom*: might, power, majesty, glory, magnificence, glory, honor, praise, dignity. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 207.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, eds. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 176.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Swanton, "The Ruin of Time," *English Literature before Chaucer* (London: Longman, 1987) 106.

<sup>10</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 173.

<sup>11</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 173.

<sup>12</sup> Seth Lerer, *Literacy & Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Lincoln, NE: U of NE P, 1991) 103.

<sup>13</sup> *Lāst*: step, footstep, track. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 622. *Lāst* also means a reputation that one leaves behind. The concept here is that one is to follow in the footsteps of one's peers.

<sup>14</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 174.

<sup>15</sup> Translation by Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 174. The text is from Bruce Mitchell, and Fred C. Robinson, eds., "The Seafarer," *A Guide to Old English*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992) 281.



<sup>16</sup> Translation by Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 181. The text is from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., "The Wanderer," *A Guide to Old English*, 273.

<sup>17</sup> *Dugup*: manhood, all of those who have reached manhood. A multitude of troops, men, attendants, or nobles. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 217-218.

<sup>18</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 175.

<sup>19</sup> Lerer, *Literacy & Power*, 101.

<sup>20</sup> Translation by Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 175. The text is from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., "The Seafarer," *A Guide to Old English*, 280-281.

<sup>21</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 176.

<sup>22</sup> John C. Pope, ed., *Seven Old English Poems* (NY: Norton, 1981) 179. Definition found in the glossary.

<sup>23</sup> This includes texts written in Latin or by other observers of Anglo-Saxon culture.

<sup>24</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 182.

<sup>25</sup> Translation by Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 175.

<sup>26</sup> The following text is from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., "The Seafarer," *A Guide to Old English*, 280-81.

<sup>27</sup> Fell, "Perceptions of Transience," 175.

<sup>28</sup> Raffel, and Olsen, eds., "The Seafarer," *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Translation mine. The text used for this translation comes from Pope, "The Seafarer," *Seven Old English Poems*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Swanton, "The Ruin of Time," 106.

<sup>31</sup> Swanton, "The Ruin of Time," 106.

<sup>32</sup> Swanton, "The Ruin of Time," 106-107.

<sup>33</sup> Certainly the seafarer may find occasion(s) to achieve *lof* and *dom* with high heroic action while at sea. Be this as it may, the seafarer never speaks of these opportunities. Concentrating solely on his plight, the seafarer speaks of his absence from the *dugup*.

<sup>34</sup> *Hlāford*: lord. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 540. The term also means "loaf-lord" meaning one who provides the necessities of life such as bread. The second definition comes from Professor Tim D.P. Lally of the University of South Alabama to whom I am indebted to for his insight.

<sup>35</sup> Text from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., “The Seafarer,” *A Guide to Old English*, 282. Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “The Seafarer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 13-14.

<sup>36</sup> Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “The Seafarer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Text from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., “The Seafarer,” *A Guide to Old English*, 278. Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “The Seafarer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Alexandra H. Olsen, “Elegies,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, trans. Burton Raffel. eds. Burton Raffel and Alexandra H. Olsen (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) 5.

<sup>39</sup> Raffel and Olsen, eds., “The Wanderer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Text from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., “The Wanderer,” *A Guide to Old English*, 271. Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “The Wanderer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Text from Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., “The Wanderer,” *A Guide to Old English*, 275. Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “The Wanderer,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Carey A. Moore, ed., introduction, *Judith, Anchor Bible*, vol. 40 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) ix.

<sup>43</sup> In the Apocryphal text, Judith is a widow whereas in the Old English text, Judith is a virgin.

<sup>44</sup> A detailed discussion of the *Beowulf* Manuscript, *Judith*, and *Beowulf* may be found below.

<sup>45</sup> Peter S. Baker, “Judith,” *Introduction to Old English* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003) 218-219.

<sup>46</sup> Burton Raffel, and Alexandra H. Olsen, eds., “Judith,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, trans. Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) 30.

<sup>47</sup> Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “Judith,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Raffel, and Olsen, eds., “Judith,” *Poems and Prose from the Old English*, 30.

<sup>49</sup> *Berserkr*: Icelandic meaning “bear-coat.” A wild Norse warrior of great strength and ferocious courage, who fought on the battlefield with a frenzied fury known as berserker rage. Also means frenzied, furiously or madly violent. *OED*, 120.

<sup>50</sup> *Heorot*: hart, stag, male deer. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 530. Throughout, I pun on the term using “hart” as “heart.”

<sup>51</sup> Acts, *NIV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) 1662.

<sup>52</sup> Acts, *NIV Study Bible*, 1682-1683.

<sup>53</sup> *Pyle*: orator, spokesman. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 1084.

<sup>54</sup> Michael J. Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," *Speculum* 73.2 (1998): 297.

<sup>55</sup> Carol J. Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," *Beowulf: Basic Readings*, ed. Peter S. Baker (New York: Garland, 1995) 127-154; and Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 297-237.

<sup>56</sup> Carol Clover in "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode" explores the Germanic Context, while Enright explores the warband context in "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode." Clover clears any misconceptions of flyting and proves flyting does not have to be an act of hostility. Enright uses a comparative approach to justify Unferð's verbal attack on Beowulf and his position in Hroðgar's court.

<sup>57</sup> See J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," *Interpretations of Beowulf: A Critical Anthology*, ed. R.D. Fulk (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1991) 14-43.

<sup>58</sup> Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., introduction, *Beowulf*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Swanton, *English Literature before Chaucer*, 57.

<sup>60</sup> Swanton, *English Literature before Chaucer*, 57.

<sup>61</sup> *Flyt*: contention, strife, a dispute; abusive speech or a scolding match. *OED*, 1066.

<sup>62</sup> Beginning with Clover's analysis of flyting, I propose that within the warband context the act of flyting exists as a part of Unferð's position within Hroðgar's court.

<sup>63</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 127. *Senna*: to chatter, bandy words, gibing. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 523.

<sup>64</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 127.

<sup>65</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 128.

<sup>66</sup> *Nið*: law term for libel, liable to outlawry, of a libel in verse. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 455.

<sup>67</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 128.

<sup>68</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 128. Because of the misuse of *senna* and *mannjafnðr* as synonyms, Clover has combined both terms as *senna/mannjafnðr*. She considers *senna/mannjafnðr* to be one class, and *nið* to be the second. Therefore, her addition of *nið* does not introduce a third class into her system that is constructed of two distinct classes.

<sup>69</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 128.

<sup>70</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 128.

<sup>71</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 129.

<sup>72</sup> Bruce Mitchell, and Fred C. Robinson, eds., *Beowulf: An Edition*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998) 65. All subsequent lines from *Beowulf* in Old English are from Mitchell and Robinson.

<sup>73</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>74</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 131. Clover notes that the female in the male/female dyad loses.

<sup>75</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 131.

<sup>76</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 131.

<sup>77</sup> Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., *Beowulf*, 64. Line 506a.

<sup>78</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 132.

<sup>79</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 133.

<sup>80</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 133.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Marino, "Beowulf," *Explicator* 54.4 (1996): 195-198. Marino argues that the competition between Breca and Beowulf was not a swimming match, but a rowing match. Translation mine.

<sup>82</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>83</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>84</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 134. Among sexual irregularities, Clover lists: bestiality, homosexuality, incest, and necrophilia.

<sup>85</sup> R.D. Fulk, "Unferth and His Name," *Modern Philology* 85.2 (1987): 113.

<sup>86</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 135.

<sup>87</sup> Clover, "The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode," 140.

<sup>88</sup> See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1984).

<sup>89</sup> Norman E. Eliason, "The Pyle and Scop in *Beowulf*," *Speculum* 38 (1963): 267-284. Fred C. Robinson, "Elements of the Marvelous in the Characterization of Beowulf: A Reconsideration of the Textual Evidence," *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English* (Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 1993) 20-35. Cited in Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 299.

<sup>90</sup> Fulk, "Unferth and His Name," 113.

<sup>91</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 297.

<sup>92</sup> Definition for *þyle* in Mitchell, and Robinson, eds., *Beowulf An Edition*, 299.

<sup>93</sup> Scholars such as Werner Habicht and Frederick Klaeber disagree about the societal status a *þyle* possesses. Habicht thinks that a *þyle* is "lowly position," and Klaeber as a "seat of distinction." See *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Frederick Klaeber (Lexington, MA, 1950) 149; and Werner Habicht, *Die Gebärde in englischen Dichtungen des Mittelalters* (Munich 1959) 18. Cited in Enright's "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 298.

<sup>94</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 299.

<sup>95</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 299.

<sup>96</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 299.

<sup>97</sup> *Þulr*: a wiseman, a sage. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 749.

<sup>98</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 300.

<sup>99</sup> Wodan/Odin is the god of the warband.

<sup>100</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 300. *Fimbul*:- prefix meaning mighty, great. With *þulr*, the term means great wiseman. This prefix is used only four or five times in Old Norse poetry. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 153.

<sup>101</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 300.

<sup>102</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 301. *Þulr* invokes the act of regicide and pagan beliefs. The latter is spoken of in Part III.

<sup>103</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 301.

<sup>104</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 302.

<sup>105</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 304. The duties of the Old Irish spokesperson parallel the duties of the Old Norse *þulr*. Since the origin of the Old English *þyle* comes from the Old Norse *þulr*, then the Old Irish spokesperson must parallel the Old English *þyle*.

<sup>106</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 304.

<sup>107</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 312. It is important to remember that the *pulr* was associated with the Odinist faith.

<sup>108</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 312.

<sup>109</sup> See Part II. Note that once Christianity has taken over, the *pyle* becomes a forgotten position since he signifies the pagan past.

<sup>110</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 312-313.

<sup>111</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 313.

<sup>112</sup> Enright, "The Warband Context of the Unferth Episode," 313.

<sup>113</sup> The following gloss is an idea that is still in development.

## APPENDIX A

### THE SEAFARER: A PROSE TRANSLATION

May I utter a lay of truth to tell of journeys how I, in the days of hardship, often suffered bitter breast cares, often endured and came to know on the ship, the abode of care, the terrible rolling of the sea waves. There, I often kept myself at the boat's stern during the anxious night watch when cliffs tossed it. My feet were pinched by the cold—the frost bound cold grip; there I lamented the sorrows about my heart; hunger from within tore my sea weary mind. The man on land, with things pleasantly befalling him, does not know, how I, wretched and sorrowful, remained on the ice cold sea in the steps of an exile, deprived of beloved kinsmen, hung around with icicles while hail showers flew. I heard nothing there except the sea roar, the ice cold waves. Sometimes the wild swan's song, the gannet's cry, and the curlew's sound entertained me in the place of men's laughter—the seagull's singing for mead drink. Storms beat the rocky cliffs. There, the icy feathered tern answered; the dewy feathered eagle often screamed round about where no protecting kinsmen can comfort the wretched spirit.

Yet, he admits little to himself, he who has life's joy enduring in strongholds, of grievous journeys while proud and gay with wine, while I, often weary on the sea voyage, remain a seafarer. The night darkened with shadows; it snowed from the north; hoarfrost bound the earth; hail fell to the earth, the coldest kernels. Truly, thoughts that I should make a trail of the high seas are even now beating in my heart. The tumult of the salt

waves remind my mind and spirit's desire to go each time, that I should seek far from here the land of the foreigners.

Yet, there is not a proud-spirited man on earth, with his good gifts, active youth, bravery in his deeds, or his lord so kind that he does not have anxiety about his sea voyage that his Lord will bring. No harps ring in his mind, no rings are received, there is no pleasure for women, or the joys of the world—nor anything else except the tossing of the sea waves, but he always has a longing to go to sea. Groves burst into bloom adorning the stronghold and making the meadows beautiful; the world hastens on—all exhort the eager mind to set out, the heart also thinks of the journey and departing on the ocean's paths. The cuckoo exhorts its mournful speech. The summer's guardian sings and bitterly announces what is felt in the breast. The warrior, who is blest with comfort, does not know what those who lay the paths of an exile endure.

My mind now turns, my heart goes with the ocean's stream over the whale's home and takes its far flight, across the earth's surface, and comes back to me ravenous and greedy, the solitary flyer, crying out loudly and irresistibly whets the heart the whale's way over the ocean's expanse. Indeed, I was hot for the joys of the Lord rather than this dead transitory life on land. I believe that earthly riches do not eternally endure. There is always one of these three things, in every circumstance, before a man's final hour comes such as an uncertainty of disease, old age, or sword hate, passing away, his life wrested from him. Therefore let each nobleman speak afterward, praise of one's reputation by the living is best. That he should bring it about, before he must go away, good deeds on earth against the enemies' enmity, brave deeds against the Devil that the children of men should afterward praise, and his praise afterwards live with the angels.



Days are departed when all of earth's kingdoms were in array; there are no kings, no emperors, no gold givers, such as of old, when the greatest number of glorious deeds were performed and they lived in the most lordly praise and judgment. Failed is this company of noble retainers, joys have departed; the living and this world's holding degenerate, enjoying the use of it by toil. Joy is brought low, the earth's nobility grows old and withers as does each man throughout middle earth. Old age overtakes him, his appearance grows pale, gray-headed he feels sorrow, and remembers his friends of former days, noblemen's sons given to the earth. Nor may he when the fleshy covering that life loses swallow sweet, or feel pain, or stir his hand, or think with his mind. Though his brother will desire to strew the grave with various gifts, he cannot take them; nor may a sinful soul that he hides while he lives on earth seem like gold in God's power.

Great is the Measurer's awe, before which the earth will turn. He established the rocky foundations, the earth's surface, and the heavens above. Foolish is he who does not fear the Lord. Death comes unexpectedly to him. Blessed is he who lives humbly; the mercy of heaven comes to him. The Measurer establishes his heart because he believes in Him. A man should keep a headstrong mind and keep it in place, be trustworthy to men, and keep his manners clean. Each man should grasp love for the dear and malice for the hostile in moderation, though fire consumes the friend he has made on the funeral pyre: fate is strong, the Measurer mightier than man's thought.

Let us think where we possess our home, and then think of how we come there; and then strive so that we, too, may go there in the eternal happiness, where life is comprehended in the Lord's love high in heaven. For this we give God thanks, that He honored us, heaven's Lord, the eternal Lord of all time. Amen.

## APPENDIX B

### THE WANDERER: A PROSE TRANSLATION

Often the solitary one longs for grace, the Measurer's mercy, while he, troubled in spirit, moves through the sea way for a long time traversing the paths of exile, stirring the frost cold sea with his hands. Fate is very determined. Accordingly, the wanderer spoke mindful of hardships, hostile deadly combats, and the fall of beloved kinsmen.

“Often in the early mornings I lament my sorrow; there is no one now living that I can clearly speak out my heart's inmost thoughts to. I know, for truth, that it is a noble custom for a nobleman to bind fast his breast, hold in his breast treasure, think what he will. Nor may a dejected spirit withstand fate, nor the troubled mind bring help. Therefore, those eager for fate often sadly bind their minds fast in the recesses of the breast.

“So I should do with my heart, often wretched and sorrowful, deprived of home, far from noble kinsmen, fastened with fetters, after years have gone by when the earth covered my bountiful friend in darkness, and I, dejected, passed winter-sad over the confinement of the waves. Dejected, I sought the hall of a treasure giver, where I, afar or near, might find one in the mead-hall who might know of my people or where I could find comfort in friendliness, to allure me with pleasures. He who tries it knows how cruel a companion sorrow can be to the one who has few dear protectors. The path of an exile guards the enclosure of his heart, not twisted gold or the earth's glory. He remembers

hall-warriors and the receiving of treasure, of how he, in youth, his bountiful friend accompanied him to the feast. All joy came to an end.

“Therefore, he knows he who shall long forgo his beloved lord and friend’s council. When sorrow and sleep jointly bind me it seems that in my heart I embrace and kiss my lord and on his knee I lay my hand and head, as I did accordingly in former times before the ceremony of gift giving broke. Then I wake up a lordless man and see in front of me the fallow waves, see seabirds bathe, spreading their feathers, rime and snow fall mingled with hail.

“Then the heart wounds are heavy, sore with longing for my loved one. Sorrow is renewed when the memory kinsmen passes through my mind, approaching them with signs of joy, eagerly surveying my companions in the hall. They swim away from my heart without bringing much to say. My sorrow was renewed as I was sent over the confinement of waves often weary minded.”

“Indeed, I think of why my inmost thoughts cannot but grow dark throughout this world when I contemplate noblemen’s lives. Of how they, with terrible swiftness, gave up the floor, bold young retainers with each day’s drop and fall; therefore, one cannot become a wise man before he possesses many winters in the kingdom of the world. A wiseman is patient, neither too hot tempered, too hasty of speech, too weak in battles, too heedless, too fearful, too cheerful, too greedy for wealth, and never boasting too eagerly before he readily knows how to. A warrior shall wait to boast until he stoutheartedly knows how readily his breast’s thought will turn.

“The sagacious warrior shall realize how ghostly all this world’s wealth is when it stands to waste. So now, in various places throughout this middle earth, the wind blows against standing walls, covered with frost, the snow covered dwellings. Wander then to the rulers’ wine-halls, they lie dead, bereft of joy. The hosts all perished, bold by the wall. Some were carried off in battle while carrying the way forth; one a bird carried off over the high sea; another the gray wolf shared with Death; and one, sad faced, buried his nobleman in an earth pit.

“The Creator of man so destroyed this dwelling place, until the keepers of the stronghold were deprived of clamors, the old works of giants stood empty. He who then sees this wall and in wise thought deeply contemplates this dark life, he who, wise in spirit, often remembers a great number of deadly combats of long ago may utter these words: ‘Where is the horse? What has become of young warrior? What has become of the giver of treasure? What has become of the feast seats? What has become of the hall joy? Alas, bright cup! Alas, mailed warrior! Alas, the prince’s glory! How time has departed, vanishing under the cover of night, as if they never where! Stand now, beloved host, at the footstep of a wall wondrously high, decorated like a serpent. Noblemen carried off by the ash spears’ strength, weapons, greedy for slaughter, gloriously fate it. Storms beat against these rocky slopes; snowstorms bind the earth, winters proclaimer, sending forth the growing dark shadow of night from the north. All of the earth’s kingdoms are full of trouble; fate changes the operation of the world under heaven. Here, property is brief, friends are brief, man is brief, woman is brief, and all this earth’s foundation becomes empty.’”

So spoke the wise in mind, as he sat by himself in private meditation.

Praiseworthy is he who keeps his good faith unbroken, never letting his passion manifest too quickly in his breast, unless he already knows how to valiantly remedy it. It will be well him who seeks grace and comfort from the Father in heaven, there we all our firmness stands.

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## VITA

James Daniel Simpson was born on 28 February 1976, in Phoenix, Arizona, to James Carlos Simpson and Rosa Maria Rodriguez-Simpson. After graduating from Harlingen High School in 1994, James entered Austin Community College as a Business major. Unsatisfied with the world of business, James returned to The Rio Grande Valley and began studying English and History at The University of Texas-Pan American where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1998. In the fall of 1998, James began his graduate studies at the University of South Alabama studying Old English literature under Dr. Tim D.P. Lally. Exhausted from a strenuous year of translating, James returned to his native Harlingen, Texas, where he worked on earning a teaching certificate. In 2001, James began teaching Advanced Placement (AP) British literature at Mercedes High School. In 2003, James decided to finish what he began at the University of South Alabama and entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos while teaching AP Literature at Seguin High School.

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