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A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF WINTER AS METAPHOR FOR BONDAGE AND RELEASE IN OLD ENGLISH ELEGIAC POETRY

By

AUDREY B. LITWIN

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AUTHOR: Audrey B. Litwin, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Laurel Braswell

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I intend to analyse the season of winter as a metaphor for bondage and release in Deor, The Finn Episode, The Ruin, The Wanderer and The Seafarer. The first three poems will be examined for the psychological and symbolic usages of winter as both cause of and mirror for the protagonists' feelings. A delineation of the theme in The Ruin will subsequently illustrate whether the forms of release that the protagonists have adopted to describe their reinstatement into society, are satisfactory or not. The Wanderer will be examined by a concentration on the image of winter again in terms of bondage and release by this temporal season. The major focus, however, will be on The Seafarer in order to perceive how winter is used on an allegorical level as a means towards ultimate release. Here I shall conclude that the very factors which make the winter season an effective metaphor for bondage make it, paradoxically, a perfect metaphor for release.

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PREFACE

This discussion considers the winter settings in Deor, The Finn Episode, The Ruin, The Wanderer and The Seafarer as realistic backgrounds for human action and suggests further that, subtly concealed within the framework of the natural setting, is a spiritual quality which enables the season of winter to function simultaneously on several levels as a metaphor for human bondage. At the same time, those bonds which entrap man may be seen as the means by which he can arrive at an awareness of the nature of things of this world and move toward ultimate spiritual release in the next.

The progression in awareness which arises from physical and spiritual bondage is the theme of this paper, and for the sake of thematic continuity, I have discarded any semblance of chronological format in my discussion of these elegies. Deor, The Ruin and The Finn Episode will be examined for the basic literary uses of winter as causing and representing physical and psychological bondage. The following chapters on The Wanderer and The Seafarer will continue along this line of investigation, but the increasing amount of allegorical content, especially in The Seafarer, urges the use of patristic documentation in evaluating winter as a metaphor for bondage and as a means towards ultimate release.

The nature of this study necessitates a brief introductory chapter on early 'heroic' (i.e. northern pre-Christian) and Christian perspectives on the season of winter. Aside from the periodic uses of patristic documentation in the last two chapters, however, the poems themselves will be discussed with respect to the specific uses of winter by the Anglo-Saxon poets. An understanding of winter in these elegies will point out the manifest importance of the season which preludes the new season of rebirth and will reveal that thematic and structural unity has been achieved by the use of winter as a metaphor for bondage, and as a means of release.

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INTRODUCTION

Early Perspectives on Winter

The metaphorical usages of winter imagery to represent hardship and misery came as a result of the close identification of the Germanic peoples with their natural environment.[1] To the militaristic, seafaring peoples in close contact with nature, rough wintry seas and inclement weather posed major problems of a highly practical kind. The emphasis on the hostile and violent side of nature was thus brought to their attention on a level of action, for they not only had to contend with other warring peoples, but also had to struggle for their existence against the natural elements of winter. The severity of cold and the onslaught of winter storms were of such importance that references to them were recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, often with specific references to the nature of the storms which swept over the country:

761. In this year was the hard winter.

1047. After Candlemas (2 February) in this same year came the severe winter with frost and snow and wide-

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[1]For primary sources on early Germanic peoples' way of life and areas of habitation see Tacitus, Germania, trans. by H.S. Mattingly, On Britain and Germany (Harmondsworth, 1948). See also The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great, ed. J.A. Giles, two volumes, (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1858). Cf. Six Old English Chronicles, ed. J.A. Giles, (London, 1848).

> spread storms: it was so severe that no living man could remember another like it, because of the mortality of both men and cattle; both birds and fish perished because of the hard frost and from hunger.
>
> 1111. The winter this year was very long, the weather bitter and severe; in consequence the crops were badly damaged, and there was the worst murrain in living memory.
>
> 1115. This year the winter was so severe with snow and frost that no man living remembered a severer, because of it there was fearful pestilence among cattle. 2

The severity of the winter storms and profound influence upon daily life may have led to a practical division of time between hot and cold seasons instead of weeks or months.[3] The early Germanic division of the year into two seasons is noted in the <u>Exeter Gnomes</u>:[4]

> winter sceal geweorpan,wæder eft cuman,
> sumor swegle hat. (77-78)
>
> winter shall go, fair weather return, summer-hot.

Tacitus, in his <u>Germania</u>, supplies additional evidence to support this yearly division:[5]

> unde annum quoque ipsum non in totidem digerunt species: hiems et ver et aestas intellectum ac vocabula habent, autumni perinde nomen ac bona ignorantur.
>
> accordingly the year itself is not divided into as many

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[2] G.M. Garmonsway, trans., 3rd edition, (London: Dent, 1975), pp. 1ff. All subsequent references are to this particular edition unless otherwise stated.

[3] Cf. Tacitus, <u>Germania</u>, XXVI.

[4] Blanche Williams, <u>Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon</u>, (New York: Ams Press, 1966).

[5] Tacitus, <u>ibid</u>., 26.

> parts as with us: winter, spring, summer, each has a meaning and a name; of autumn the name alike and bounties are unknown.

The yearly Germanic division is thus derived from the sensitivity of the early peoples to climatic changes which oftentimes imposed restrictions on their seafaring way of life.

The warmer months as well saw an increase in productivity by insuring finer weather and thereby enabling the peoples comparatively easy mobility over land and sea, which the colder months made almost impossible. Winter-quarters became a necessity, then, to ensure that the men had a home base if they could not return to their homeland during the winter months. Although winter-quarters were used primarily as strategic bases from which to carry forth attacks against the enemy, there is little doubt that the procurement of safe shelter from the onslaught of winter storms was a major factor in the establishment of these quarters. Ample provision of firewood and food was henceforth to protact the men against the wintry elements of nature, if not from the attacks of men.

The severity of winter led the early peoples to regard the season with some dread, and the preternatural occurrences during the winter added to the belief that winter was aligned with the darker forces of nature. The Chronicle

[6] According to the Chronicle, winter-quarters were secured by Alfred, who was thus able to attack his enemy without returning to his home between the years of 868 A.D. and 886 A.D. Such procedures seem quite common, as illustrated throughout early literature. Cf. Njal's Saga, trans. by Magnus Magnusson and H. Palsson (Penguin, 1960); Egil's Saga, trans. by H. Palsson and Paul Edwards, (Penguin, 1976).

notes that in A.D. 1117 strange happenings followed the onslaught of winter storms:

> in this year also, on the night of 1 December, there were violent storms, with thunder, lightning, rain and hail. And for a great part of the night of 11 December, the moon appeared to turn all bloody and afterwards was eclipsed. Also on the night of 16 December the heaven was seen very red, as if there were a conflagration in the sky. On the octave of St. John the Evangelist (3 January) occurred the great earthquake in Lombardy, as a result of which many churches, towers and houses collapsed, and wrought great havoc among the people.

In this passage, the association of the color of the moon with the term "bloody" points towards a man-nature relationship, wrought by man's ability to conceive of natural phenomena in terms of his own experiential knowledge. Such descriptions are, in northern mythology, transferred to greater abstract phenomena such as the seasons, which may be interpreted as natural parallels to man's own cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

Because there is little extant English mythology from which to frame a reference to winter, a survey of Scandinavian literature, particularly Icelandic works, will enable us to view winter in terms of man's own experiential knowledge. The extent to which Scandinavian mythology influenced the Anglo-Saxons, or whether the ideas in Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century Prose or Younger Edda were the accepted notions of all Northernmen, is unknown, but, as Professor Tolkien remarks, attitudes towards winter could not

[7] "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics", in An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson, (Notre Dame, 1963), p. 76.

differ so much as to make analogical statements impossible.[7]

The close identification of man with his natural environment results in a unique treatment of winter which focuses on its state of stormy activity. On a literal level, the northern peoples view the winter season as a series of stages whereby each month exhibits certain antagonistic qualities:

> the first in winter is the Month of Cattle-Slaughter; then Freezing-Month, then Rain Month. 8

This quality of destructive cold is then picked up in the Edda and transferred by a unique characterization of winter:

> how should winter be periphrased? Thus: call it Son of Vindsvalf, Destruction of Serpents, Tempest-Season. 9

In the Lay of Vafthudthnir[10] the "Father" of Winter is succinctly described as "cold-hearted, all that kin" and a further description of "kin" indicates that

> these were kinsmen grim and chilly-breasted, and Winter has their temper. 11

Winter, according to the Edda, is both a personified entity and an abstract force, with all the literal and figurative aspects of coldness associated with the physical and psychological qualities of coldness of heart and spirit. Endowed

[8] Lines are from Arthur Brodeur's edition of The Prose Edda, (New York: Am. Scandinavian Foundation, 1929), p. 225.

[9] Ibid., p. 220.

[10] From The Poetic Edda, trans. by Lee Hollander, (Austin: Univer. of Texas Print, 1962), pp. 42-53.

[11] Ibid., p. 32.

with such qualities, winter can be interpreted as a warrior with powers beyond human capability. Although winter is essentially amoral, the qualities associated with the season place it in a class with those darker forces which seek to destroy man. The enormity of the problem of contending with winter and the elemental forces it harbours becomes more difficult when those elements in turn become personified forces of evil, forces capable of the greatest destruction to body and soul. Scandinavian and early Germanic literature contain many tales of the victories of heroic warriors who battle against these beings whose homes are in the remotest areas of the known world.[12] It is difficult to disassociate the season of natural violence from these personified forces of evil, for winter is not indicative of growth and regeneration as is the season of spring. This association between winter and evil denizens may be seen in the literature of the north, particularly in Snorri's Edda and the Voluspa. In these works the apocalypse known as the Ragnarok is examined.

In the Gylfaginning and the Voluspa the fusion of heat and intense cold create and destroy life in the Scandinavian universe. The first life in the form of Ymir, the "Rime-Giant", is caused by the melting of the ice of Niflheim. His affinity with the cold, however, denies him the

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[12]Cf. Beowulf: An Introduction, ed. R.W. Chambers with supp. by C.L. Wrenn, (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), pp. 451ff.

possibility of goodness and the result is that

> by no means do we acknowledge him God, he was evil and all his kindred. (p. 18)

The evil that is inherent in Ymir at the moment of his creation is thus woven within the fabric of the universe, and his progeny and the offspring of Loki effect man's ultimate destruction.

The association of evil with intense cold leads to the use of winter as a backdrop against which human drama is played as well as an active participant in their final end. The Fimbulvatr or "Awful Winter" is the final stage in the Ragnarok, and that there was a widespread belief in the apocalypse has been well attested to in many archeological findings. Hilda Ellis Davidson notes particular inscriptions on Swedish heroic gravestones, one of which reads "earth shall be torn asunder as well as the high heaven",[13] and she further notes in her study the apocalyptic events in Saxo Grammaticus' Gesta Danorum VIII, 262, at the death of Harald of Denmark.[14] Furthermore, Mrs. Davidson examines a series of carvings on the tenth-century Gosforth Cross, which depicts men and monsters contending with each other in addition to other apocalyptic scenes.[15] Mrs. Davidson submits the belief that

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[13] Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 205.

[14] Op. cit., p. 205

[15] Ibid., p. 207

> these carvings give us the right to assume what the literary evidence implies, namely that Ragnarok was a widespread popular image in the heathen north, and need not be accounted for by imitations of scholars, or borrowings by bookish men from the written literature of the East. 16

The dismal climate, the volcanic flames, the intense cold, and the long nights could easily lead to the interpretation of the Ragnarok that is prevalent in Snorri's prose version and the Voluspa. The Fimbulvatr with its cold seasons and wild ragings of the natural elements is subsequently a depiction of what might have occurred had the Ragnarok become more than just a mythical reality:

> in that time snow shall drive from all quarters; frosts shall be great then, and winds sharp; there will be no virtue in the sun. The winters shall proceed three in succession and no summer between; but first shall come three other winters, such that all over the world there shall be mighty battles. (p. 77)

The age, replete with warfare, famine, chaos and destruction is succinctly described by the poet as an "axe-age, a sword-age...a wind-age, a wolf-age, ere the world totters." (p. 78)

Winter's power to destroy leads towards an interpretation that draws both the season and the monsters together against the gods and men of the universe. So close is their relationship that R.B. Anderson considers the monsters as external manifestations of the season,[17] Thomas Carlyle affirms that "Frost, Fire, Sea, Tempest, these are Jotuns",[18] and

[16] Ibid., p. 208

[17] Norse Mythology: The Religion of Our Forefathers, second ed., (Boston: Milford House, 1891, rep. 1974), p. 29,197.

[18] "On Heroes and Hero-Worship", taken from Anderson's edition, p. 38-9.

Joseph Fontenrose impresses upon the reader the aspect of winter which transfers the season to the side of chaos and represents

> all dreadful forces that remain in the world and periodically threaten the god-won order; hurricane, flood, fire, volcanic eruption, earthquake, eclipse, disease, famine, winter, darkness, death. They imagined that...the demon himself came back to life and renewed the combat...striving for disorder, a return to primeval activity. 19

As representative of the demon chaos, winter is antithetical to the other seasons which foster life and encourage new growth. The association of winter with man's own destruction leads to its definition as that of a temporal boundary, circumscribing man and the things of this world. Man's inability to 'escape' the limitations of his mortality is the result of his inability to find a release from the aspect of change which is brought by time. It is this specific interpretation of winter which is of major importance in the theological discussions of time and eternity.

I have used the Scandinavian apocalypse in an effort to illustrate the prevalence of winter as a period of destruction and to depict man's inability to escape from time and mortality. Although there is a recurring time of rebirth and regeneration in the northern mythology, there appears to be little or no hope for man in the world:

> Earth sinks in the sea, the sun turns black,
> Cast down from the Heaven are the hot stars,

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[19] Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 218.

Fumes reek, into flames burst,
The sky itself is scorched with fire.

I see Earth rising a second time
Out of the foam, fair and green;
Down from the fells, fish to capture,
Wings the eagle; waters flow. 20

Out of destruction life rises anew, but the individual who is circumscribed by time, fate and the things of this world is unable to find rebirth once his alloted time on earth is finished. Man departs with the old world of which he is a part, and while mankind as a whole is able to resume activity, the individual must exist in a negative state. With a knowledge and awareness of death, I turn to the interpretation of winter as the endedaeg of man in Scandinavian literature.

The pervading atmosphere of fatalism, of stoic acceptance of the hostile ways of the world, may have arisen from the lack of fixed notions concerning the after-life of man. Snorri in his prose version submits certain ideas concerning the judgement of man and the allocation of punishment in the netherworld: the righteous move to Gimle, the heroes partake of the delights of Valhalla, and the evil men are transported to Niflheim, whereas the worst culprits are subject to the torturing heat and cold of Nastrand. Apart from this schematized vision of the after-life, however, the emphasis on this life rather than the next indicates that definite views of the after-life were not accepted by the northern peoples. As Hilda Ellis Davidson says in her conclusion to her edition of

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[20] The Poetic Edda, eds. P. Taylor and S. Auden, p. 152.

The Road to Hel,

> the evidence for the future life in Norse literature seemed...to deal rather with journeys towards an underground realm than with any continuous life lived there after death. 21

The realm of Hel, etymologically defined as the "covered place" from the OE helan ("to conceal") is given human form in mythology as the daughter of Loki, who controls the spirits of the netherworld. There she is to "apportion all abodes among those that were sent to her: that is, men dead of sickness and old age" (ch. 34). The reference to men that are sent to her is important, for it illustrates that all men, not necessarily the evil ones, go to her. The more common view of Hel as a realm also points towards its definition as a place of the dead rather than any place of pain and retribution as is the Christian hell.

The northern Hel, then, as a place similar to Hades[22] or Sheol,[23] is a shadowy realm where one remains in a negative existence, and is neither rewarded nor punished for his actions on earth. Even Baldr, the god of Light, is consigned to Hel

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[21]Cambridge: University Press, 1943, p. 195. Cf. E.O.G. Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion of the North, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1964), p. 269-74.

[22]Cf. Virgil, The Aeneid. Trans. by Allen Mandelbaum, (Bantam, 1972), Bk. VI, pp. 133-62.

[23]Cf. From Death to Life, ed. Robert Martin-Archard, (Edinborough and London: Ovier and Boyd, 1960), p. 37. He states, "Sheol was the lifeless land, the world of chaos, the non-world...Sheol does not denote a mere place; rather it stands for a state, a condition in which life ceases to be liveable for man."

after his death, and his departure to the netherworld illustrates the inability of even the gods to escape their inevitable fate.[24] As a realm for all men and gods, Hel signifies the limitations of existence, and all that man could hope for would be the continuation of his name among the living after he departs.

The lack of a well-defined structure of the hereafter results in the placing of great importance on life in this world, for there is no hope of redemption or transformation after death. By adhering to a general code of heroism, however, man can step beyond his mortality by ensuring that, through acts of bravery, his name will live in the minds of men. Hilda Ellis Davidson puts forth the belief that

> we find in the myths no sense of bitterness at the harshness and unfairness of life, but rather a spirit of heroic resignation: humanity is born to trouble, but courage, adventure, and the wonders of life are matters of thankfulness to be enjoyed while life is still granted to us. The great gifts of the gods were readiness to face the world as it was, the luck that sustains men in tight places, and the opportunity to win that glory which alone can outlive death. 25

A reliance on worldly glory or dom leads to a necessity for the heroic warrior to approximate, as Morton Bloomfield confirms, what would be considered in his heroic society as a state of perfection according to his own ethical code.[26] The gods and men

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[24] Op. cit., p. 162.

[25] Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, p. 218.

[26] "Some Reflections on the Mediaeval Idea of Perfection", in Franciscan Studies, 17 (1957), p. 226.

may not win the final victory over the forms of chaos, but their courage is, as affirmed by J.R.R. Tolkien, all the more perfect because without hope.[27] The ability to reach that plateau of heroism removes the warrior from anonymity and places him forever in the hearts and memories of men.

The bonds of temporality which are represented by the season of winter may take many forms, all of which may seek to bring man's life to an end: old age, sickness, and feud. Although old age may result in wisdom as, for example, with Hrothgar in the Anglo-Saxon epic, Beowulf, old age is still a prelude to death. In northern mythology, even the greatest of wisdom and the best feats of courage are no match for the greater powers of time; as Prof. Tolkien says, man is "doomed to die".[28]

The gradual amalgamation of northern heroic beliefs and Roman Christian concepts leads to a new level of meaning where man is a subject of God; though he must die, his death is given new meaning in the kingdom of the Lord. An awareness of a steady continuum of time as opposed to that aspect of time, the essence of which is change,[29] leads to the ability of the Christian man to remove himself from the bonds of his temporality. When viewed in this light, the season of winter is subordinated

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[27] "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics", pp. 71.

[28] "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics", p. 77.

[29] Cf. "Transition in Renaissance Ideas of Time and the Place of Giordano Bruno", by G.F. Waller, Neophil. 55-56 (1971-2), pp. 3-13.

in importance to the coming season of spring, which denotes a new life for each and every individual: winter, though a time of destruction and infertility, is a part of God's overall plan in the working of life through death. Edwin's counsellor, in the well-known passage from Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica, says,

> While he (the sparrow) is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from whence he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it. 30

The overwhelming need for an understanding of the unknown leads to a dependence on Roman Christianity's codified teachings which transform the unknown into the realm of God, and allay all fears which had been formerly associated with the unknown. Faith and adherence to the heavenly dryht enables man to reach his goal, with heaven as the place where all will be rewarded for their behavior on earth. Thus, though winter appears to be limiting and defining man's existence, the chaotic realm is transformed into the bright state wherein the soul is at one with God; inversely, the existence of man on earth becomes a brief but painful time of hardship, misery and sufferance. The wintry darkness, paradoxically, becomes man's hope, for he can move through and beyond the perception of symbolic "limitations" into the state of ultimate perfection.

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[30] Bede, A History of the English Church and People, trans. by Leo Shirley-Price, (Edinborough: Penguin, 1962), p. 127.

Frank Kermode affirms that Christianity fulfills the archetypal need in man who enters the world in medias res, for it speaks

> humanly of a life's importance in relation to it...a need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and an end. 31

He claims that eternity may be seen as linear for man is granted everlasting peace and joy in the heavenly kingdom of God. Citing Augustine, whose views lie behind almost all medieval treatments of time and eternity, he observes that, to his query, "what is the longest time of man to God's eternity",[32] the response is "all things pass away in this life, only eternity hath no period."[33] Another great Church Father, Ambrose, comments that "in a brief passage of time, each and every one of us withers in the flower of his age."[34]

Time, which encircles the world, begins from the creation of the world and not before this world, as does eternity. Both Augustine and Ambrose, in their explanation of eternity, indicate that only man is bound by such temporal fetters.[35] This leads into an evaluation of the seasons which, because they are of this world rather than the next, are

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[31] The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction, (Oxford, 1968), p. 4.

[32] City of God, ed. Vernon J. Bourke, (New York: Doubleday, 1958), Bk. XI; ch. vi, p. 211.

[33] Confessions, ed. F.J. Sheed, (New York, 1942), Bk. XI; ch. x, p. 28.

[34] Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel, trans. J. Savage, (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1961) Bk. III; ch. 7.

brought into being by God's own Word. Subsequently, winter, as the endedaeg of life, is also an agent who works out the plan of God for mankind. As subordinate to God, the season has a definite purpose which is not simply to destroy mankind; as a punitive and purgative agent, it seeks to destroy only those who are not followers of God, and to redeem through physical and spiritual mortification those who wish to enter into the heavenly kingdom. Winter may thus bind man with the fetters of his own mortality, but man can use winter as, paradoxically, a means through which he can emerge unscathed into the heavenly ham. As the seasons move upon the express orders of God, so do they move man closer and closer to the final goal of all creation--to be as one with God.

The transformation of the winter season from 'limiting' according to 'heroic' tenets to being 'limited' by God's Word leads to new interpretations of winter as both a negative, and a positive, force of time. Man's life is threatened constantly by the elemental forces of nature which may in turn be personified forces of evil. But, if man is able to use these forces for physical and spiritual mortification, he can paradoxically escape the bonds of his own mortality and thus move into the next world. There are no extremes of temperature in Paradise, no onslaught of wintry storms and thus, no need to

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[35] City of God, Bk. XI, ch. vi: "the world was made not in time but together with time." Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel, Bk. IV, ch. 4: "God made the sun, moon and stars, and allotted to them the measurement of time, the sun for the day and the moon and stars for night...."

struggle for existence. The poem entitled The Phoenix[36] aptly points out the perfection of heaven by the absence of such weather:

> Þaet is wynsum wong, waldas grene,
> rume under roderum. Ne maeg þaer ren ne snaw
> ne forstes fnaest, ne fyres blaest,
> ne haegles hryre, ne hrimes dryre,
> ne sunnan haete, ne sincaldu
> ne wearm weder, ne winterscur.
> (13-18)

> That is a winsome plain, the forests full of green,
> spacious under the sky. Nor may there enter rain nor snow
> nor fall of frost, nor fires blast,
> nor downfall of sleet, nor descent of rime,
> nor sun's hot heat, nor endless chill
> nor warm weather, nor winter's shower.

There is an obvious parallel between winter and the hardships that man must suffer on earth^ posited up by the very absence of winter in Paradise. Man's inability to conceive of the ultimate perfection of Paradise results in a negation of those factors which assail man in his misery, and winter is obviously representative of such misery. But as a destructive force, the period of dormancy, of infertility and stagnation, is that very factor which presses man ever closer to the new life as denoted by the spring of the following season. If man can use the resources of the wintry wasteland for the purpose of mortification in his effort to prove his loyalty to God, and to indicate his rejection of sin, he is granted the ability to move beyond winter and into a land of peace and tranquility.

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[36] G.P. Krapp and E.K. Dobbie, eds. The Exeter Book, in ASPR III, (New York: University Press, 1961). Cf. The Phoenix, ed. Norman F. Blake, (Manchester: University Press, 1964).

The transition from heroic fatalism to an optimistic belief in the after-life according to Christian doctrine results in a re-interpretation of the seasons which, in many ways, parallel the life-cycle of man. The early heroic man is bereft of the ability to carry his fame with him into the netherworld, and his dom is essentially fatalistic. The attitude that undoubtedly predominated much heroic thought is briefly summarized in the Exeter Gnomes:

> yrfe gedaeled,
> deades monnes. Dom bi þ selest.
> (79-80)
>
> the property of a dead man
> shall be divided. Fame is best.

Man cannot escape his own temporality, and winter is the ultimate victor. The transformation of winter into a subordinate, submissive agent of God, however, tempers the fatalistic notions of life and death with the Christian negation of death. Subsequently, the ideas and concepts of time and eternity are indicative of the fact that man is on earth only to prove his worthiness to his eternal Dryhten. Trapped in a world of fallen nature and changing times, man is forced to arrive at an awareness of his life's expanse and to use those aspects of nature in his effort to arrive at his ultimate goal.

Although the link between Old English and Scandinavian literature and mythology is tenuous, certain similarities may be perceived. In poems such as Maldon and Brunanburh, and prose pieces such as Cynewulf and Cyneheard, certain heroic ideals

are reminiscent of the ideals in northern mythology. In addition to heroic ideals are many similar exploits against those beings which seek to deprive the heroic warrior of his life. The element of fatalism is also woven into Old English literature, and to deny that there is fatalism is to deny certain attitudes and beliefs inherent in heroic poetry and literature. Consequently, I believe that any discussion concerning Anglo-Saxon man must include a certain knowledge of 'pre-Christian' literature, especially when the beliefs concerning time and eternity are involved. Winter, as a period of destruction, is also a time of great spiritual productivity when viewed as an agent of God. An examination of the uses of winter in the elegiac poems will indicate this dual role of winter as a metaphor for bondage, and as a means of release. Winter's nature, however, cannot be understood without considering the early views on life, death and the after-life.

CHAPTER ONE

Winter as Bondage in Deor, The Finn Episode and The Ruin

The Old English Deor, The Finn Episode, and The Ruin,[1] as expressions of human misery, belong to the genre conventionally called 'elegiac'. Defined simply as a "lyric" or "song of meditation",[2] the sense of elegy is extended by Dr. Alvin Lee to include an essential element, which is

> a melancholy sense of the passing away of something desirable, whether that something be a life, a civilization, a human relationship, a beloved object or activity, or perhaps a state of spiritual or emotional harmony. Elegy involves a frustration of human desire, followed by a sense of unhappiness or misery, which, if the mood is allowed to develop, will probably take the form of lamentation or sympathetic utterance in relation to the object of desire. 3

In its broadest sense, the whole corpus of Old English literature may be regarded as elegiac, for the idealization of human

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[1]All references to Deor are from the Exeter Book, eds. G.P. Krapp and E.K. Dobbie, ASPR III, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 178-9. The Finn Episode is taken from F.R. Klaeber's edition of Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, 3rd ed., (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1950), ll. 1063-1159. The Ruin is taken from Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book. Cf. also R.F. Leslie, ed., Three Old English Elegies, (Manchester, 1961), pp. 1-2.

[2]Robert Douglas Mead, Hellas and Rome, (New York: New Am. Library, 1972), p. 158. "The Greek elegy was the verse for epitaphs or for expressing political or philosophical sentiments, but the Romans used it as a form of personal lyric, mostly for love poetry."

[3]The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 128.

effort and worth within the Germanic heroic society does not preclude a deep awareness of mutability in the natural world. It is this inevitability of loss followed by misery and lamentation that is expressed by the Anglo-Saxon writers in the literature of their time. A preoccupation with misery, however, does not make elegiac poetry totally gloomy or pessimistic in its outlook. Rather, it is this central experience of loss that enables man to understand the transitory nature of the things of this world and to redirect his sight to that which is not mutable. The particular pattern of loss and consolation and the opposition between sublime joy and utter despair, then, are the central movements in the elegiac pieces; these contrasting aspects are usually, though not always, manifested in the external surroundings of the elegiac figure.

One of the greatest of hardships to befall the heroic warrior is exile, a state which is defined by the absence of all joy and happiness. There is an obvious dependence on the communal pleasures of the comitatus, for the acts of vengeance, treasure-giving, and oath-takings which comprise the basis for all heroic behavior cannot be otherwise fulfilled. Such dependence on the comitatus leads inevitably to sadness, for no worldly pleasure can resist change. Old age, sickness, death and feud leads oftentimes to a dispersal of the comitatus band if the dryhten dies and there is no one to accept the responsibility of leadership. Acts of cowardice

or treachery would also mar the happiness and tranquility of the comitatus, and the sinners would inevitably be exiled from the comitatus; and for every man the task of finding another comitatus, whatever the reason for his exile, is an arduous one.[4] The elegy Deor depicts the loss of some form of pleasure or value within the comitatus, in addition to the thoughts and emotions which accompany deprivation.

In Deor six situations, including that of the protagonist, deal with the abrupt transition from happiness within the comitatus to unhappiness of the exiled man/woman. The situations in sequence are the mutilation and exile of a warrior; the rape and subsequent pregnancy of a woman; a disruption of love; the exile of a king; the misery of those under the tyrannical rule of Eormanric; the misery of a man possessed by the knowledge of exile and hardship; and the lament of the dispossessed scop, Deor.[5] The general atmosphere is one of misery, and the immediate goal for the unhappy figures in this elegy is reinstatement into the pleasures and values of the comitatus. The desire for happiness is implicitly revealed in the moral of the poem, þaes ofereode, þisses swa maeg! ("that passed, so may this!"). The emphasis, then, is on the movement of time and the constantly changing fortunes of

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[4]Cf. Michael D. Cherniss, Ingeld and Christ: Heroic Concepts and Values in Old English Christian Poetry, (Netherlands: Mouton and Co., 1972). Cf. also H.M. Chadwick, The Heroic Age, (Cambridge, 1926).

[5]For a perceptive analysis of Deor, see Kemp Malone's edition, (London: Methuen and Co., 1949).

the world which transport man between the two polarities of happiness and woe.

The poem opens immediately with the feelings of sorrow of Weland, an essentially syllan monn ('good man',6), who has been forced by external circumstances from his position within the comitatus as anhydig eorl ('noble man',2) to that of a man bound by sorge ond longunge ('sorrow and longing',3). His knowledge of exile is expressed in the phrase, wraeces cunnade, and the symbolic environment in which he is placed is implied in the associative phrase, wintercealde wraece ('winter-cold exile'). Although the alleviation of sorrow is assured in the refrain of the elegy, the focus is on the personal feelings which have been elicited by the movement into exile rather than on the return to happiness.

The two phrases, wraeces cunnade and wintercealde wraece show an association between the season of winter, and the misery of exile. As Dr. E.G. Stanley affirms,

> winter is a season of cold terror. To wander alone in a scene of wintery desolation is to feel all the misery there can be on earth. 6

The misery of exile is augmented by the season of winter, for

> whoever finds himself there, cold and without shelter against the blasts of wind, may well remember the joyous feasting in the wine-hall and the king, the gold-giving friend of men, sharing out treasure by the heath, while he must dwell in the grove. 7

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[6] "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer," in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. J.B. Bessinger, Jr. and S.J. Kahrl, (Connect.: Shoe String Press, 1968), p. 482.

Thus the wintry setting is emblematic of the deprivation of the man who is unable to find a hall wherein he would be protected.

The phrase, wintercealde wraece, may be literally interpreted as "winter-cold exile", for there is the probability that Weland has had to suffer a number of winter years on his island, alone and in dire want of comfort. However, it is difficult to know whether the poet is using wintercealde literally or figuratively, and whether winter is a reality or a symbol of deprivation. In Old English literature the setting and mood are so closely linked that it is difficult to tell what is uppermost in the poet's mind. There appears to be a general agreement among critics today that the environment was not used simply for 'art's sake'. Barbara C. Raw submits the belief that

> the predictive statements of the gnomic poetry suggest that there was an agreed view of nature and of landscape as well as of human behavior...In narrative poetry the gnomic idea that everything has its appointed place is extended to create a landscape which springs from the characters and their actions. 8

The Romantic love of nature for its own sake does not apply to Old English literature, for the setting has its own specific purpose, whether to indicate peace and tranquility, or a place of danger as, for example, Grendel's mere in Beowulf. Because of nature's close affinity with human behavior and action, a variety of theories of man and nature have led Dr.

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[7] Op. cit., p. 482.

[8] The Art and Background of Old English Poetry, (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), p. 48.

White to affirm that

> the finest nature poetry in OE was incidental, the setting for an action, or the symbol of a state of mind or moral concept. 9

A complementary theory is posited by Dr. E.G. Stanley:

> the finest OE figurative diction is that in which a state of mind or moral concept evokes in the poem the description of a natural phenomenon, associated by the Anglo-Saxons with that mood or moral concept...it is the thought that gives the flower, not the flower that gives the thought. 10

Subsequently, the use of wintercealde is not to emphasize the cold of winter so much as the 'cold of winter-exile', and we must henceforth assume that the use of winter is figurative, indicative of deprivation and emotional conflict rather than physical cold. In this particular instance Weland, as a man who has been deprived of his position, physical agility and happiness, is an exemplary exilic figure who is presently suspended in a state of frozen inactivity. Weland's despair, however, with the passing of time, departs with his acts of vengeance upon those who have placed him in his predicament.

The use of cold to denote misery and deprivation is inherent in the Helgakviða[11] as well as in Baldrus Draumar in the Elder Edda.[12] In the Helgaviða Huntingsbana II,

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[9] From Essays by Divers Hands, New Series, 25(1950), p. 13.

[10] Ibid., p. 476.

[11] From Ursula Dronke's edition of The Poetic Edda, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

[12] Peter Salus and Paul B. Taylor, eds., (New York, 1970).

frost is associated with the intensity of sorrow:

> your hair, Helgi, is clotted with frost....You weep,
> gold-clad girl, cruel tears...each falls bleeding,
> chill as rain, searing, clotted with grief. (vv. 44-45)

In Baldur's Dream, there is a unique association of frost with the sorrow of the netherworld. Odin, in his search for answers to questions of which only the dead have knowledge, ventures into Hel's Deep--

> The High One halted at the eastern gate
> Where loomed a tumulus, tomb of a witch....Runes he
> chanted, charms of power.
> His spectre rose whom his speech commanded.
>
> Who is he that on Hel intrudes?
> Who calls me up, increasing my grief?
> Drenched by hail, driven by storm,
> Dew-frozen, I am dead long. (vv. 2-3)

Although frost may not be indicative of winter, there is little doubt that the seasonal correlative to sorrow is winter, the time of prolonged frozen inactivity.

The poets of both Scandinavian and Old English literature appear to have in common a coupling of the cold aspects of winter with the sorrow of man. This is not to suggest that nature is used as a sympathetic background to the protagonist, a Romantic concept which is known as "pathetic fallacy". There is a man-nature parallel but nature is not extended beyond the sense that it mirrors the protagonist's emotional and spiritual dilemma. This use of winter may be seen in Deor, and although wintercealde is not mentioned throughout the rest of the elegy, the subsequent figures manifest those qualities of deprivation and frozen inactivity

which are associated with the season.

The ensuing stanza describes the bereavement of Beodohild who

> ..ne waes hyre broþra deaþ
> on sefan swa sar swa hyre sylfre þing.
> (l. 8-9)

> could not mourn her brothers' deaths
> so much as her own problem, which pained her more.

The violation of her innocence has deprived her of the ability to mourn the deaths of her brothers, who, according to the Volundarkvida,[13] have fallen into the vengeful hands of Weland. Her subsequent rape by Weland has resulted in an inability to weep, which is a central role of women in the heroic culture. Tacitus says,

> feminis lugere honestum est, viris meminisse.
> (ch. 27)

> lamentation becomes women, men must remember.

The intensity of her own emotional grief is so extreme that she must remain emotionally 'locked' in her grief until her allotted pregnancy time is completed.

The third emotional trauma mentioned in Deor again concerns the unhappy relationship between man and woman, but this time there is an impression that external circumstances are forcing the two apart. The intensity of sorrow is again perceived by Maethild's mone ('moans',14) which results in a deprivation of sleep--slaep eal binom ('sleep was

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[13] From Lee Hollander's edition of The Poetic Edda, 2nd. edition, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 159-68.

banished',16).

The following two situations deal with an enforced exile from the comitatus, but both instances are unique: Theodric is exiled from his kingdom, but his exile is not without physical comforts; the men under the tyranny of Eormanric are psychologically and emotionally deprived of the good things which are supposedly inherent in the comitatus. Both parties are bound to their fate, and there is an obvious reliance on the passing of time to heal their sorrows and move them once again into the time of joy. Theodric must wait þritig wintra before he is reinstated into his comitatus, and although he is able to retain his leadership status with the Maerings, the time lapse gives the impression that þritig wintra was a period of prolonged, 'wintry' sorrow and unhappiness. This image of suspended activity is carried over into the next verse, where the poet makes clear references to the men's bondage:--saet...sorge gebunden ('sat,...bound by sorrow',24). Again, there is no definite allusion to winter, but it is difficult to disassociate this particular section of the poem from the initial reference to wintercealde wraece.

The image of bondage by various degrees of sorge ond longunge leads smoothly into the sorrowful man's discussion of the misery of all men. The inevitability of sorrow is voiced by a third person, who says,

maeg þonne gepencan þaet geond þas woruld
witig Dryhten wendeþ geneahhe,
eorl monegum are gesceapaþ,
wislicne blaed, sumum þeana dael.
(ll. 31-34)

may one think that throughout this world
the wise Lord changes constantly,
shapes the favours of many men,
to some assures fame, to others woe.

In his argument against a fatalistic reading of these lines, Kemp Malone alludes to the idea of God's divine control over all men:

> first and foremost, they ought to accept their tribulations as for the best, since these have come from God. 14

The Old English poems which reflect the allotment of grief as well as happiness are The Gifts of Men and the Fortunes of Men.[15] Both poems paraphrase the ideas which are found in Deor:

sumum her ofer eorþan aehta onliheþ,
woruldgestreona,
(Gifts, 1-2)

to some on earth He grant goods,
worldly treasures,

and

sumum þaet gegongeþ on geogudfeore
þaet se endestaef earfeþmaecgum
wealic weorpeþ.
(Fortunes, 1-3)

to some it happens, in his youth,
that the end becomes a woeful trial

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[14] Deor, p. 15.

[15] Both poems are from The Exeter Book, eds. Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR, pp. 138-40, and pp. 154-55.

In Deor, the lament of the protagonist is not so much about the divine control of God, as about the changing fortunes of this world, which have transported him from a state of wealth and happiness in the comitatus to that of a dispossessed bard.

Deor's loss has been the result of the usurpation by another, possibly better, bard. Such misery has elicited Boethian laments as to the reason for his misery.[16] The placement of his lament after various examples of misfortunes outlived, however, indicates a reliance on the passage of time as the greatest healer for men. Citing these instances of misfortune removes him from a purely personal context, in which all men must suffer their own misfortune, to a generalized statement of the misery of all men as their fate in the world. However, the change in the nature of fortune insisted upon by the refrain of the poem means that his own misfortune will be alleviated, or even changed, in time.

The movement in time is essential for an understanding of these elegiac instances of misfortune. The exilic figures are trapped within a winter of misfortune: the emphasis on seasonal change, which is a recurring phenomenon, indicates that with the passing of the winter happiness will be restored. The rotation of the seasons thus implies a rotation in man's fortunes, for there is a parallel between the cyclical cycle of the year and the emotional cycle of man on this earth. The

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[16] Boethius: A Consolation of Philosophy, ed. Richard Green, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962).

use of winter as a time of misfortune is thus indicative of a temporary suspension of activity; but with its inevitable departure, so will man's woes be removed. The close relationship between the seasonal cycle of the year, and man's own cycle of happiness to woe is perceived in the second elegiac piece in our discussion, The Finn Episode.

The passage of particular importance for the study of winter runs as follows:

Hengest ða gyt
weal-fagne winter wunode mid Finn
eall unhlitme; eard gemunde
þeah þe ne meahte on mere drifan
hringed-stefnan; holm storme weol
won wið winde, winter ymbe beleac
isgebinde oppaet oþer com
gear in geardas, swa nu gyt deð
þa de syngales seles bewitiað
wuldor-torhtan weder.

(ll. 1127b-36)

Hengest then
remained the slaughter-stained winter with Finn
though not [illegible] of his own choice; he thought of
his land, though he could not travel on the sea
with his ring-prowed ship; the ocean seethed with storm,
dark against the wind, the winter locked the waves
ice-bound, until another spring came
into the dwellings as it now does,
that always observes the proper times,
that wondrously bright weather.

From what can be pieced together from The Finn Fragment and The Finn Episode, Hnaef, leader of the Danes, is staying at the hall in Finnsburg, visiting his sister and brother-in-law, Finn. The fight which is described in the Fragment takes place, and the battle ends with the death of Hnaef. Hengest accepts the responsibility of leadership after his lord's death, but the battle is not resumed. A truce is called,

and the men who are left in the care of Finn uneasily co-exist until the warmer season will allow the Danes to cross the sea to their homeland.

After the winter has passed, Hengest has the sword, Hunlafing, placed upon his lap as a symbol of renewing the sword-feud. The fighting, which is elicited by the necessity of avenging Hnaef's death, is subsequently renewed. Finn is killed in the springtime and Hengest departs over the sea to his homeland with the treasure as a symbol of his heroic worth. His act of vengeance thus allows him full heroic rights within his comitatus, for Hengest has concretely manifested his oath of loyalty by his act of vengeance.

In the Finn Episode the act of revenge is dramatically underscored by the conflict of rights and obligations within the moral sphere of heroic ideology. Hengest has sworn an aþ, an oath of fealty to Finn, and the undertaking of any oath for whatever reason is considered binding for both parties involved. Oath-binding is an important act in the maintenance of heroic ideals, for it provides a stable base in an otherwise unstable world; and breaking the oath is regarded as no less than treachery. Hengest is granted the right to break such an oath because his original oath to Hnaef is the primary act; his own indecision indicates that both oaths are, in his mind, perfectly balanced. His choice then lies in the acceptance of a truce between parties, or the subsequent bloodshed in a never-ending cycle of feud and death. His indeci-

sion reaches a climactic point when he is morally unable to do anything else other than accept the symbol of feud in Hunlafing.

The natural world around Hengest attests to his inability to act immediately. As T.A. Shippey puts it,

> these clashes of storm and ice, of change in the year set against an unchanging purpose, brilliantly express a contorted state of mind, built up from Hengest's opposing desires and from the unexpressed implications of the contract and the burning. 17

In this passage, setting and mood are so intricately woven together that winter may be seen as both cause and mirror for Hengest's dilemma.

The specific components of winter--storm, wind and ice--and the related verbs--weol ('battled' or 'surged'), won ('contended') and beleac ('locked')--reveal two ideas of battle and bondage which manifest the turbulent emotions of Hengest as he wrestles with his moral dilemma. The image of battle in waelfagne ('slaughter-stained')[18] alludes to the past battle as well as foreshadowing the future battle of Hengest and Finn, and the image that the epithet conveys leads to a further image of winter as a warrior, actively participating in the human strife. Furthermore, if one is to interpret "slaughter-stained" in human terms, there is the allusion

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[17] Old English Verse, (London: Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., 1972), p. 24.

[18] Although Klaeber, in his footnotes to The Finn Episode, mentions other possible definitions for waelfagne, I feel that "slaughter-stained" is the most appropriate definition for my discussion on winter.

to the blood which has been spilled by such warfare. The passage on the burning of the bodies on the pyre (1120b-24) tells of the blood which aetspranc ('sprang forth') from the defeated heroes.

The second image of bondage in the frozen waves may be interpreted literally and figuratively, for the waves mirror the emotional binding of Hengest, which has also been caused by his inability to cross the sea. The hostility of the sea in winter leads to a denial of safe passage for the warrior, for sea-voyaging was impossible at this time. The locking of the waves upon which the ship would have moved, causes Hengest to accept the truce with Finn. The prolongation of the winter season effects an internal prolongation of Hengest's decision, because no action is now possible. But, as in Deor, the emphasis on the cyclical and recurring nature of the seasons points towards Hengest's inevitable physical and psychological release. The movement into spring thus shows the breaking of the bonds on the sea, and with the ability to once more travel on the waves Hengest is also forced into a decision.

With the arrival of warmer weather, couched by the poet in gnomic phrasing of the 'ways of the world', the physical estrangement from Hengest's homeland is no longer an issue. The loosening of the physical bonds of nature--swa nu gyt ded--now elicits a response,

fundode wrecca
gist of geardum; he to gyrnwraece
swiðor þohte þonne to saelade.

(ll. 1137-39)

the exile hastened in thought,
the guest of the castle; he thought more of
revenge than of the sea-journey.

The final resolution of indecision is caused by Hengest's acceptance of continued feud, which is, in fact, his only 'real' alternative. His decision to remain to carry on the feud, is ironically illustrated by spring's return with its emphasis on spring and regeneration. No blame is cast upon Hengest, however, for his decision to take vengeful justice simply signifies the 'ways of the world' since his heroic ethical code denies him any other course of action. As Robert T. Burlin points out,

> ...in the regular procession of the seasons, there is in the affairs of men a pattern, a 'law', which is immutable and beyond the control of human agency, though men are themselves the agents. Heroes and heroic codes may attempt to counter its force and occasionally meet with some success, but eventually they are borne down. In this world, it goes as it will. 19

In the conflict of moral obligation it is not surprising that the side of destruction is victorious over the side of peace. The concept of loyalty, which establishes the heroic basis for every other code, must be firmly implemented by the warrior's adherence to his code. Justice in heroic society

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19 "A Note on the Semantic Value of Structure in Beowulf", from Old English Studies in Honor of John C. Pope, ed. Robert Burlin and E.B. Irving, Jr., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 83.

must be upheld, even though this resolution may not lead to order and harmony; instead, it sets into motion a self-perpetuating chain of violent events which cannot be resolved in the world of men. The seasonal movement of the natural world is in direct contrast to the movement of man, but at the same time, both effect their inevitable end. Although spring may come again, there is the distinct impression that man is still trapped within a symbolic winter of destruction without total resolution. The pervading aspect of winter as a time of misery and hardship, which cannot be alleviated by the literal seasonal rotation, brings us to the final elegy in this chapter, The Ruin.

The association of the seasonal cycle with the cycle of human joy and sorrow gives the impression thatman, too, will move once again in the 'spring' of his own regeneration. This is not the case in The Ruin. The Finn Episode has already indicated that man's release may paradoxically be associated with winter rather than spring. If we apply this same interpretation in The Ruin, the scene of mutability is indicative that a symbolic winter is here to stay. The Ruin not only depicts winter's symbolic return, but illustrates by implication that there is no other season for those who exist in this world. Although there is little actual winter imagery, the qualities of loss and deprivation produce a general atmosphere which is evocative of winter. The elegy is by no means apocalyptic, as some critics have been led to be-

lieve,[20] but there is an awareness that no better future is in store for man on earth.

The way in which the poet of the elegy gives direction to the teaching of mutability is to begin with the sight of an actual ruin,[21] and to draw certain morals from it. The overall attitude of the speaker appears to be fatalistic in that there is no hint of any future transformation or redemption for those who have fallen within its walls. There is no hint of condemnation, either, and the attitude of the poet seems to be only one of deep regret for the passing of a civilization, as well as a deepened awareness of the transitory nature of the things of the world. The setting, therefore, is more than just mere backdrop, for it is the means by which a moral is drawn. Consequently, winter will not be viewed in the specific 'cause and mirror' categories, for the two aspects blend together and are, for the most part, inseparable. The walls are representative of human endeavor and achievement in man's attempts to immortalize himself, and the frost which covers them depicts the futility of it all.

The setting upon which the speaker gazes is one of bleakness and desolation: the great towers crumbling into dust, and the once-glorious buildings corroded and relentlessly

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[20] Cf. Hugh T. Keenan, "The Ruin as Babylon", Tennessee Studies in Literature, 11 (1966), pp. 109-117. An eschatological examination of the ruins may be found in "The Ruin: Structure and Theme," JEGP 71(1972), 369-81.

[21] James H. Wilson, Christian Theology and Old English Poetry, (The Netherlands: Mouton, 1974), p. 77.

pursued by the embrace of the earth. The concrete depiction of hrim on lime ('frost on the lime',4) suggests the forces of nature which have now taken over the habitation of men, and while it might not indicate an actual winter season, the frost evokes a certain process of thought which is associated with the season. The poet, in his attempt to perceive the past greatness of such ruins, resorts to the contrasting devices of height and depth, glitter and dullness, sound and silence, heat and cold: all of which contribute to the dramatic unity of the poem.

In the opening lines of the elegy the speaker gazes upon the enta geweorc and reconstructs a vision of the 'work of giants' from the still-apparent beauty of such ruins:

> wraetlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebraecon. (1)
> splendid is the stonewall, broken by fate.

Because there is no reference to God, wyrd must be simply defined as the 'course of events' to which man is subjected.[22] The poet may then be emphasizing the inevitability of change without any Christian belief in a future life to come; his concern is on the process of life to death, rather than the events after death. The focus on the ruins indicates that even these enta geweorc are fated to change with time. They thus provide meager symbols of man's immortality, for though

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[22]Cf. B.J. Timmer, "Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry" in Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur, ed. S.B. Greenfield, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p. 144.

they may remain long after man has departed, they cannot last unmarred forever.

The poet of The Ruin effects a shuttling effect between past and present by the judicious use of verb tenses and key images which are emblematic of joy and sorrow. Even though there is the awareness of the present sight of corruption, the poet is thus able to conceive of the grandeur of the former civilization:

> beorht waeron burgraeced, burnsele monige,
> heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,
> meodoheall monig mondreamas full.
>
> (ll. 21-3)

> bright were the buildings, many halls of men
> lofty pinnacles, a great noise of armies
> many a meadhall full of the sounds of revelry.

The sounds of joy which last for a hund cnea are coupled with the brightness of the buildings which are reflective of the men's physical and mental garb in heroic times: glaedmod ond goldbeorht ('glad in mood and gold-bright',33). The emphasis on glitter is further associated with a key symbol of heroic times, the treasure which bound together the leader and his band and encouraged great acts of bravery and cunning. The warrior

> seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
> on ead, on aeht, on eorcanstan,
> on þas beorhtan burg bradan rices.
>
> (l. 35-7)

> he gazed upon treasure, on silver, on intricate jewels,
> upon wealth, upon possessions, on precious stones,
> upon the bright buildings and its broad domain.

Such outward possessions appear to immortalize the glory of

man, for they are concrete symbols of his presence, his effort and his achievement while on earth. But, as Edward B. Irving says, man builds and civilizes, but both man and buildings are unbound; hence the wires which wound together (20) both man and his creation, cannot withstand the greater power of time. By the power of wyrd, they are both gebraecon.[23]

The movement in perspective from past glory to present decay may be viewed as one of expansion and contraction; the poet moves back to cover a hund cnea ('hundred generations') before returning to the bleak and lonely present, but this present sight continuously brings back the temporal vision of past ages to coincide with the ordered structure of the speaker's own time. There is no escaping the awareness that the towers have now fallen, the gold and the warriors are buried beneath the earth, and the walls raeghar ond raedfah ('lichen-grey and rust-coloured',10). The poet notes carefully the structural details of the ruins which time has destroyed; the hrofas ('roofs',3), torras ('towers',3), hrungeat ('barred gate',4), scurbeorge ('roofs',5), heah horngestreon ('high gables',22), and hrostbeagas hrof ('vaulted roof',31). The inevitability of time and the theme of mutability are thus given expression by the fall of the buildings which once reflected human endeavour at its finest. All of these have now succumbed to the force

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[23] "Image and Meaning in the Elegies," in Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays, ed. Robert P. Creed, (Providence, R.I., 1967), p. 156.

of time which has led to a collapse of such grandeur; the speaker sees all the ruins now fettered by the ever-tightening embrace of winter frost.

The process of time thus takes its toll on buildings, and because the buildings parallel the efforts of men, there is the awareness of the methods by which the civilization was destroyed. There is mention of aeldo ('old age',6), woldaeg ('sickness',26) and swylt ('death',26) and with these natural enemies of man is that human creation which deprives man of life, waepnum ('weapons',12). The central theme in The Finn Episode is indecision, whether to continue the feud and thus win glory or to accept a truce with an enemy. Here in The Ruin death is final, and although there is an awareness that glory can be won through feud, the speaker's own objectivity dismisses the reality of any 'after-speakers' to carry on the memories of those who died with honour. There is no mention of specific names nor of specific actions, and the warrior who gazes upon the jewels is anonymous and bereft of any individuality; rather, he stands as a symbol of all mankind who have moved through life in glory but who are unremembered by later generations. That is a lesson in mutability.

Throughout the poem there is an almost fatalistic sense of the passing of time; the only remaining reality is that of desolation and deprivation which is evocative of the season of infertility and inaction. If we apply Northrop Frye's association of the last stage of human life with the

"darkness, winter and dissolution phase",[24] a parallel may be perceived between the time of bleakness and the winter season. The reality of winter is irrelevant here, for what is important is the symbolic presentation of those aspects which are undesirable to man. At the same time, however, the ruins and scenes of deprivation move the speaker into an awareness of mutability and the knowledge that earthly beauty cannot exist ad infinitum. An awareness of this fact leads inevitably to the next; there must be something beyond this world that is without change.

In Deor, The Finn Episode and The Ruin, the setting and season are structured around the emotional aspects of the protagonists. In addition to establishing a general mood and underscoring the central ideas in each poem, winter is also used as a realistic context for human action and event. In The Finn Episode winter is both cause of and mirror for the emotional and psychological turbulence of the protagonist. Winter may also be seen as enlarging the scope of human action by presenting it in a worldwide context of recurrent life and death. In Deor, as in The Finn Episode, there is the inevitability that with the passing of sorrow, metaphorically presented by the passing of winter, man will find joy. Lastly, winter provides a sense of continuity in time, for all human action is structured within the temporal boundaries

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24 Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 16.

of seasonal change. The symbolic binding of winter in The Ruin is, of course, indicative of the fact that man cannot escape his own winter of despair and inactivity. The direct parallel between winter and the final stage of man's life subsequently leads to a return to the past in order to find happiness, for there is no joy in the present time of deprivation. Although this may appear fatalistic, winter is in fact the sole means by which man is able to realize the inevitability of change, and to redirect his sight to something of a more permanent nature. An examination of The Wanderer illustrates the personal growth of a man who is forced to endure his own 'eternal' winter and the methods by which he arrives at an awareness of the changelessness of the heavenly home of God.

CHAPTER TWO

Winter as the Gateway to Wisdom in The Wanderer

The elegiac poem, The Wanderer,[1] deals with the concept of change and mutability which also constitutes the main theme of The Ruin. The elegiac lament in The Wanderer, however, is far more complex in thematic content, because framing the poem are two specific references to the miltse and are ('mercy' and 'grace') of God, and there is an obvious emphasis on the awareness of the faestnung of God. The first one-and-a-half and last one-and-a-half lines are so well balanced, that Bernard Huppé states that

> the structure of the poem must be built around a themal contrast between earthly insecurity and heavenly security: a contrast stated at the beginning, developed in the body, and summarized at the end of the poem. 2

The poem is broadened in elegiac scope by these Christian references to God, and there is a gradual spiritual progression of the eardstapa, who, realizing the inevitability of the result of a return to the past, raises his sight heavenwards to the eternal changelessness of God's heavenly kingdom. The poem is not an allegory, for there is no indication that the

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[1] From The Exeter Book, eds. Krapp and Dobbie, ASPR, p. 134-37. Cf. also The Wanderer, eds. T.P. Dunning and A.J. Bliss, (London: Methuen, 1969), and R.F. Leslie's own interpretative analysis of The Wanderer, (Manchester, 1966).

[2] "The Wanderer: Theme and Structure", JEGP 42 (1943), 516-38.

wanderer, progressing in wisdom from eardstapa through anhoga to snottor, ever reaches true spiritual salvation.[3] But an allegorical reading is unnecessary because the emphasis is on the awareness of the stability and eternity of God rather than the attempt to reach God after death. The knowledge which the wanderer receives is that which will afford him spiritual comfort and give him the strength to accept his lot as an exile in the world.

The first half of the elegy is autobiographical, devoted to the experiences of the eardstapa ('earth-stepper' or 'wanderer') in the face of adverse fortune. The first five lines which constitute the propositio[4] establish three of the four concomittants of the exile state which are, according to S.B. Greenfield, status, state of mind, reason for deprivation and movement in or into exile.[5] The solitary man is described as anhoga ('solitary thinker')[6] and his troubled state of mind is defined by modcearig ('troubled in thought',2). His movement in exile is ex-

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[3] The Guest-Hall of Eden, p. 140. Professor Lee states that "no human soul, however devoid of grace, can theologically be damned while life remains during which the receiving of salvation is still possible".

[4] Cf. Dunning and Bliss, op. cit., p. 81.

[5] "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of Exile in Anglo-Saxon Poetry", from Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, p. 354.

[6] Cf. Dunning and Bliss, p. 40. The definition is extended to include the wise man who "encloses himself" alone in order to "meditate undisturbed".

tended over a lengthy period of time which is expressed in longe sceolde ('long must',3) and his reasons for exile, as we later find, are the deaths of his lord and fellow retainers which result in his need to hreran and wadan ('row' and 'journey') the hrimcealde sae ('ice-cold sea',4). But the deaths of his lord and kinsmen are not the main reasons for his being modcearig: the greater reason for his unhappiness is the overwhelming power of his own lot, his wyrd[7] which has set him on the tracks of exile.

In order to understand the wanderer's present plight in time, it is necessary to begin with the deaths of the lord and kinsmen. The impression one receives from the phrase nu nis cwicra nan ('now there is no one alive',9) is that he is virtually the last survivor of his comitatus. As a last survivor, he is unable to maintain the feud which might have avenged his lord's death if we interpret wrapra waelsleahta as the final battle which deprived the lord and thanes of life. The finality of wrapra wealsleahta and the passage of time thus deprives the wanderer of any heroic act of loyalty which might have allowed him that glory or dom upon which men place great reliance. As a last survivor the eardstapa is forced to live the life of an exile, deprived of the heroic pleasures and values inherent in the comitatus, but, ideally, carrying on the memories of the brave warriors who died in battle. The lapse of time between the death of his kinsmen

[7]Cf. B.J. Timmer, "Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry", Neophil., 26 (1940), pp. 24-33.

and the present time, as implied in geara iu ('years ago', 22) and longe sceolde, has, however, moved the wanderer toward a reverie upon his own misery which has resulted from such events. He is subsequently left with the harsher memories of loneliness, physical discomfort and bitter hardship; as a figure of confinement in exile, his experiences are described by E.G. Stanley as

> the OE stock poetic expressions for misery: the loneliness of the morning, the icy sea, frost, snow and hail, all the ingredients of cold care. 8

Throughout the elegy there are constant references to winter and the hardships of cold to which the wanderer has been exposed. The literal movement of the sea-journeys undertaken by the wanderer in order to find another lord is given impetus when we remember the hardships of the winter storms which forced Hengest in The Finn Episode to remain on land. The verbs hreran and wadan in The Wanderer express the literal and figurative motions of the exile who is forced to endure a life apart from the joys and comforts of the comitatus. The wintry environment to which the exile is confined is thus a reflection of the psychological state of the thought-bound man. As a mirror for his internal weather the winter imagery reveals his frozen despair and his inability to find the happiness that would remove him from his state of exile.

If we apply the 'setting or mood' theory of E.G.

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[8] "Old English Poetic Diction", p. 500.

Stanley, and accept the belief that the poem is not an "exercise in realism",[9] the literal setting is subordinated to the of a psychological representation of the human dilemma. This specific use of winter as a metaphor for misery is apparent throughout classical literature, and because the poem is classified in the tradition of the "classical and Christian literary genre of the consolatio",[10] we must briefly consider a few obvious examples of the use of winter as a metaphor for hardship and misery. This is not to say that there is a single, common tradition among classical and Anglo-Saxon writers, but there is no doubt that the use of cold to depict misery and bondage were prevalent in early writings. The two poets from which the lines will be cited are Virgil and Ovid, the Roman poets of the early classical period.

In the Fourth Georgic of Virgil[11] winter is used in conjunction with misery as illustrated by the story of Orpheus and his lost Eurydice:

> In solitude he roved
> Far north through frozen fields and Scythian snows,
> O'er mountain steeps that wear perpetual cold
> Lamenting loudly his lost Eurydice.
>
> (IV. 522-25)

The bitter cold of frozen, alien lands is often referred to by

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[9] Ibid., p. 492.

[10] S.B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature, (New York: University Press, rep. 1972), p. 218. Cf. J.E. Gross, "On the Genre of The Wanderer", Neophil., 45(1961).

[11] The Georgics and Eclogues of Virgil, trans. T.C. Williams, (Cambridge: University Press, 1915).

Ovid in his Pontic Epistles, his Fasti and his Tristia, of which two works are dedicated to his emperor in the effort to gain reinstatement in his favour. Sentenced for reasons which are partially unknown, Ovid is forced to endure a life as an exile, deprived of his city, his family and his countrymen. In almost every Tristia narration there is mention of the frozen, almost uninhabitable environment in which he is placed. The frozen Scythian fields are well-known as a realm of hardship, and Ovid uses these fields to symbolize his own state of unhappiness and misfortune. Ovid's consignment to an "eternal winter" is given expression in the Pontic Epistle III:

> for thee (the sea) no Autumn holds forth the clustering grapes; but all seasons retain an intense cold. Thou keepest the sea bound up with ice, and often in the ocean, does the fish swim enclosed in the covered water. 12

The idea of an eternal winter as the only existent reality for the exile is recognized in Ovid's personal statement of his plight:

> I lie here, deserted, amid the sands of a far distant region, where the hidden earth supports eternal snows. (I. ep. iii)

In the Pontic Epistles as well as the Tristia, there are references to the Scythian snows which are "perpetual" (III. ep. i). This idea of entrapment within an eternally cold season is implicit in The Wanderer, for the wanderer is confined to his own eternal winter on earth.

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[12] The Fasti, Tristia, Pontic Epistles, Ibis and Halieuticon of Ovid, H.T. Riley, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903).

The winter setting in The Wanderer as a psychological projection of the eardstapa's troubled thoughts may be seen as the "real" setting in the first half of the poem, as opposed to the visionary setting of the gift-hall. His physical attempts over wapema gebind in order to find the sinces bryttan ('giver of treasure') are abortive, and he, in his desire and need for reinstatement, tries to escape from the misery of his present plight by a retreat into the past through the memories of former days. This is in order to effect what Mircea Eliade describes as an "eternal return" to the happier, golden days of the past.[13] The journey back in time is consequently due to the wanderer's knowledge of a bleak present and an equally undesirable future; his psychological escape is his final attempt to release himself from the awareness of misery with which he is surrounded.

In order to understand the wanderer's desire for reinstatement within the comitatus, we must first examine his early waking moments into the realization of his plight. He laments,

> oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce
> mine ceare cwiþan.
>
> (ll. 8-9a)
>
> often I should alone each morn
> bewail my cares.

With the evocation of fresh misery, the eardstapa seeks consolation in the act of thought-binding, because

[13] The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. by Willard Trask, (New York, 1954). Cf. also Myth and Reality, trans. by Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

ic to sope wat
þaet bip in eorle indryhten þeaw
þaet he his ferðlocan faeste binde,
healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille.
(ll. 11b-14)

I forsooth know
that it is a noble custom in a prince
that he bind fast his feelings,
hold his hoard-coffer, let him think as he will.

The image of binding one's thoughts enables the wanderer to participate in the heroic values which bound society together. The eardstapa can thus find a measure of comfort in the knowledge that he is still able to adhere to a custom of the glorious past, and his own efforts at thought-binding place him on the heroic level of all great warriors who participated in such an act. In the elegy, however, his status as a last survivor points towards a rather tenuous association between his oath-binding and his former comitatus. Because all of his fellow-men have gone and there is no one left to carry on the values of feud and vengeance, the heroic customs are almost futile in their consolatory aspects. The eardstapa does not have to make any decisions, the outcome of which would affect all men; and his thought-binding is made out of necessity rather than choice. Hengest in the Finn Episode must match words with actions, so any hesitation must remain 'locked' within his heart until his indecision is resolved. The eardstapa's troubled thoughts do not lead to any heroic resolution; at best they lead to a reconciliation with his own place in the world, which he must finally accept as his lot. Because the act is made out of necessity rather

than choice, the eardstapa must find further consolation in the actual memories of bygone days to find the values which to him are all-important.

The memories of the eardstapa thus transfer him into happy times when he had once participated in the joys of the gift-hall:

> gemon he selesecgas ond sincþege,
> hu hine on geogude his goldwine
> wenede to wiste.
>
> (ll. 34-36a)

> he remembered the retainers and the receiving of treasure
> how in his youth his gold-giver
> entertained him with feasting.

In The Finn Episode such heroic adherence to the values of the comitatus necessitates Finn's death at the hands of Hengest. Although a truce has been made, it is uneasily held by the followers of Hnaef, and revenge is inevitable. The judgement may be harsh, but life without adherence to such values is meaningless to the heroic warrior: it is no wonder that the eardstapa retreats into the memories of former days since thought-binding proved a heroic but not consolatory act of stoic endurance. The totality of such loss and deprivation is perceived in his lament, wyn eal gedreas ('joy has fled'). From memory the eardstapa moves into a dream state which allows him total release from his woes until his awakening moments:

> þinceð him on mode þaet he his mondryhten
> clyppe ond cysse, ond on sneo lecge
> honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum aer
> in geardagum giefstolas breac.
>
> (ll. 41-44)

it seems in his mind he
embraces and kisses his lord, and on his knees places
hands and head, as he used to do
in bygone years, when he shared the gift-throne's bounty.

The act of loyalty is the basis from which all values are established, and with such homage come all the pleasures of gold-giving and honour within society. The eardstapa relives the act of homage because it embodies all the happiness of which he is now deprived. Such a dream state is invariably brought to a close, however, and his awakening each morning indicates his return to reality.

The intensity of such loss upon the wanderer's awakening into present reality leads him, as Dr. Leslie states, beyond his "control and understanding"[14] as he yields to a hallucinatory vision of his former companions 'flying' over the frozen sea:

þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð,
greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað.
secga geseldan swimmað eft onweg,
fleotendra ferð no þaer fela bringeð
cuðra cwiðegiedda.

(ll. 51-55a)

then the mind perceives the memory of his kinsmen,
greets them with joyful utterances, eagerly scanning them,
the warriors, his companions, swim away,
the floating ones, nor can they bring
back known sayings.

The absence of these 'known sayings' reveals to the eardstapa the transiency of human relationships which cannot extend from beyond the grave. Hallucination, the last attempt to regain former happiness, only reveals the inability to obtain

[14]Leslie, op. cit., p. 9.

that which no longer exists.

In all three attempts to recapture former joy, the sporadic presentation of the frozen seascape, in keeping with the eardstapa's state of mind, serves as an effective barrier between the man and his desires. Although the seascape is a reflection of his own frozen despair, its presence actively forces him into an awareness of his own plight, and the futility of escaping through memory, dream and hallucination.[15] As a mirror for his state of mind, the frozen environment depicts his loss and deprivation, and the hail and snow serve as a contrasting device to the visionary warmth of the gift-hall. The constant re-appearance of the wintry seascape throughout the three visions forces the eardstapa to move beyond his thoughts, for memories are unable to give him comfort. Instead, they only serve to make the present time bleaker than it is already, and the bonds of sorge ond slaep ('sorrow and sleep',39) only bind him more securely into a never-ending cycle of memory and despair. Although the winter setting offers no comfort, it nevertheless forces him into an awareness that solace can only be found, paradoxically, in his acceptance of his present plight as an exile, a plight that has been determined by fate. Consequently,

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[15]These terms are from R.F. Leslie's introduction to The Wanderer, p. 8. See also "Purpose and the 'Poetics' of The Wanderer and The Seafarer", by W.F. Klein, in Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation, eds. Lewis E. Nicholson and D.W. Frese, (Notre Dame: University Press, 1975), pp. 208-223.

while the present time of wintry desolation appears to bind him into memory and despair, it encourages him to move through and beyond his unhappiness which memory has served to augment.

Throughout the movement into memory, dream and hallucination, the eardstapa speaks in the third person, the better, perhaps, to manage the intensity of the sorrow when he returns to present reality. At the end of this passage, the wanderer reverts back to the first person and thinks how, sooner or later, the same fate must befall every man. With this shift back to the first person narrative a new strength is now seen in the eardstapa, who is able to rise from a concentration on personal woe, to an almost objective view of the misery of all men. This change may be attributed to the final realization that he cannot escape his sorrow, but must face it as bravely and with as much fortitude as he can muster. The function of the wintry environment has thus served its purpose, for it gradually reveals to him the futility of escaping from the present, and forces him into an acceptance of the reality of 'the way of the world'. His following reflections now move him towards a greater understanding of man's lot, but this time there is no desire to escape through memory. With his mind firmly planted in the present, he says

> forþon ic geþencan ne maeg geond þas woruld
> forhwan modsefa min ne gesweorce,
> þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence,
> hu hi faerlice flet ofgeafon,

> modge magupegnas, swa þes middangeard
> ealra dogra gehwam dreosed ond fealleþ.
> (ll. 58-63)

> Verily I cannot think why in the world
> my mind should not be darkened,
> when I consider the life of noblemen
> how they suddenly gave up the halls,
> the brave men, just as this middle-earth
> every day crumbles, perishes and falls.

One cannot wyrde widstondan ('withstand fate',15), and so the only alternative is to face adversity with fortitude and the wisdom to acknowledge mutability and loss without despair. Mrs. Gordon says that there is no reason why he should not feel saddened,[16] but she does not suggest that sadness is a negative trait. Tacitus quotes, "women must weep and men remember" (ch. 27), implying that sadness is a necessary burden which should not be lightly dismissed. St. Augustine confirms that,

> if there is any man who can endure such calamities, or even contemplate them without feeling grief, his condition is all the more wretched for that. 17

The feeling of sadness, then, is that which enables a man to acquire the insight to perceive all the sadness inherent in the world; and with insight comes wisdom and understanding. As the eardstapa affirms,

> ne maeg weorpan wis were, aer he age
> wintra dael in woruldrice.
> (ll. 64-5)

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[16] "Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer", RES, New Series 5-6 (1954-55), p. 6.

[17] Vernon J. Bourke, ed., St. Augustine: The City of God, (New York: Image Books, Inc., 1958), p. 447.

> no man grows wise without having his
> share of winter-years in the world.

The expression, wintra dael, may be literally interpreted as 'years' share', but the speaker is emphasizing the hardship and misery which elicits the maturing process; hence, there is a larger symbolic context applied to 'year', which extends its definition to include 'the time of hardship and pain' that is normally associated with winter. But winter, as such a time, is paradoxically that agent which enables the anhoga to obtain the wisdom which will point ultimately to the eternal faestnung of God.

Although it is not known whether or not the poet was influenced by Boethius' Consolatio, there is general agreement among critics that the elegy is in the "tradition of the Classical and Christian literary genre of the consolatio.[18] Boethius affirms:

> good fortune deceives, adverse fortune teaches....You will notice that good fortune is proud, insecure, ignorant of her true nature--but bad fortune is sober, self-possessed and prudent through the experience of adversity. Finally, good fortune seduces weak men away from the true good through flattery; but misfortune often turns them around and forcibly leads them back to the true good. 19

The inevitable lot of man to experience the winters' share of misery, enables him to view his lot in the perspective of the lot of mankind. As an anonymous and solitary individual, his

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[18]Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature, p. 218. Cf. J.E. Cross, "On the Genre of The Wanderer", Neophil. 45 (1961), pp. 63-75.

[19]From Richard Green's translation, Book 2, prose 2.

personal experiences have in fact been the experiences shared by all men who have moved from happiness and joy to misery and longing. As a representative of mankind his experiences, which lead to wisdom, reveal that all unfortunate individuals will be able to find comfort in wisdom and understanding of their own lot in life.

In the second half of the poem, the speaker shifts from an autobiographical account of his own experiences to those of all men; the ruins, which constitute the second "real" setting, reflect the change in his perspective on the things of this world. The wanderer begins with a vision of the future of mankind and states,

> hu gaestlic bið
> þonne ealre þisses worulde wela weste stondeð.
> (ll. 73-4)

> how ghastly it shall be
> when all this wealth of the world stands waste.

The ruins symbolize the transiency of all earthly glory and pre-empt the symbolism that is inherent in the frozen seascape. By illustrating the totality of loss, the ruins reveal the inevitable outcome of all those things which are circumscribed by change and mutability:

> ...nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard,
> winde biwaune, weallas stondaþ
> hrime bihrorene, hrydge þa ederas.
> Woniað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
> dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong
> wlonc bi wealle.
> (ll. 75-80)

> ...now scattered throughout this middle-earth,
> blown through by winds, the remaining walls stand
> hanging with frost, snow-swept buildings.

> The wine-hall crumbles, the ruler lies
> deprived of joy, the warriors have all fallen,
> proud by that wall.

The ruins symbolize the endedaeg of man's joys and sorrows, and the frost which binds the ruined buildings emphasizes collapse of the bonds which sought to create order and harmony out of chaos. The speaker proceeds to elaborate on the endedaeg of man in his concentration on the mutability theme as illustrated by the birds and beast motif (ll. 80-84), which stresses the more somber effects of battle.[20] The final climax culminates in the vision of the empty world, where the eald enta geweorc idlu stodon (87,'the ancient work of giants stood idle.') Pondering deeply þis deorce lif ('this dark life',89) the snottor moves into the ubi sunt passage, wherein the secondary vision of the hall is pre-empted by the reality of winter's wasteland:

> Hwaer cwom mearg? Hwaer cwom mago? Hwaer cwom maþþumgyfa?
> Hwaer cwom symbla gesetu? Here sindon seledreamas?
> Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
> Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat,
> genaþ under nihthelm, swa heo no waere!
>
> (ll. 92-96)

> Where is gone the horse? Where is gone the man?
> Where has gone the giver of treasure?
> Where has gone the banqueting-hall? Where are the hall-joys?
> Alas, bright cup! Alas the warriors in armour!
> Alas, the glory of the princes! How the time departed
> grew dark under the helmet of night, as if it
> never were!

The final utterance is a lament for all vanished joy and splendour, for the darkness of the eternal night, and the

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[20] Dunning and Bliss, p. 119, f.n.

end of all springtime beauty. The onslaught of winter storms against the world points towards an almost, but not quite, apocalyptic ending for mankind:

> þas stanhleopu stormas cnyssað;
> hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð;
> wintres woma þonne won cymeð,
> niped nihtscua, norþan onsended
> hreo haeglfare haelepum on andan.
>
> (ll. 101-105)

> The storms beat against the stoney slopes,
> the falling snowstorms bind the earth,
> winter's tumult, when darkness comes, shadows of night
> come darkly lowering, and turbulent hailstorms come from the north
> in malice towards warriors.

The description of hail as a malicious force against mankind is appropriately used here, for it not only illustrates the final victory of chaos over civilized order, but it is indicative of the way in which heroic man lived and died. Feud, as a means of obtaining dom and lof , in addition to all other heroic values which seek to immortalize heroic man, is seen as futile in this passage for, as in The Ruin, there are no 'after-speakers' to carry on the memories of brave men. The dependence on the comitatus is now perceived as futile, and the snottor raises his sight upwards from the scene of worldly desolation in an effort to perceive the changelessness of God:

> wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
> frofre to Faeder on heofonum, þaer us eal seo
> faestnung stondeð.
>
> (ll. 114b-15)

> Well is it for the one who seeks consolation from
> the Father in Heaven, where all our security lies.

The snow-laden ruins symbolize the final stage in the develop-

ment of spiritual wisdom of the speaker, who is now able to see through and beyond the ruins of the earth and into the faestnung of God. As the essence of man is change, so his desire is to find changelessness, which lies outside the temporal boundaries of time. In Blanche Williams' edition of the Cotton and Exeter Gnomes, the changelessness of God may be clearly seen in the references to God's power:

> Meotud sceal in wuldre, mon sceal on eorþan
> geong ealdian. God us ece biþ,
> ne wendaþ hine wyrda ne hine wiht drecep,
> adl ne yldo aelmihtigne;
> ne gomelaþ he is gaeste, ac he is gen swa he waes,
> þeoden gepyldig.
>
> (Cotton Gn. 7-12)

> God shall live in glory, man shall on the earth
> pass from youth to old age. God to us is everlasting
> he is not changed by fate, nor does anything change Him,
> sickness nor old age, afflict the Almighty One;
> nor does he grow old in spirit, but he is always as he was,
> the patient Lord.

The final lines of the elegy thus point towards the consolatory knowledge of lasting stability which man had tried to erect for himself on earth. But though the ruins of the world provide the image of future destruction, they paradoxically provide the assurance of security against total destruction in the faestnung of God. The season of winter may bind man to his mortality, but even winter is controlled by God:

> Þrymmas syndan Cristes myccle,
> wyrd byþ swiþost. Winter byþ cealdost,
> lencten hrimigost he byþ lengest ceald,
> sumor sunwlitegost, swegel byþ hatost,
> haerfest hredeadegost, haeleþum bringeþ
> geres waestmas, þa þe him god sendeþ.
>
> (Exeter, 4-9)

> The powers of Christ are great,
> fate is strongest. Winter is coldest,
> spring frostiest, it remains cold longest,
> summer is most sunny, the summer is hottest,
> autumn is most triumphant, it brings to men
> the fruits of the year, which God sends to them.

As God unbinds the fetters of winter, so does he unbind the fetters of man's mortality, and a reliance on God will subsequently allow total spiritual release from one's fate on earth. The Wanderer does not attain to total spiritual awareness of God, and, as Dr. Lee affirms, he does not attain spiritual salvation. Instead, he remains a static figure of frozen confinement,[21] on the earth, fated to endure the remainder of his days as a lonely exile. However, the knowledge that he has finally obtained by his vision of the mutability of mankind as well as the world has enabled him to find the comfort which will alleviate his present misery, and grant him answers to man's mutable nature. The poem is not fatalistic, for although the Wanderer only gains the first step in the awareness of the changelessness and security of God, he at least has directed his sight heavenwards.

The use of winter imagery in The Wanderer has provided the poet with a medium through which all thoughts and feelings of the protagonist could be revealed. The inability to escape the reality of winter's cold leads the protagonist through a series of visionary settings to arrive at an acceptance of his own fate in life. As a cause for physical discomfort, the

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[21]Dr. Lee, p. 137.

winter setting is also a foil for his frozen thoughts, and his responses to his plight are reflected by the changes in setting. However, as an exile who has been unable to find the path through which he might escape his plight, his seasonal imagery leads him into a realization of the greater mutability of all the world. Comfort is thus paradoxically obtained when he arrives at an awareness of the changelessness of God by the changing nature of the world. The knowledge of changelessness beyond those aspects of temporal change leads into a further implied realization that temporal borders can be broken, and man can find spiritual happiness in the heavenly home of God. Winter, as a metaphor for temporal bondage, is now perceived as that agent which enables man to move into a greater spiritual awareness of the next world.

CHAPTER THREE

The Seafarer: Towards a Means of Release

The present study has been leading towards an examination of the elegy, The Seafarer,[1] which has been considered as the companion-piece of The Wanderer. The concepts of change and mutability are again emphasized in this elegy, but there is an added level of interpretation suggesting that The Seafarer is the final stage in the sequence of the Christian desire to escape the fetters of temporality. Miss Whitelock's literal interpretation of the Seafarer as a voluntary exile may be to some extent substantiated by the peregrinus theme within the first half of the poem.[2] But, although we need not rule out the literal aspect of the poem as does G.V. Smithers,[3] there is no doubt that a reading of the poem must take into account its greater universal meaning. Similarly, the use of winter imagery to define temporal boundaries is expanded in scope to include an interpretation of winter as an agent of

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[1]The poem is from The Exeter Book, ASPR III, ed. G.P. Krapp and E.K. Dobbie. The translation of lines are attributed to I.L. Gordon's edition of The Seafarer, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966).

[2]"The Interpretation of The Seafarer", in Chadwick Memorial Studies, The Early Cultures of North-West Europe, eds. Sir Cyril Fox and B. Dickins, (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), pp. 261-72.

[3]"The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer", Medium Aevum 26 (1957), p. 3. Cf. The Seafarer: An Interpretation, ed. O.S. Anderson, (Lund, 1937, repro. 1970).

God, working out God's divine plan for mankind. Through the unique usage of winter imagery, the poem's symbolic and allegorical meanings are developed and refined.

In traditional elegiac terminology, the poem opens with the Seafarer's sođgied ('true story',1), in which he bemoans his hard lot as a sea-farer. Emphasizing his bitre breost-ceare ('bitter breast-care',4) he tells his audience that ever since he was winemaegum bidroren ('deprived of loved ones',16), he has earfođhwile oft þrowade ('often endured hardships,3) while on wraeccan lastum ('tracks of exile',15). In the previous elegies, winter has been used primarily as a mirror for the emotional dilemma of the protagonist, but the Seafarer's immediate cause for misery is the onslaught of winter's storms, rather than any deprivation of society:

> Calde geþrungen
> waeron mine fet, forste gebunden
> caldum clommum, þaer þe ceare seofedun
> hat ymb heortan; hunger innan slat
> merewerges mod. Þaet se mon ne wat
> þe him on foldan faegrost limpeđ,
> hu ic earmcearig iscealdne sae
> winter wunade wraeccan lastum,
> winemaegum bidroren,
> bihongen hrimgecelum; haegl scurum fleag.
> (ll. 8b-17)

> Pressed by the cold,
> were my feet, bound by frost,
> in cold fetters where the cares sighed,
> hot about the heart; hunger tore through
> the sea-weary spirit. The man who lives
> on land rejoicing in his lot
> does not know how I sorrowfully on the ice-cold sea
> remained in winter on the tracks of exile,
> deprived of loved ones,
> hung about with icicles; the hail flying in showers.

The poet's concentration upon the visual aspects of a 'realistic' winter leads to the belief that the only grief that the Seafarer is feeling is that misery from the cold, ice, wind, hail and frost of winter. He is even denied the stability of the ground beneath his feet, for he is on a boat which is repeatedly tossed by the waves. Physically insecure, cold, hungry, and on the alert for any possibility of danger to the boat during his nihtwaco, he is deprived of any comfort or peace of mind during his long vigil. The image that is evoked by the poet, then, is that of a man who is physically and psychologically bound to an intolerable situation. Deprived of human companionship, he must lament within his own heart and, like the Wanderer, is forced to 'bind fast' his thoughts and troubled cares.

The isolation of the Seafarer becomes apparent throughout his sorgied, which is further augmented by the emphasis on the sea-birds as his travelling companions.[4] As in The Wanderer, the presence of the birds emphasizes the alien nature of the environment in addition to the communal deprivation by the substitution of the ylfete song (19). The language of men and sea-birds is thus contrasted by the inability of the birds to afford man any 'wise sayings' (Wand. 55). In place of the sounds of men, the Seafarer is subsequently forced to listen to the roaring of waves (18-19), and the lonely cries of the sea-birds. The present reality of

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[4] I.L. Gordon, The Seafarer, p. 35-6. Cf. Miss Whitelock, p. 263.

ice waves and sea-birds preening their feathers is the Seafarer's only existent reality in his present state of exile, which deprives him of warmth and the ceremonial aspects of the comitatus.[5]

As cause for the misery of the Seafarer, the wintry setting is also a foil against which the emotional deprivation of the exile is reflected. Although the audience may understand the literal hardships imposed upon man by the wintry seas, there is general agreement that, as E.G. Stanley asserts, the elegy is "an imagined situation, invented to give force to the doctrine which forms the end of the poem and its purpose."[6] Moreover, there is an obvious parallel between the situation and the emotional deprivation of the Seafarer; the sea, hail and ice are concrete symbols of his bitre breostceare, which give way to the poet's cold-hot oxymoron. The physical cold depicts the Seafarer's isolation-cum-deprivation beyond the world of men, and the replacement of human sounds by the mournful cries of the birds indicates the transiency of human happiness. The poet's careful dilineation of details is not for the sake of literal reality, but rather to point out the bonds between the physical situation and the spiritual condition of the Seafarer. Reality and symbol are thus combined by the poet in an effort to create a scene of loneliness and deprivation, resulting from subjection to the

[5]Cf. Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of Exile", pp. 352-62.

[6]"Old English Poetic Diction", p. 492.

bonds of temporal change.

While the Seafarer is bemoaning his unhappy plight on the sea, he gazes back upon the land which is just within sight, and ponders upon the lack of discomfort there. The Seafarer feels hunger, cold, the rocking of the ship under his feet, the misery of night-watch, the loss of communal delights and hardship without respite; the land-dwellers do not. Such ease of the land-dwellers is enviously noted in three specific passages throughout the first half of the poem. The first passage (12-15) indicates the ignorance of the land-dwellers of all hardship; the second passage (25b-6) indicates their inability to help the Seafarer with words of comfort; and the third passage (27-30) indicates their unawareness of the hardship which the Seafarer must undergo. While the sea is a symbol of the Seafarer's bitre breost-ceare, the shore subsequently signifies the joys from which the protagonist is exiled. Idealistically imagining the stylized comforts of those who live on the land, the Seafarer believes that they have absolutely no knowledge of what he is enduring on the sea. The third passage is worthy of notice, for it establishes the image of the ideal heroic warrior who has been granted all the honours of his comitatus:

> For þon him gelyfeð lyt, se þe ah lifes wyn
> gebiden in burgum, bealosiþa hwon,
> wlonc ond wingal, hu ic werig oft
> in brimlade bidan sceolde.
>
> Indeed, he who possesses the joys of life
> living in his castle, proud and wine-flushed,
> little knows how I often wearily, wandering fraught with
> hardship, came to dwell on the sea.

The land is a realm of peace and plenty and its inhabitants are happy and comfortable. Because the mode of existence is so different, a separate state of mind is involved depending on the location of the individual. At sea, man is lonely, depressed and miserable; on land, no winter storms come to torment him with hardships. The land, then, becomes an image of total peace and prosperity because winter is non-existent, winter, therefore, is representative of all unhappiness, while the absence of winter denotes a return to happiness.

The description of the inhabitants as wlonc ond wingal is important, for it is illustrative of the members of the comitatus at the height of prosperity and glory. The phrase also draws attention to the immersion of the warrior in the pleasures and values of his comitatus, without which life has little meaning. There is obviously no intended disapprobation here[7] but the following lines of the elegy appear to mar the spring-time beauty of heroic joy:

> nap nihtscua, norpan sniwde,
> hrim hrusan bond, haegl feol on eorpan,
> corna caldast.
>
> (31-33a)

> the night grew dark in shade, it snowed from the north,
> frost bound the earth, hail fell on the ground,
> coldest of corn.

This reference to the falling of hail and snow on eorpan denotes the coming of winter to the land and hence symbolizes

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[7] I.L. Gordon, p.

that the final stage of man comes to the land. Once a realm of peaceful tranquility where no winter could affect man, the land is now encompassed by hail, frost and the darkness of night. (Cf. The Wand., ll. 101-105). The memories of a joyful past and the reality of a happy present are now subtly changed by the approach of winter. The land subsequently takes on the symbolic characteristics of the frozen sea, and both are representative of the mutability and inevitability of loss in this world.

The great list of hardships endured by the Seafarer on the sea is not very encouraging for one who wishes to venture out further upon the high seas. However, even with the knowledge of hardship,

> for þon cnyssað nu
> heortan geþohtas þæt ic hean streamas,
> sealt-yþa gelac sylf cunnige --
> monaðmodes lust maela gehwylce
> ferð to feran, þæt ic feor heonan
> elþeodigra eard gesece.
>
> (33b-38)

> and so the thoughts
> of my heart impel me to experience the high seas
> the salt-waves' tumult, for myself;
> my heart incessantly calls upon my spirit
> to set forth in search of other lands,
> far away from here, the homeland of strangers.

There is an unexpected shift from a perception of the sea as a symbol of misery and hardship to the sea as symbolizing a path of hope for the Seafarer. The expansion of his state of mind henceforth leads to return to a discussion of the land-dweller; but this time the emphasis is on the quality of life rather than on concrete details. The joys of the land-

dweller are no longer perceived as attractive for there is a longing within the Seafarer to reach these other lands, a longing which is not apparent in his earlier references to the comforts of the land-dweller. The above passage indicates an important step in the development of the poem, for the Seafarer moves beyond his own personal lament on physical pain, to an emphasis on spiritual well-being. Seasonal imagery is discarded here, and the Seafarer is thus able to realize a universal truth--that all men face hardships at sea. The line,

> ac a hafaþ longunge se þe on lagu fundaþ (l. 47)

but he has longing who is eager to sail out on the sea may also be translated as "but he has distress who is eager to sail out on the sea".[8] Here the scope of the Seafarer has been enlarged to include the misery or longing of all men who have endured hardship on the sea.

The following passage on the reviving nature of the land elicits a response from the Seafarer:

> bearwas blostmum nimaþ, byrig fægriaþ,
> wongas wlitigaþ, woruld onetteþ;
> ealle þa gemoniaþ modes fusne
> sefan to sepe þam þe swa penceþ
> on flodwegas feor gewitan.
> (48-52)

> the groves adorn themselves with flowers, the cities grow fair,
> the fields are beautified, as the world moves into new life;
> all of these things urge the eager mind
> and heart to journey,
> to go far away over the flood-ways.

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[8] I.L. Gordon, p. 39.

The movement of winter to spring now stirs the soul of the Seafarer to fly ofer holm gelagu ('over the ocean',64), and in a moment of spiritual lucidity, the Seafarer realizes that the Dryhtnes dreamas ('joys of the Lord',65) are far more real than the deade and laene ('dead' and 'transitory',66) life on earth.[9]

The winter imagery in the first section of the poem has led to an awareness of the mutability of life as opposed to the greater eternal joy in heaven. The falling of snow on eorþan moves the Seafarer to an awareness that both land and sea are as one, with the land taking on the same 'negative' qualities as the sea. The realization that there is no hope in the land elicits the inevitable reaction of the Seafarer to move as far away from the changing land as possible in an effort to achieve salvation in the elþeodigra eard of God. The sea, as a place of hardship, now becomes the symbolic path towards salvation, and the decision to move across the ocean is evoked by the pictorial description of the revival of nature on the land. Because the spring season is but a brief image of the greater joys of heaven, the Seafarer moves towards the journey which will remove him forever from the bonds of his temporality and enable him to achieve everlasting comfort in the ham of God.

The rejection of worldly prosperity and an ascetic call

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[9]For a perceptive analysis of ll. 58-66a, see "The Flight of the Exiled Soul to Its Fatherland", ed. F.N.M. Diekstra, Neophil., 55-56 (1971-72), pp. 433-45.

to hardship and exile are the essential corrolaries of the theme of the peregrinus. Such a tradition produced in Britain an attitude towards life which James Wilson describes as a "willing acceptance of hardship in exchange for the consoling hope of eternal reward."[10] This attitude is illustrated in the writings of St. Columba of Iona. In his Book of Lismore he asserts:

> now the goodcounsel which God enjoined here on the father of the faithful, to wit, on Abraham, it is incumbent on his sons after him, namely on all the faithful, to fulfill it, that is, to leave their country and their land, their wealth and their worldly delights for the sake of the Lord of the Elements and to go into perfect pilgrimage in imitation of Him. 10a

Miss Whitelock's literal interpretation of the Seafarer as a voluntary exile is given substance by the number of historical pilgrimages recorded in early writings, "from kings like Aethelwulf and Cnut downwards, who journeyed abroad for this purpose."[11] Such a pilgrimage was to end in spiritual fulfillment for the individual whether one visited a shrine, helped the poor, or simply removed oneself from society. But good intent must accompany the act whatever it is, for, as St. Columba affirms,

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[10] Christian Theology and Old English Poetry, (Netherlands: Mouton and Hague, 1974), p. 216. Cf. Smithers, 1957, p. 149. For a discussion on voluntary exile see Michael D. Cherniss, Ingeld and Christ, pp. 210-17.

[10a] This translation of St. Columba's speech is quoted from P.L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966), p. 30.

[11] Miss Whitelock, op. cit., p. 271.

> it little profiteth anyone to leave his fatherland unless he do good away from it....As if what God would clearly say to Abraham were: "Shun both in body and soul henceforward in thy pilgrimage the sins and vices of the country wherein thou hast hitherto dwelt in the body... for it is not by path of feet nor by motion of body that man draws nigh to God: but it is by practising virtues and good deeds. 12

The movement into hardship is thus a serious attempt to gain eternal life by proving one's total love and faith in God to the point of forsaking all worldly goods. Augustine's definition of all men as "mere sojourners in this world" who "profess the hope of a home in heaven"[14] consequently illustrates that the love of earthly goods must not hinder man from reaching his true goal in heaven.

Although Miss Whitelock dismisses the allegorical possibilities of The Seafarer and E.G. Stanley argues that it is "neither realism nor allegory",[15] we must agree with Smithers and O.S. Anderson that the theme of exile cannot be examined on a single plateau of thought.[16] Furthermore, the poet's concern with death and the longing for the elþeodigra eard places the poem in the allegorical mode of interpretation, especially with the Seafarer's reference to God and the desire to find his way across the high seas (of life) into God's kingdom. Greenfield's comment on the dual nature of exile which is, as he says, "enforced and desired",[17] and his in-

[12] P.L. Henry, p. 31.

[14] City of God, Bk. I: ch. 9.

[15] "Old English Poetic Diction", p. 492.

[16] "On the Meaning of The Wanderer and The Seafarer", p. 151-2.

sight into the play on words such as dryht, dream and dugeðum[18] cannot be ignored even if the literal possibilities are obvious.

An examination of the winter imagery will illustrate the extent to which an allegorical reading may be established in the poem. The desire

> elþeodigra þaet ic feor heonan
> eard gesece, (37-8)

becomes a necessity when the Seafarer realizes

> for þon me hatran sind
> Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade life
> laene on londe.

The insight into the transiency of life on londe which is implied by the encroachment of winter onto an idealized land of beauty prompts a further insight into all worldly grandeur which must inevitably come to an end. The Seafarer, in his desire to attain spiritual salvation, must place his faith in God,

> þaer is lif gelong in lufan Dryhtnes. (121)

the source of life is there in the love of God. The wintry onslaught on the sea is undesirable when compared to the apparent happiness of the land, but, as E.G. Stanley asserts, "factually or figuratively, it is miseries such as

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[17] A Critical History of Old English Literature, p. 220.

[18] Cf. St. Augustine, City of God, Bk. 22; ch. 22. Cf. Bede, De Temporibus Liber, "De Mundi Aetibus" in Patrologia Latina 90, 228.

these that a man must flee to, if he sees no lasting hope in this dead world of worldly joys."[19] The emphasis, then, is on the unfortunate fate of all men in the world by

adl oþþe yldo oþþe ecghete. (70)

sickness or old age or the sword-edge.

These invevitably take their toll on man, and he must put his faith in God if he wishes to escape the fetters of his mortality and enter into the eternal kingdom of God. The concept of contemptus mundi, 'the knowledge of God', and the awareness that another eard exists beyond time or place leads to a recognition of its more universal meaning. The stock figure of the exile is therefore associated with the first man, Adam, who is forced from his true ham by his error in judgement.

The pilgrimage is subsequently connected with the journey over the seas (of life) in the eternal quest of man to reach his spiritual home. S.B. Greenfield's discussion of the theme of exile as a recurrent idea in religious literature moves him to the statement that

> the most notable advantage of a highly stylized poetry is that the very traditions it employs lend extra-emotional meaning to individual works and phrases. That is, the association with other contexts using a similar formula will inevitably colour a particular instance of a formula so that a whole host of overtones springs into action to support the aesthetic response. 20

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[19] Op. cit., p. 493.

[20] "Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Epic Poetry", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 62 (1963), p. 205.

The associative theme of exile may be traced initially to the fall of Lucifer and subsequently to Adam and Eve. The Old English version of Genesis,[21] which is divided into two main sections, develops the story of the first rebels in heaven and depicts the processes of the evil mind when Adam and Eve succumb to the tantalizing words of the Satanic tempter.

As Genesis opens the vision of perfect harmony in heaven is marred when Lucifer proves faithless to his eternal Dryht:

> noldan dreogan leng
> heora selfra raed, ac hie of siblufan
> godes ahwurfon.
>
> (ll. 23-25)

> no longer would they fulfil
> their own counsel, but they from the peaceful
> love of God turned aside.

Lucifer's fall from heaven (ll. 292-321) appears to influence the creation of the world, for the earthly figures are to fill the void in the celestial choirs by singing His praises with all of creation. But their deception by the Satanic emissary is soon followed by their expulsion from Paradise by God who says,

> þu scealt oðerne eðel secean,
> wynleasran wic, and on wraec hweorfan
> nacod niedwadla neorxnawanges
> dugeðum bedaeled.
>
> (ll. 927-30)

> you shall now seek another home,
> joyless dwelling place, and in exile journey

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[21] All references to Genesis are to The Junius Manuscript, located in ASPR I, ed. G.P. Krapp, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 156f.

naked and in want from paradise,
deprived of good things.

Their home is not to be filled with the eternal beauty of Paradise, and they are forced to oðerne eðel secean, but they are not rices leas (372) like Satan and his followers. Their desire to find reinstatement in God's kingdom and re-enter the Garden is thus not as impossible as Lucifer's situation, for the paths of exile inevitably lead back to God. Man's salvation is also achieved by the fact that he did not sin knowingly. As Alcuin asserts in his Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesis,

> the angel was the author of his own crime, but man was deceived by a trick. Also, the greater the angel's glory the greater was his ruin: but the more fragile was the nature of man, so much the easier was his pardon. 22

Although Adam's speech of affirmed loyalty to God arrives too late to prevent him from expulsion, his speech is important because in it he defines the role of man as an exile who cannot find repose until he comes ham:

gif ic waldendes willan cuðe
hwaet ic his to hearmsceare habban sceolde,
ne gesawe þu no sniomor, þeah me on sae wadan
hete heofones god heonone nu þa,
on flod faran, naere he firnum þaes deop,
merestream þaes micel, þaet his o min mod getweode,
ac ic to þam grunde genge, gif ic godes meahte
willan gewyrcean.

(l. 828-35)

if I knew the will of the Lord
what punishment I was to have from Him,
never would you see a quicker response, though the

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[22] Patrologia Latina, III. Translated by J.M. Evans in "Genesis B and Its Background", RES, New Series, 14, 53(1963), p. 2.

> God of Heaven should bid me hence to go on the sea,
> travel on the flood, it would not be so deep for men,
> the ocean so great, that my mind would hesitate at it,
> but I would go to the depths, if I could work
> God's will.

Such an affirmation of loyalty could only come with the awareness of expulsion, but it is interesting that his heroic gesture is one of sea-crossing. Even more interesting is his foresight concerning the climatic changes in the world which may have been elicited by his fall:

> forþon he unc self bebead
> þaet wit unc wite warian sceolden,
> hearme maestne. Nu slit me hunger and þurst
> bitre on breostum, þaes wit begra aer
> waeron orsorge on ealle tid.
> Hu sculon wit nu libban odde on þus lande wesan,
> gif her wind cymð, westan odde eastan,
> suddan odde nordan? Gesweorc up faereð,
> cymeð haegles scur hefone getenge,
> faereð forst on gemang, se byð fyrnum ceald.
> (800b-09)

> Wherefore He Himself bade us
> that we should guard ourselves against torment,
> greatest of harms. Now hunger and thirst tear
> bitterly through my breast, by both of which we
> at all times were before untroubled.
> How shall we now live or dwell in this land,
> if a wind comes here from the west or the east,
> south or the north? Darkness rises up,
> a shower of hail comes from the heavens,
> frost advances in the midst, which is excessively cold.

By implication, the presence of winter, which was unknown to the first inhabitants of Paradise, signifies all misery and hardship (Cf. Wand. 101-5). The world of creation thus represents man's fallen nature by its own physical format, and weather is the unfortunate result of Adam's failure to maintain the Word of God.

The binding of man by his temporal nature leads to

further misery and hardship. The Tree from whence the 'apple' was picked

> se baer bitres fela. Sceolde bu witan
> ylda aeghwilc yfles and godes
> gewand on þisse worulde. Sceolde on wite a
> mid swate and mid sorgum siddan libban,
> swa hwa swa gebyrgde þaes on þam beame geweox.
> Sceolde hine yldo benian ellendaeda,
> dreamas and dryhtscipes, and him beon dead scyred.
> (Gen. 479-85)

> bore much bitterness. Each of men should know
> both good and evil in
> this world. Man should live in blood and sorrow,
> whoever tasted what grew on that tree.
> He should be deprived of great deeds by old age,
> of joys and power and death must be his destiny.

Man has fallen from eternal joy into a mutable and changing world, and he, like creation, must grow old and die. Although his physical fate is sealed, he is granted salvation by Christ's death and subsequent movement into heaven. Such an act makes it possible for man to regain salvation in heaven. But first his loyalty must be tested, and the bitter storms of winter, as representative of all human hardship, must be endured and even contended with if man is to prove his spiritual worth.

In The Seafarer the protagonist's refusal to remain on land echoes Adam's longing to venture on the seas in order to find his true home. The Seafarer does not attempt to find release from his misery through the channel of memory, nor does he retreat at any time to the land. The Seafarer's awareness of this deade lif also indicates that his initial complaints are hardly to be taken literally, for his exile is

voluntarily undertaken in order to prove his heroic worth. The snow which falls on eorþan is thus evocative of the mutability of the world, for even the joys of the land are now perceived as mutable and subject to change. His subsequent acceptance of the hardships which winter imposes upon him is the method by which he will gain salvation.

The Seafarer's immersion into the storm of winter is symbolic of his acceptance of the punishment which has afflicted the sinful man though the ages. In King Alfred's translation of the History of Orosius there is an episode which coincides with the biblical version of Moses and the Egyptians. Before leading his people out of Egypt, Moses performs many 'wonders' in an effort to illustrate God's power over all men:

> the seventh was, that there came hail, which was mingled with fire, so that it slew both the men and the cattle... the ninth was, that there came hail, and so great a darkness both by day and night, and so thick that it might be felt. 23

As a punishment for sinners, the rain, hail, intense cold and bitter winds afflict those who are filled with sin, and it is not surprising that Satan must suffer such torments without surcease:

> þaer haebbaþ heo on aefyn ungemet lange,
> ealra feonda gehwilc, fyr edneowe,
> þonne cymð on uhtan easterne wind,
> forst fyrnum cald.
>
> (Gen. 313-17)

> there they have in the evening immeasurably long
> all of the fiends feel fire newly-kindled;

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[23] The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great, ed. J. Bosworth, vol. II, (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1858), I:vii, p. 68.

then at dawn comes a wind from the east
frost exceeding chill.

Enduring punishment for his ofermod, Satan, in Christ and Satan[24] must be bound in the caldan grund, where hat and cold hwilum mencgad (131) to suffer for all time.[25] The punishment for disloyalty, therefore, is the hardship of hail and intense cold, but mankind, unlike Satan, has a choice: to repent by using those same punitive devices as a scourge for spiritual error. The Seafarer's deliberate participation in these tortures serves to effect his salvation and strengthen his soul through physical mortification.

The winter imagery, which has been used in the previous elegies of this thesis, has been an active agent in revealing the mutability of the world. The only 'real' season left to man in the postlapsarian world[26] is that of winter, from which escape is impossible. Representative of the final stage of man's life, the winter season is symbolic of the endedaeg of man, for it signifies all the aspects of man's mortality which may afflict him--sickness, old age, feud, and death. But illustrating the endedaeg of mankind is not the only knowledge to which the Seafarer attains; his awareness of the elpeodigra eard illustrates that he is able

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[24]All lines are taken from The Junius Manuscript, Records I.

[25]The Anglo-Saxon Poets on the Judgement Day, ed. Waller Deering, (Halle: Ehrhardt Karras, 1908), pp. 48-60.

[26]The terminology is from The Guest-Hall of Eden, ed. Dr. Lee, p. 140.

to see beyond the mutability of this world and into the changelessness of the next. The ensuing step is to find that path which will lead him back to his heavenly ham of God.

The use of the winter elements as a scourge is noted by Bede in his Historia Ecclesiastica. Bede tells the stories of Furseus and Dryhthelm, the first a holy man who returns from a vision of hell, with the actual scar tissue of a burn he received there,[27] and the second a monk who returns to life after dying of sickness and endures midwinter baths in an ice-cold river. As Dryhthelm said upon his return to life, "I have known it colder" and from this day forth,

> he tamed his aged body by daily fasting, inspired by an insatiable longing for the blessings of heaven, and by his words and life he helped many people to salvation. (p. 294)

Man's ability to attain spiritual salvation transforms the punitive aspects of winter frost and hail into purgative agents of God. He will not have to suffer eternal torment if he uses those same wintry torments as a source of mortification, gladly suffering physical torment for eternal salvation. The Seafarer has already arrived at the knowledge of mutability which echoes the sentiments of Isaiah (40:6-8):

> All flesh is grass,
> and all its beauty is like the flower
> of the field.
> The grass withers, the flower fades
> when the breath of the Lord blows
> upon it;
> surely the people is grass.
> The grass withers, the flowers fade;
> but the word of our God will stand forever.

[27] Book 3: ch. 19.

The wintry landscape is reminiscent of man's fallen condition, but the acceptance and capability for enduring such hardships will effect release from the bondage of temporality and the changing fortunes of this world. Man is unable to forget his mortal sin against God, and he is thus encouraged by God to rectify his mistake by showing Job-like faith and fortitude in all the spiritual tests of temptation and punishment.

As a punitive agent of God, winter binds man by an endless number of hardships which lead ultimately to his death. A knowledge of true salvation changes the punishment into a scourge by which all unhealthy sin may be eradicated. The concept of frost and hail as such a form of mortification is clearly explained by St. Jerome in his Homily 57:[28]

> 'Frost he strews like ashes.' The Latin word used here, 'nebulam', is a very poor translation, for the Greek word homixle follows the concept in the Hebrew text that is expressed by the Latin 'Pruinam', hence the reading: "Frost he strews like ashes." He teaches us and makes us a garment as white as snow and when He has clothed us in His own garment, then He gives us nourishment. 'Frost he strews like ashes.' Mark: 'like ashes'. Do you want to be clean? Do penance. 'For I eat ashes like bread and mingle my drink with tears. Do you see now how He strews his Frost like ashes? Wonderful mutation of things! From ashes snow is made; from repentance cleanliness is effected. (57, p. 414)

In The Seafarer those who are wlonc and wingal will suffer for their pride in Hell, for as St. Jerome asserts, such cold which is from within the being is symbolic of the pride which first elicited the division in heaven:

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[28] The Homilies of St. Jerome, vol. I., translated by Sister Marie M. Liguori Ewald, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), pp. 408-415.

> To me...it seems that the words: 'Before his cold who shall stand?' refer to God. Of God, I say, 'Who is able to endure his cold?' What torments does Holy Writ tell us are prepared for sinners? Nothing is hotter than hell-fire, yet gehenna itself is icy. Gehenna consists of fire, but if anyone grows cold enough, he is sent into the fire of Hell....If anyone's soul should grow cold, as cold as the north wind; if the warmth of charity should ever grow cold in our heart; if one should sin, should chill, should die--attending very carefully to what I am saying--if one should grow cold, if one should die, God is a consuming fire....May the Lord grant that our frigidity, too, may thaw, that this crystal of ice be dissolved and melt. (57, p. 414)

The wintry-cold of man's inner being is thus a different aspect of the cold of the Lord, for He will send down His own haelepum to defeat those who turn away from His word. The cold that He sends down, is thus quite different in essence, for such cold is associated with the warmth of his mercy, whereas the cold of pride will be met by the cold of His judgement.

The Seafarer, by undertaking the forms of mortification during his earthly days, is granted eternal salvation. This does not make his task of enduring these torments easier. His longunge may still be defined as 'distress', because hardship is a condition to be avoided rather than continually sought. His perception of the snow on eorpan and his awareness of the mutability of the world, however, resolve in his mind any doubts that he might have had while in sight of the land. The wintry elements may be perceived as purgative symbols of God, for while they appear to harm the Seafarer, their purgative and redemptive powers move him closer to his heavenly ham. The aspects of frozen rain and ice of winter are consequently baptismal, for they allow a conversion within the

Seafarer from a distraught and spiritually ignorant man who cannot find the reasons as to why his fate is one of exile, to a man aware of his place in the world of men, and the world of God. In understanding the baptismal aspects, we may refer to Dr. Lee, who says,

> in Christian symbolism water has always, of course, existed in a double aspect: on the one hand, as a principle of destruction and instrument of judgement, it destroys the sinful world, as well as symbolizing the primordial chaos; on the other hand, it represents the principle of creation itself, the element from which all life emerges. 29

The Seafarer's denial of memory and dream to which the Wanderer still adheres illustrates his ability to use the hardships of winter to further his sight of the heavenly world and define the path upon which he must move. The transformation of winter as temporal bondage to the central means of release may be subsequently noted in the letter of Ignatius to Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna:

> the season bids you to reach unto God, just as pilots look for the winds and the storm-tossed sailor seeks the harbour...The prize is immortality and eternal life--of this you are certain. 30

The path which will indicate the way to heaven is revealed to the Seafarer by his total adherence to faith in God. Whether or not he succeeds is not known, for the journey of life (and death) is an experience not to be shared by another. What is important is that though the Seafarer is filled with trepidation concerning the hardships of life, he

[29] Guest-Hall of Eden, p. 26.

[30] Translated by Kirsopp Lake, ed., The Apostolic Fathers, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), I. p. 172ff.

is certain that salvation can, and will, be attained. As a member of the 'city of God' his salvation is affirmed by Augustine, who says that,

> on that day we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise--for this is to be the end without the end of all our living, that Kingdom without end, the real goal of our present life. (City of God, 22:30)

The emphasis on hu we þider cumen ('how we thither come',118) is the final stage of the Seafarer's spiritual development, as he seeks the path upon which he can move into the lands beyond.

In The Seafarer, the use of winter imagery effectively delineates the similarities and differences between the land and the sea, the two symbols between which the Seafarer moves. The ambiguous nature of land and sea as represented by the presence of the winter season, or lack thereof, leads to a development of the concepts of mutability, change, and eternity. The active participation of the Seafarer in winter's elements accords him the method by which salvation can be achieved; at the same time they indicate that his own torments on earth are not without end. There is no winter in heaven, as illustrated in The Phoenix and numerous other writings, but before entering into eternal spring, one must prove his worth by enduring his 'winter' on earth. Winter is thus representative of the time of old age, hardship, misery and deprivation, but while its nature metaphorically binds man to his fate, it paradoxically allows him to effect his own release into eternity. The literal presentation of the wintry

details in the first half of the poem thus establishes the pattern for the allegorical perspective towards land and sea, exile and return, which culminates in the Seafarer's understanding of his place in the world in the final lines of the poem.

CONCLUSION

In Old English elegiac poetry the poets are ultimately concerned with the presentation of figures who think and speak within a tradition familiar to all, for what is novel cannot inspire common assent. The reasons for the individual protagonist's dilemma may differ, but the essential quality of universality within these dilemmas allows the central themes and concepts concerning man and his world to be developed along certain interpretative lines.

The elegies that have been examined in this thesis are representative of the pattern of regret for the past and hope for a better future, a theme that runs throughout the Old English poetic canon. An agreed view of landscape and man's behavior makes possible the association between man and the seasonal cycle of the year which manifests that pattern of loss and joy, while the figurative use of winter's natural aspects to denote human feelings provides the poet with the means by which universality is achieved. The recurrent pattern of the seasonal rotation also enables the poet to affirm the return of joy in the unhappy man's life, and allows him to base his discussion around the ultimate value of such misery which has temporarily afflicted man.

Throughout the elegies there is the constant hope that _þaes ofereode, þisses swa maeg_ ('that passed, so may this').

The elegiac figure who is afflicted with misery and hardship attempts to find a release from the bonds which have denied him the happiness of the comitatus. In all the elegies, the comitatus is the symbol of the happiness and tranquility in man's world, for it protects the member from the forces of chaos which seek his destruction. The seasonal imagery associated with the comitatus is that of spring, for both bespeak happiness, growth, prosperity and pleasure. The deprivation of the comitatus is no less than a deprivation of an entire way of life. Such absence of all good things is subsequently illustrated by the approach of winter.

In elegiac poetry, the winter environment to which the unhappy figure is consigned is that of a frozen, alien land which appears dormant and inactive. To the heroic man whose life revolves around activity, such dormancy is undesirable. Scandinavian sources have illustrated the necessity for action, for it is the behavior of man on this earth which will give him the dom so vital in the maintenance of his name and reputation in the minds of other men. The inability to effect this heroic behavior through action is no less than spiritual bondage, for it deprives man of the consolation of eternal life. Winter, as a period of inactivity is thus associated with the greater aspects of hardship in the forms of old age, sickness, feud, destruction and death, all of which erase man from his world and deprive him of positive action.

The desire to escape from the time of inactivity is

uppermost in the exiled man's mind. In Deor, the central theme of sorrow is permeated by an intense longing to find release from the bonds which surround the exile. Weland achieves his release through physical action in the form of vengeance upon those by whom he has been hurt. The other characters in Deor, including the main protagonist, rely on the changing nature of the ways of the world, which is affected by time. Time, then, is the main factor which will move man beyond his misery and into his own season of happiness. In The Finn Episode time is also a major factor in resolving Hengest's dilemma, for with the arrival of spring after a bitter winter of bondage and indecision, his actions enable him to achieve total physical and spiritual reinstatement into his comitatus.

Although the protagonists in Deor and The Finn Episode achieve their release from misery, in The Ruin there is a greater awareness that time may be destructive as well as creative, since the happiness of the members of the comitatus is also a transitory and transient aspect of the changing world. The existent reality is depicted by a permanent return of winter against which man cannot contend. He is, to quote J.R.R. Tolkien, "doomed to die", and no amount of human endeavour can change the inevitability of his fate. The elegy is to a certain extent fatalistic, but it provides the means by which greater wisdom can be obtained--if not by those who have died, then at least by those who are still living. Man's

longing to find permanence in a changing and mutable world must lead to a direction of the spiritual self towards God, who is without change and therefore beyond the binding force of temporality.

The Wanderer concerns the plight of a frozen man who is trapped in a wintry wasteland of mutability and his efforts to escape from his present reality. The Wanderer moves through several channels of memory, dream and hallucination, but there is no escape from the present time. His awareness of the essence of man, which is that of change, leads him towards a spiritual acknowledgement of God's own changelessness. The faestnung which man has attempted to resurrect is but a mere shadow of the greater faestnung of God. Although the Wanderer still remains trapped by memory, the winter setting has enabled him to redirect his sight to that which is eternal.

The next step in the spiritual development of man is to find the path which will lead him into this greater faestnung of God. The wintry landscape and seascape in The Seafarer illustrate without a doubt that both man and the world are subject to decay and change. Because there is no hope for man in this world, he must move across the sea of life and death in order to find his true ham. As a man who is already possessed with the knowledge of the transiency of the world, the Seafarer depicts his spiritual worth to God by his acceptance of and participation in those very hardships which have previously sought his destruction. The use of those wintry

elements of wind, hail and snow results in the permanent loosening of the bonds of temporality. His undertaking of such forms of mortification affirm that he will find relief in the eternal kingdom of God; we leave him, then, with the decision to cross the hean seas in an effort to regain the elpeodigra eard from which the first man, Adam, was expelled.

Winter, as cause and mirror for hardship, is also a means by which man can achieve salvation. The knowledge of where his true ham lies transforms the punitive nature of winter into an agent of God which punishes the wicked, yet redeems the good. Winter, as a final form of mortification, is that same means by which man can be tested and baptized into the kingdom of God. Winter, as a metaphor for those bonds which have led to man's misery, is thus, paradoxically, the sole means by which he can attain his heavenly goal for which he has always longunge.

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