# Interactions of Thought and Action

# in

# Old English Poetry

**by**

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For my father.

Η Ιθάκη σ' έδωσε τ' ωραίο ταξείδι.
Χωρίς αυτήν δεν θάβγαινες στον δρόμο.
Άλλα δεν έχει να σε δώσει πια.

Κ. Π. Καβάφης

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A note on editions used:

***The Battle of Maldon***
All quotations from *The Battle of Maldon* are taken from: D. G. Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981).

***The Seafarer***
All quotations from *The Seafarer* are taken from: Anne L. Klinck, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992).

***Juliana***
All quotations from *Juliana* are taken from: Rosemary Woolf ed., *Juliana* (London: Methuen, 1955).

All other poems from the Old English canon are quoted from the ASPR editions:
George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*, 6 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-42).

In order to match the punctuation between the texts and my translations I have at times altered the punctuation given in the above editions. Any other divergences from the editions cited above are explained in footnotes.

Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

All quotations from Shakespeare are from the Arden editions. Specific editions and editors are given in footnotes.

Quotations from the Bible are given in the Latin from the Vulgate and in English from the Douay-Rheims translation: *The Vulgate Bible*, ed. by Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, 6 vols (Cambridge MA and London: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010-13).

**Abbreviations**:

***ASE***: *Anglo-Saxon England*.

**ASPR**: Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records.

**Bosworth Toller** or **BT**: Joseph Bosworth and Thomas Northcote Toller et al., *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, comp. Sean Christ and Ondřej Tichý, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague < http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz.

***BR***: *The Benedictine Rule – Die angelsächsichen Prosabearbeitungen der Benedictinerregel*, ed. by Arnold Schröer (Kassel: Wigand, 1885).

***CH* I**: Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1997).

***CH* II**: Malcolm Godden, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1979).

***DOE***: *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project 2009).

**EETS**: Early English Text Society Editions.

***GPC***: *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care,* ed. by Henry Sweet (London: Trübner for EETS, 1871).

***JEGP***: *Journal of English and Germanic Philology.*

***OEB* I** and **II**: *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

***TOE* :** *A Thesaurus of Old English* Volumes I and II, eds. Jane Roberts, Christian Kay and Lynne Grundy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

## 1: Introduction

> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry
> And lose the name of action.[1]

The Anglo-Saxon mind has been the focus of much critical attention in recent years; however, most criticism has considered the mind in isolation the better to understand Anglo-Saxon psychology and philosophy.[2] It is the aim of this study to look at the mind from a different perspective and to consider it as an agent of action, an agent which does not perform in isolation, but in tandem with the body. Hamlet was fascinated by the relation between mental actions and physical actions, finding himself too apt to think and not enough to act. This imbalance is perhaps at the heart of his tragedy.

It is the contention of this thesis that the Anglo-Saxons also focussed on the relation of thought to action in certain texts and that an

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[1] *Hamlet* III. 1. 84-8. All quotations from *Hamlet* are from W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Routledge, 1989).

[2] For essential reading on the Anglo-Saxon mind see: M. R. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind' in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmet Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 271-98; Antonina Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002); Antonina Harbus, *Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012); Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Soon-Ai Low, 'Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for 'Mind'', *Studia Neophilologica*, 73 (2001), 11-22; Britt Mize, 'The Representation of the Mind as an Enclosure in Old-English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 (2006), 57-90; Britt Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: the Old English Poetics of Mentality*, (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

understanding of this can offer new readings of those texts. To demonstrate this, three poems from different genres showing a deliberate interaction of mental and physical acts will be analysed closely. The interplay between mental and physical acts or states is not apparent in every poem in the Old English canon, any more than it is in every play by Shakespeare. However its significance where it is present is as vital to our understanding of those poems as it is to our understanding of *Hamlet*.

Purportedly one of the earliest extant poems in Old English, *Cædmon's Hymn,* puts forward the premise that the mental and the physical are of equal importance:

> Nu scylun hergan  hefaenricaes uard,
> metudæs maecti  end his modgidanc,
> uerc uuldurfadur,  sue he uundra gihuaes,
> eci dryctin,  or astelidæ.
> He aerist scop  aelda barnum
> heben til hrofe,  haleg scepen;
> tha middungeard  moncynnæs uard,
> eci dryctin,  æfter tiadæ
> firum foldu,  frea allmectig.  (1-9)

> Now we must praise the Guardian of the heavenly kingdom,
> the Creator's might and his mind,
> the work of the Glory-Father, how he,

Eternal Lord, established the origin of each of [all] wonders.
He first shaped for the children of men
heaven for a roof, the holy craftsman;
then mankind's guardian, eternal Lord,
after created Middle-earth
a land for mankind, almighty Lord.

The perfection of the expression in form, word and balance was such that this verse was reputed to have changed, not just the life of the man who composed it, but the course of English poetry. It is perhaps difficult for us today to see exactly what it is about the poem that so moved its listeners, but we must accept that everything in its expression is deliberate and significant. Of significance to this thesis is the balance of might and mind, the mind which conceives of the wonders and the might which renders them into physical form. All of the marvels of creation – that is the works or actions of God, are born out of His *meaht*, to use the more familiar West Saxon form, and His *modgeþanc*, His power and His mind. Cædmon balances the importance of God's power to create the physical with the power of His mind to conceive it. The action of creating physical marvels is born out of God's will and conception and performed through His strength. Without both the mental and the physical there would have been no actions, no *weorc*, no creation.[3]

[3] See below 1.1.1.

I have chosen to focus on three poems which, superficially, have very little in common: *The Battle of Maldon*, a heroic battle poem probably dating to the late tenth century, *The Seafarer*, an elegy, and *Juliana*, a poetic version of the *passio* of the eponymous saint. In each of these poems, the poet has created deliberate effects through the presentation of an interplay between what we might call mental acts and physical ones. Through an interrelated set of patterns, *Maldon* presents an ideal of balance between mental and physical acts; excess of one or another is presented as a threat. In *The Seafarer* it is the ways in which the poet has allotted agency for physical acts and mental acts that is significant; the forces of nature perform physical acts and the thoughts and emotions of the speaker are given agency, their acts described in physical terms. The speaker himself is not described as performing any physical acts at all. In *Juliana*, mental acts are described in physical terms. Just as for Hamlet the taking up of arms represents a thought process, so too for Juliana the only actions of any real import are those performed by the mind, despite the very physical actions to which she is subjected.

One of the principal questions that this raises is whether it is the influence of Christianity that encourages such introspection, placing a higher value on the nature of mental action and seeing physical action as the fruit of mental acts. The duality is reflected in the idea that a Christian has two lives, a mortal and an immortal one, two elements, the corporeal and incorporeal, body and soul. Where a hero's virtues

were traditionally considered to be *geæþele from cneomagum* [4] (inborn from their ancestors), the poet consciously applying Christian values will consider virtue as something which has to be fought for; it is the product of choices, and right action will be the product of right thinking and wrong action the product of an inability to control the mind, to think in the right way, to formulate the right intentions and to adhere to them. The Christian perspective places a greater importance on the mental act than the physical one because success or failure of mental acts will have consequences for the eternal wellbeing of the soul, and physical acts can only be achieved as a result of mental stimulus, preparation and intent; thus they become extensions of mental acts.

### 1.1 Terminology

In order to consider the interplay between mental and physical acts and states, it is necessary to define what is meant by those terms. Put succinctly, any acts performed by a physical body will be considered to be physical, and any others to be mental or spiritual.

There is some debate currently concerning the corporeality of the mind, most notably from Leslie Lockett who argues that what she refers to as the 'hydraulic model' was considered to be a literal physiological

[4] Paraphrased from *Battle of Brunanburh* 7-8.

response rather than a metaphor.[5] Lockett's book is a fascinating argument for a corporeal mind. However, whilst this thesis engages with the idea of the mind presented in physical terms it does not seek to enter into the debate as to whether the mind was perceived corporeally in a literal or metaphorical way.

The definition of emotion is one that eludes any consensus even today. I have outlined the main points relating to an understanding of an Anglo-Saxon conception of emotion and the parameters of my use of the term in this thesis. This requires a great deal more explanation than straightforward mental or physical acts do, but that is not an indication of the importance attached to the relative terms. Emotions come under the heading of mental acts and it is the relation between mental and physical acts that is central to this thesis.

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[5]Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). Lockett describes a 'loose psychophysiological pattern, in which psychological disturbances are associated with dynamic changes of pressure and temperature in the chest cavity'. Lockett refers to this as the 'hydraulic model' because 'it alludes to the physically dynamic dimension of the pattern – the correlation between increased heat and increased pressure,' (p. 5). Lockett argues that this model, hitherto considered to be metaphorical, was in fact a literal description reflecting popular folk belief. The majority of examples of the 'hydraulic model' relate to physiological responses to sudden emotions or passions. It is well known that there are physiological responses which accompany emotions – increased heart-rate, perspiration, changes in respiration, involuntary facial expression, blood rush to and away from the head and so on. A recent study by Nummenmaa et al. shows that the 'perception of emotion triggered bodily changes' were 'culturally universal'. They noted that 'most basic emotions were associated with sensations of elevated activity in the upper chest area, likely corresponding to changes in breathing and heart-rate'. See 'Bodily Maps of Emotions' by Lauri Nummenmaa, Enrico Glerean, Ritta Hari, and Jarl K. Hietanen, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, January 2014, 646-51.

### 1.1.1 Physical acts:

By physical act, I mean any act performed physically by a body. This includes the acts of the human body, animals and the elements. Divine acts, as we have seen in *Cædmon's Hymn*, are less straightforward because of the incorporeal nature of God. God has no physical essence but His works have physical form.

### 1.1.2 Mental Acts:

By mental act I mean any acts performed by the inner being i.e. the mind or spirit. The Anglo-Saxon lexis for the mind is vast; the *Thesaurus of Old English* devotes forty-six pages to the category of Mental Faculties, a further twenty-three to Opinion and twenty-nine to Emotion.[6] Tempting as the question may be, there is not room here to attempt to differentiate between those acts which are mental and those which are spiritual, depending as this does on whether the author conceives of a unitary soul or not. Whilst it is to be hoped that this thesis may furnish evidence to further the debate, it does not attempt to enter the debate directly.

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[6] *A Thesaurus of Old English, ed. by* Jane Roberts, Christian Kay and Lynne Grundy, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

Typical mental acts would be:

- Remembering
- Forming intention
- Understanding
- Focussing the mind
- Controlling the passions (applying reason)
- Desiring
- Accepting or rejecting the influence of others
- Imagining the future
- Planning
- Maintaining faith

This is just a sample of the types of mental acts that will be considered. The Anglo-Saxon concept of the mind is, as Leslie Lockett's book so amply demonstrates, a complex one. It is not in the scope of this thesis to attempt to elucidate the way the mind was conceived in the early medieval period, and given the extensive research on the question presented in Lockett's book, it is not necessary.

### 1.1.3 Emotions

Broadly speaking, emotions come under the category of mental acts. Anglo-Saxon literature distinguishes between rational, meditated acts and impulsive and instinctive ones. For the purposes of this thesis,

emotions will be defined as instinctive mental responses to stimuli, as opposed to rational thought. From an Anglo-Saxon perspective, these are often excessive and dangerous, the fruit of wrong thinking or an inability to control the wayward part of the mind, *mod*, as we will see. Critics struggle to differentiate emotions from other types of mental activity in the Anglo-Saxon world view; Lockett remarks, 'the Old English lexicon evidently includes no precise equivalents for PDE "emotion" or "emotional" as non pejorative alternatives to "reason" or "rational"'.[7] The reason for this may be that the Anglo-Saxon concept of emotion is a negative one. The terms which could come under this negative category may more comfortably be referred to as 'passions'. There is no Anglo-Saxon word which corresponds directly to the PDE word 'emotion'. The TOE offers *styrung* and *gewitt* to convey 'a feeling, what is felt'.[8] *Gewitt* is a less satisfying suggestion in this context as it usually represents a rational and controlled sense – BT gives 'wit, senses, [right] mind, mind, intellect' as primary meanings, and 'knowledge, understanding, consciousness' as secondary meanings. *Styrung* has motion as its primary sense with disturbance, perturbation and trouble as secondary meanings, and is perhaps closer to the modern idea of emotion.

The TOE differentiates between the 'heart / bosom as seat of emotions' (08.01) and the head as 'seat of thought' (06.01), clearly differentiating between emotion and other types of thought. Leslie

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[7] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 34.

[8] TOE, 08.01.01.

Lockett's work places the Anglo-Saxon mind firmly in the chest, although her hydraulic model of the mind generally applies to the kind of mental agitation that would qualify as emotion.[9]

Modern sensibility, especially North American sensibility, often sees emotion as a positive thing, evidenced in phrases such as 'be in touch with your emotions' and 'emotional intelligence'. In earlier philosophies these were dangerous passions which needed controlling. Emotion opposes rationality, again positive in current thinking where 'listening to your heart' as opposed to 'your head' is a form of modern decision making; it implies giving preference to instinctive emotional responses rather than rational and logical ones. Rationality, however, is what separated man from beasts for the early-medieval thinker. From an Anglo-Saxon standpoint, to favour the emotional and instinctive over the rational is to encourage a bestial wildness that is in opposition to the rational control of the Anglo-Saxon Christian ideal.

Malcolm Godden draws attention to another key difference between PDE and Old English expression of specific emotions. Where PDE has us 'feel' emotions, the Anglo-Saxons 'took' them, using *niman*. The modern sense is 'adapted from terms of sensory perception' whilst the Old English term leads to the conclusion that 'there was presumably some rooted sense that passions, or feelings towards other people and things, did not just take hold of one from outside or inside but involved, at some level, an act of will'.[10] This is a considerable difference. Where

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[9] See: Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[10] M. R. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 286.

modern emotions are an integral part of the self and self-expression, to the Anglo-Saxons they were external forces that people took on willfully. Most significantly for the purpose of this thesis, 'linguistically, at least, passions can resemble mental actions rather than mental states'.[11]

Augustine also links emotion to will: 'the important factor in those emotions is the character of a man's will. If the will is wrongly directed, the emotions will be wrong; if the will is right, the emotions will not only be blameless, but praiseworthy'. He takes this further to say that all emotions are essentially acts of will because the will is engaged in all of them, 'for what is desire or joy but an act of will in agreement with what we wish for?'[12] An emotion, for Augustine, is produced when the will is either in agreement or disagreement with something desired or feared. The wishing or rejecting, is then separate from the will. Although Augustine categorises passions under the heading of emotion, he does distinguish between them. Once the will is involved, there is rational thought. Augustine differentiates between emotions directed by will and passions that are independent of the will when considering whether Adam and Eve would have procreated had they not fallen. He concludes that those organs of the body currently only responsive to lust would have obeyed the will in the way other body parts do.[13] Therefore if emotions are acts of will, they are not of the will themselves, but the will decides to comply or resist. Augustine is

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[11] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p.286.

[12] St Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV. 6, p. 555.

[13] St Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV. 24, p. 587.

contending with the stoics who see all emotion as undesirable, and Augustine argues that there are appropriate emotions, but these are controlled by the will; for example: 'to be indignant with the sinner with a view to his correction, to feel sorrow for the afflicted with a view to his release from suffering, to be afraid for one in danger so as to prevent his death – these are emotions which, as far as I can see, no judgement could reprove', but these are all emotions controlled by rational thought.[14] He also concludes, 'we have to admit that the emotions we experience, even when they are right and as God would have them, belong to this life, not to the life we hope for in the future; and often we yield to them against our will…If we are to understand [*apatheia*] as meaning a life without the emotions which occur in defiance of reason, and which disturb the thoughts, it is clearly a good and desirable state; but it does not belong to this present life.'[15]

It is those emotions which occur 'in defiance of reason and which disturb the thoughts' that the Old English texts show as dangerous and which need to be controlled.

The Alfredian version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care,* a text translated from the original Latin into the vernacular so as to make the ideas therein available to a wider lay audience, shows that such stimuli were considered to be either internal or external; in describing the appropriate admonishment for the excessively joyful or the excessively unhappy, Gregory notes that in some cases the excesses are a result,

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[14] St Augustine, *The City of God*, IX. 5, p. 349.

[15] St Augustine, *The City of God*, XIV. 9, p. 564.

not of uncontrolled responses to external stimuli, but of illness and disease of the blood.[16] There is no evidence that feelings such as moderate love, moderate happiness and love of God were frowned upon; they would probably have been considered mental states rather than actions or emotions, as they are not brought on as a result of stimulus, and would not have been considered in the same way as passions such as desire, anger or despair.

### 1.1.4 The Classical and Vernacular Concepts

An understanding of the philosophies behind what are commonly termed the classical and vernacular concepts of the mind will be useful.

Medieval thought was divided on the question of the mind and whether or not it was part of the immortal soul or the mortal body. Lactantius in his *De Opificio Dei* uses Plato's arguments that 'the soul of man could not be otherwise than immortal, since its wonderful skills in invention, its quickness in reflection, and its readiness in perceiving and learning, its memory of the past, and its foresight of the future, and its knowledge of the innumerable arts and subjects which other living creatures do not possess, appear divine and heavenly… and when freed from the abode of the body as from prison, it flies to the heaven, and to its own nature,'[17] to prove the immortality of the soul. These arguments clearly show that the faculties which comprise the mind –

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[16] See below, 1.2.4.

[17] Lactantius, *Vol. I: The Divine Institutes*, ed. and tr., by Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), p.447.

that is of thinking, understanding, knowledge, foresight and so forth – are, for him, part of the soul. We also see the familiar notion of the body as prison as well as that of the soul flying to heaven once free.

Alcuin took part of his definition for the soul from Plato in designating its tripartite nature and was influenced by St Augustine. However, as Godden explains, Alcuin *equated* the rational mind with the soul, whereas Augustine saw it as the superior part of the soul, seeing the soul also as a life force; the lesser part of the soul he considered to be shared with animals.[18] The tripartite nature of the soul, memory, will and understanding, mimics the divine nature of God. Alcuin further insisted that, 'the soul's likeness to God resides in its engagement with the real material world.'[19]

Clemoes famously demonstrated the similarity of expression between a passage in Alcuin's *Animae Ratione Liber* and *The Seafarer* where Alcuin writes, 'the soul's intellectual faculty, *mens*, is in the image of God' through its ability to cross oceans, lands and cities; the mind has the ability to move with great speed and cover great distances even when the body is immobile or asleep.[20]

Not everyone has been convinced by Clemoes' arguments; Leslie Lockett questions the combining of both classical and vernacular thought, the vernacular thought being embodied in the concept which

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[18] M. R. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 272.

[19] M. R. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p.273.

[20] Full quotations and translations are given in Clemoes, '*Mens absentia cogitans*', pp. 63-4.

she calls *breostsefa*.[21] If Clemoes is right, she argues, then the use of these cardiocentric concepts are archaisms or metaphors. The most important difference between classical and vernacular traditions, however, is not considered to centre on the location of the soul in the body, but the question as to whether mind and soul are separate or part of a unified whole.

Antonina Harbus sums up the argument neatly in her chapter on conceptual metaphors when she writes of 'the distinction drawn by Malcolm Godden between the Platonic concept of the tripartite soul that informs the Old English prose, and the fundamental distinction between the mind (controlling thought, emotion and volition) and the soul that informs the verse.'[22]

The critical division of poetry as largely following a vernacular tradition in difference to the prose which follows a classical tradition is one that is open to debate. The existence of numerous conceptual and figurative similarities between the prose and the poems brings this into question.

### 1.2 Examples of Interplay Between Mental and Physical Acts in Christian Literature

[21] Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[22] Antonina Harbus, Cognitive Approaches to Old English Poetry (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), p. 33.

### 1.2.1. *The Benedictine Rule*, The Sermons of Ælfric and the Alfredian *Boethius*.

A study of some of the chief texts promoting Christian living shows a consistent stress given to the importance of mental and physical acts together, often balanced against one another. These texts, whilst they may have been composed by men who had access to the works of classical writers and thinkers unavailable to the ordinary Anglo-Saxon, were nevertheless, in the case of Ælfric's sermons and perhaps to a lesser degree the *Boethius*, designed for a wide audience.[23]

The prose of the Old English *Benedictine Rule* makes numerous references to mental and physical acts or states in tandem; for example only those who live *mid clænnesse modes and lichoman mid geleafan and godra weorca biggenge*[24] (with cleanliness of mind and of body and with faith and practice of good works) will see the kingdom of heaven. The mind-body balance is given and immediately repeated – cleanliness of mind and cleanliness of body, then faith (a mental act in the sense that it is cultivated in the mind and must be maintained) and good works. The rule is written to direct the governance of monastic life. The points are laboured and repeated, but this serves to underline, as the basis of Christian thinking, that salvation lies in the right combination of the mental and the physical. A more detailed example

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[23] For a full discussion of works available to Anglo-Saxon scholars, see Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[24] *Die angelsächsichen Prosabearbeitungen der Benedictinerregel*, ed. by Arnold Schröer (Kassel: Wigand, 1885), p.3. Hereafter *BR* in footnotes.

closes the prologue to *The Benedictine Rule*, expanding on the biblical image of the way to heaven being steep and narrow in opposition to the way to Hell, which is broad and downhill:[25]

> se weg is rum and forðheald þe to deaðe and hellewite læt; se is neara and sticol þe to life and to heofona rice læt; he is us þeah to gefarenne mid rumheortan mode and mid godum and glædum geþanc and mid gefyllednesse godes geboda, swa þæt we on mynstre þurhwunigen on Cristes lare and tæcinge, þæt we, hine geefenlæcende, mid geþylde earfeþa and eahtnesse þolien, þæt we his rices gemænnesse and gefean mid him agan moten. [26]

> the way is wide and downward sloping that leads to death and Hell-torment; it is narrow and steep that leads to life and the heavenly kingdom; still that way is for us to travel with a mind that is spacious around the heart [i.e. free of anxiety or passion] and with noble and glad intention and with fulfilment of God's commands, so that we in the monastery continue in Christ's lesson and teaching, so that we, imitating Him, endure with patience sufferings and persecution, that we may have fellowship and rejoicing with Him in His kingdom.

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[25] Matthew 7.14, *quam angusta porta et arta via est quae ducit ad vitam, et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam* (how narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it).

[26] *BR*, pp. 5-6.

The mental acts are foregrounded. Travelling is a physical act, here used in a figurative sense to represent the acts, both mental and physical, of daily life, and must be donewith a wide-hearted mind (this in contrast to the narrowness of the way travelled) and with good and happy intention. Leslie Lockett has demonstrated through her exposition of what she refers to as the 'hydraulic model' of the heart, that the heart was considered to constrict or expand; however 'in the absence of psychological distress, the ''default'' state of the heart is roomy and unencumbered'. Generally the examples given of 'psychological distress' relate to what we would call emotion – often excessive anger, or excessive sadness. The requirement of a *rumheortan mod* is therefore also a requirement to avoid excessive emotion.[27] The mental acts of forming a positive intention and keeping the heart / mind open are presented more as states as they must be kept up constantly. This correct mental stance is manifested in the following of Christ's teaching. The phrase *earfeþa and eahtnesse* glosses *passionibus Christi* in the Latin (the sufferings of Christ).[28] In contrast Cotton MS., Tiberius A. 3., which is a version of the *Benedictine Rule* in Latin with an Old English gloss, employs *þrowung* to gloss *passionibus*.[29] This term is most frequently used to describe Christ's suffering. The term *earfoþ* is used more broadly to describe suffering of many kinds, and in more literal contexts means physical

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[27], Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 5.

[28] *Benedicti Regula*, ed. Rudolphus Hanslik, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, LXXV (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1960), p. 9.

[29] *The Rule of St Benet: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Interlinear Version*, ed. by H. Logeman (London: Trübner for EETS, 1888), p.6.

suffering, toil or 'affliction suffered as a condition of earthly life'.[30] By choosing a term that is associated more with everyday suffering, hardship and toil over the usual term *þrowung*, Æðelwold, the English translator, has offered a more down to earth and physical sense of the suffering of the monks' daily life to balance against the mental acts of keeping a *rumheortan mod*.

Ælfric of Eynsham also underlines the importance of a balance of physical and mental acts for the good Christian:

> Ic bidde eow gebroðra, tihtað eower mod to gecnyrdnysse godra weorca, þæt ge mid geðylde godne wæstm to Godes handa gebringon, þæt ge mid him and his halgum þæt ece lif habban moton on ealra worulda woruld.[31]

> I ask you brothers, to direct your minds to eagerness for good works, that you with patience bring good fruit to God's hands, that you may have eternal life with Him and His holy ones in the world of all worlds.

So for Ælfric the kingdom of heaven is obtained through the production of good fruits, the fruits through good work and the good work is the

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[30] Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette di Paolo Heaney et al., *Dictionary of Old English: A to G online* (Toronto, ON: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2007), at http://www.doe.utoronto.ca: *earfoþ, earfoþe, earfoþu,* 1.b.i. and 1.a.

[31] Malcolm Godden, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1979), *Dominica in Sexagesima*, p. 59.

product of the mind. Mental and physical acts are inextricably linked and the one relies upon the other.

A final example is from the Alfredian translation of Boethius where Providence and Fate are described in relation to thought and action respectively:

> Ac þæt þætte we hatað Godes foreðonc and his forsceawung, þæt bið þa hwile þe hit þærmid bið on his mode, ærþæm ðe hit gefremed weorðe, þa hwile þe hit geþoht bið, ac siððan hit fullfremed bið, þonne hatað we hit wyrd. Be þy mæg ælc mon witan þæt hit sint ægþer ge twegen naman ge twa þincg, foreþonc and wyrd. Se foreþonc is sio godcunde gesceadwisnes; sio is fæst on þæm hean sceppende þe eall forewat hu hit geweorðan sceal ær ær hit geweorðe. Ac þæt þæt we wyrd hatað, þæt bið Godes weorc þæt he ealc dæg wyrcð, ægþer ge þæs ðe we gesioð ge þæs þe ungesewenlic bið.
>
> But that which we call God's providence and his foreseeing, that exists for the time that it is there in his mind, before it is effected, while it is thought, but after it is effected, then we call it fate. From this everyone can perceive that they are both two names and two things, providence and fate. Providence is the divine intelligence; it is fixed in the high creator who fore-knows all, how it must turn out before it happens. But that which we call fate, that is God's work

which he effects every day, both that which we see and that which is invisible.[32]

In essence, the Alfredian Wisdom is describing God's works in much the same way as Cædmon.[33] First comes the Divine idea and then this is translated into works. Providence exists in God's mind and therefore comprises the mental acts of forethought, intention and planning, and Fate is the translation of these Divine thoughts into actions. The Old English translator sums up the idea using an image of a craftsman: *Se wyrcð æfter his unasecgendlicum foreþonc swa hwæt swa* [*he*] *wile, swa swa ælc cræftega ðencð and mearcað his weorc on his mode ær ær he hit wyrce and wyrcð siþþan eall* (He effects according to his inexpressible providence whatever he wishes, just as a craftsman considers and designs his work in his mind before he carries it out and afterwards effects it all).[34] In other words the interplay of thought and action is the very essence of creation.

These writers wrote about the interplay of thought and action in order to explain the mysteries of God's creation and to teach good Christians how to live well. This thesis will seek to elucidate the purpose and function of similar employment of interplay between thought and action in Anglo-Saxon poetry and consider whether this will enhance our

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[32] B Text, Chapter 39, *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'* ed. by Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Vol. I, p. 362 and translation Vol. II, p. 82.

[33] *Cædmon's Hymn* (2) attributes the works of creation to God's *meaht* and His *modgeþanc*.

[34] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 39, p.362, and translation *OEB* II, pp. 82-3.

readings of the poems. A detailed consideration of the ways in which this interaction is presented in prose texts will be useful to establish whether the interplay is deployed in the same way and perhaps to the same end in the selected poetry.

### 1.2.2 Mind as Body: Movement and Stillness

We have seen how Anglo-Saxon Christian thinkers considered important a balanced combination of the mental and the physical in their conception of good living and how this mirrored divine creation. Further examination of Christian texts shows a common figurative trope of the mind described in physical terms. At times it is even given metaphorical body parts and senses. In Ælfric's *Dominica in Quinquagesima* the mind is endowed with sight and has a voice: *swa hwa swa oncnæwð þa blindnysse his modes Clipige he mid inweardre heortan*[35] (he who is aware of his mind's blindness let him shout out with inward heart). Ælfric's references to the inner mind or heart go beyond a bodily personification and refer to layers of consciousness in the mind. More violently in *Dominica in Sexagesima* we have: *woruldcara, and welan, and flæsclice lustas forsmoriað ðæs modes ðrotan*[36] (worldly cares and riches, and desires of the flesh choke the mind's throat). Similarly in Alfred's translation of Boethius, Mod (Mind), turns back (*bewendan*) towards Wisdom who *adrigde þa* [*his*] *modes eagan* (dried [his] mind's

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[35] Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1997), p. 260.

[36] Ælfric *CH* II, p. 55.

eyes),[37] again describing the mind as if it were a physical body. In *The Benedictine Rule* the mind is endowed with ears: *anhyld þinre heortan eare*[38] (incline your heart's ear). The mind described in physical terms is capable of movement; it can turn towards God or away from Him. There is a connected trope of movement opposed to stillness, where God represents stillness and all His creation seeks to turn towards Him and find that stillness whilst the devil attempts to corrupt God's followers into turning away. This image seems to have Boethian roots. Alice Jorgensen remarks on a use of movement in the Old English *Boethius* that she describes as being at once psychological and physical. In the analogy of the Wheel of Fate in chapter 39, linking to *eall ðios unstille gesceaft and þeos hwearfiende* (all this moving and turning creation),[39] which shows God as the axle around which the world and all creation turns, she identifies 'imagery of strong emotion as physical agitation or disturbance'. God is *stille* (still), *gestæððig* (stable) and *anfeald* (single), whilst men are like the hub and spokes of the wheel: those closest to God at the hub move the least and are more stable, whilst those further away move more and are unstable.[40]

The mind turned away from God is the image which opens the prologue to *The Benedictine Rule*:

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[37] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 3, p. 245, and translation *OEB* II, pp. 5-6.

[38] *BR*, p. 1.

[39] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 39, p. 363, and translation *OEB* II, p. 83.

[40] Alice Jorgensen, 'Textual Memory and Emotional Culture: The Legacy of Neoplatonism in the Old English *Boethius*', conference paper given at Leeds IMC, 2015, currently unpublished.

> Gehyr ðu min bearn geboda ðines lareowes and anhyld þinre heortan eare and myngunge þines arfæstan fæder lustlice underfoh and caflice gefyl, þæt ðu mid þinre hyrsumnesse geswince to Gode gecyrre, þe þu ær fram buge mid asolcennysse ðinre unhyrsumnesse.[41]
>
> Listen my child to your teacher's commands and incline your heart's ear and gladly receive the exhortation of your pious father and quickly comply so that with your labour of obedience you turn to God from whom you turned away before with the idleness of your disobedience.

Here obedience and disobedience, mental states, are defined in terms of action and inaction, labour and idleness. Mental action thus seems to become physical action as the mind turns towards or away from God. Clearly mental effort presented in physical terms is required to maintain the heart turned towards God as idleness or inaction allows it to turn away.

Ælfric repeatedly uses the image of the mind in movement. In comparing a worldly priest to the hireling fleeing the wolf he remarks *ne flihð he na mid lichaman, ac mid mode*[42] (he does not flee with his body, but with his mind); this image of fleeing suggests a more extreme movement than just turning away, presumably because the priest has a

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[41] *BR,* p.1.

[42] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Dominica II. Post Pasca*, p. 315.

duty not just to his own soul, but to the souls of his flock and therefore his turning away from God is more significant . Egeus, persecutor of St Andrew, tells the saint, *ic wende þæt ðu on nihtlicere smeagunge sceoldest þin mod fram dwæsnysse awendan*[43] (I believed that after nocturnal deliberation you would turn your mind from foolishness). Egeus' sense of what the right direction of movement should be or indeed what 'foolishness' consists of is of course inverted, being from a pagan perspective. For Ælfric the mental movement can and should be imitated physically. The Christian Goal is to be turned towards God; once the mind is attached to God it is still. In Ælfric's reflection on the physical movement of Christ's disciples he seems to imply that it is appropriate to accompany the mental movement with a physical one *him to genealæhton his discipuli, þæt hi gehendran wæron lichamlice, þa ðe mid mode his bebodum genealæhton* [44] (His disciples drew nearer to Him, so that they were near bodily, who with their minds had drawn near to his commands).

### 1.2.3 Emotion as Mental Turbulence Opposed to God's Stillness

The struggle between movement and stasis is presented in Alfred's *Boethius* as being part of the natural order of things, the natural desire of all things being to return to the stillness that is God, *nis nan gesceaft gesceapen ðara þe ne wilnige þæt hit þider cuman mæge þonan þe hit*

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[43] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Natale Sancti Andreei*, p. 516.

[44] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Natale Omnium Sanctorum*, p. 492.

*ær com, þæt is to ræste and to orsorgnesse. Seo ræst is mid Gode and þæt is God* (there is no creature made that does not desire to be able to return to where it came before, that is to rest and to security. The rest is with God and it is God).[45] Whilst Boethius certainly links God to stability and stasis,[46] the Alfredian translator makes the idea explicit. In the Latin, Boethius only refers to the desire of all things to return to their natural state:

> Repetunt proprios quaeque recursus
> redituque suo singula gaudent
> nec manet ulli traditus ordo
> nisi quod fini iunxerit ortum
> stabilemque sui fecerit orbem.
>
> Everything seeks its origins
> and each rejoices to return
> and no order given can be upheld
> if it does not go back to its origin at the end

[45] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 25, p.294, and translation *OEB* II, p. 37.

[46] for example in IV. 6: *quodsi supernae mentis haeserit firmitati, motu carens fati quoque supergreditur necessitatem* (and if [anything] cleaves to the steadfast mind of God, it is free from movement and so escapes the necessity imposed by Fate), Latin from *Philosophiae Consolatio,* ed., Ludovicus Bieler (Turnhout: Brepols,1957), p. 80 and English translation from *The Consolation of Philosophy* tr. by Victor Watts revised edition (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 105.

and form a stable circle.[47]

The Old English text emphasises and develops the idea that all things strive to return to the stillness that is God.

Strong emotions are described as causing turbulent motion in the mind, a motion that necessarily opposes the inclination to divine stilllness:

Ic gereccan mæg
þæt of ungemete ælces ðinges,
wiste and wæda, win-gedrinces,
and of swet-mettum, swiðost weaxað
þære wrænnesse wodðrag micel;
sio swiðe gedræfð sefan in ge-hygd
monna gehwelces, þonan mæst cymeð
yfla ofer-metta, unnetta saca.
Þonne hi gebolgene weorðað, him wyrð on breostum inne
beswungen sefa on hraðre mid ðæm swiðan welme
hat-heortnesse, and hreðe siððan
unrotnesse eac geræped,
heard gehæfted. (37-49)

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[47] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* III. 2, Latin from Bieler p. 40 and English adapted from Boèce, *La Consolation de Philosophie*, ed. Claudio Moreschini and Jean-Yves Tilliette, tr. by Eric Vanpeteghem (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2008), p. 145: *Toute chose recherche ses origines / et chacune se réjouit d'y revenir, / et nul ordre transmis ne se maintient / s'il ne joint l'origine à la fin / et ne forme un cercle stable*.

> I can affirm that from a lack of moderation in each thing, food, garments, the drinking of wine, and from delicacies, grows most fiercely a great frenzy of lust; it greatly stirs up each man's inward thoughts in his mind, whence very often comes evil pride and useless conflict. When they become swollen, the heart becomes afflicted with the fierce surging of fury within the breast, within the chest, and soon afterwards also fettered, firmly made captive with sadness.[48]

The *wodþrag*, which might be translated as 'temporary madness', is brought on by lack of moderation, in other words excess of consumption through an inability to control bodily desires. The result is a mental movement implied in the verb *gedrefan*, which can imply both mental and physical agitation. From the stirring up of the *ingehygd* or inner mind, come various emotions: pride, anger, fury and sadness. Thus Wisdom in Alfred's Boethius equates movement with emotion and excess, and opposes it to stasis, moderation and rational thought.[49]

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[48] *OEB* I, C Text, *Meter 25*, p. 500-1, and translation *OEB* II p. 173. Square bracket shows where I have emended Godden and Irvine 'are' to 'become'. Note that here too Alfred has elaborated on the Latin. Boethius describes kings as slaves to their passions in the verse that concludes IV. 2, *libido uersat auidis cordo uenenis* / *hinc flagellat ira mentem fluctus turbida tollens* (desire twists their heart with the poisons of greed / there anger whips their mind and raises a tumult of troubles) and the idea that emotions such as anger, desire or greed cause unpleasant movement of the mind is clearly present, but the Old English version elaborates on the causes of these passions, and overtly extends the image from concerning kings to concerning 'each man'. Latin, Bieler, p. 70, translation adapted from Vanpeteghem pp. 225-7: *la passion agite leur cœur dans les poisons de la convoitise,* / *lá la colère flagelle leur esprit et soulève un tumulte de troubles*.

[49] Movement towards God will, of course, equate to Wisdom; however this will be the result of rational thought. For the identification of this trope I am indebted to the work of Alice Jorgensen; see 1.2.2 above.

### 1.2.4 Mental Control

Wisdom requires stasis, and to counter the dangerous turbulence of an uncontrolled mind moderation is required. Ælfric describes two types of continence – the bodily and the spiritual, showing the importance of control of both mental and physical acts.

> Twa forhæfednysse cynn syndon, an lichamlic, oðer gastlic. An is þæt gehwa hine sylfne getemprie mid gemete on æte and on wæte, and wærelice þa oferflowedlican þygene him sylfum ætbrede. Oþer forhæfednysse cynn is deorwurðre and healicre, þeah seo oðer god sy: styran his modes styrunge mid singalre gemetfæstnysse, and campian dæighwamlice wið leahtrum, and hine sylfne þreagan mid styrnysse þære gastlican steore, swa þæt he ða reðan deor eahta heafodleahtra swilce mid isenum midlum gewylde. Deorwyrþe is þeos forhæfednys, and wulderful þrowung on Godes gesihðe, þa yfelan geþohtas and unlustas mid agenre cynegyrde gestyran. [50]

> There are two kinds of abstinence, one bodily, the other spiritual. One is that each person govern himself with moderation in food and drink, and warily deprive himself of superfluous consumption. The other kind of abstinence is of greater value and loftier, although the other is good: to steer his mind's movement (turmoil)

[50] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Natiuitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae,* p. 385.

> with unremitting moderation and to fight daily against sins, and chastise himself with the discipline of the spiritual helm, so that he dominate the savage beast of the eight capital sins as with iron rowlocks.[51] This restraint and glorious suffering is of great value in the sight of the Lord, to manage (steer) the evil thoughts and perverse desires with one's own sceptre.

Significantly here Ælfric uses the image of a mind in turmoil, that is to say in chaotic and violent movement and describes the continent man as one who controls this movement in an image that combines steering and bondage. This is a specific reference to control of wrong thinking, and unremitting moderation is a counterpoint to excess. The image of the personal sceptre used to control elevates the individual to a kingdom governed by the self. Ælfric's 'beast of eight capital sins' is most probably a reference to the eight sins outlined by Cassian in his *Conferences*.[52]

> There are eight principal vices that attack humankind. The first is gluttony, which means voraciousness of the belly; the second is

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[51] *Midl :* Bosworth-Toller gives 'the thong which bound the oar to the pin'; this is presumably more precise than rowlock, but is wordy. The metaphor of steering the helm is extended to the binding of the oars in order to maintain further control, but also gives a sense of imprisoning. *Midl* can also represent the bit on a horse's bridle, which relating to the beast of eight deadly sins adds an image of a rider or charioteer controlling the direction of the beast.

[52] Chapters from the *Conferences* were read over light meals in Benedictine monasteries and so would have been very familiar. Cassian based his eight sins on those of Evagrius, see John Cassian, *The Conferences*, tr. and ed., by Boniface Ramsay, O.P. (New York / Mahwah: Newman Press, 1997), and also Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp. 181-3.

> fornication; the third is filargyria, which is avarice or love of money; the fourth is anger; the fifth is sadness; the sixth is acedia, which is anxiety or weariness of the heart; the seventh is cenodoxia, which is boastfulness or vainglory; and the eighth is pride.[53]

The sins listed differ slightly from the more familiar seven deadly sins, being: gluttony, fornication, avarice, dejection, anger, weariness, vainglory and pride. All of these sins result from excessive emotion, either of desire, anger or selfishness; interestingly the excess goes in both directions as dejection and weariness represent an excessive lack of normal feeling. Cassian divides them into bodily and spiritual sins, that is sins requiring an act of the body (such as gluttony or fornication) and sins which are uniquely in the mind (such as pride or dejection). This distinction is also made by Ælfric in his reference to bodily and spiritual abstinence.

Later in the sermon on John the Baptist, who was renowned for his abstinence, Ælfric refers more specifically to emotion, *scearpnyssa beoð awende to smeþum wegum, þonne þa yrsiendan mod, and unliþe gecyrrað to manþwærnysse, þurh ongyte þære upplican gife* (sharpnesses shall be turned to smooth ways when the angry and harsh minds turn to gentleness through inpouring of favour from on high).[54] Here it is divine influence which turns the mind back in the right direction and Ælfric is suggesting that excessive or inappropriate

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[53] John Cassian, *The Conferences*, p.183, translation by Ramsay.

[54] *Ælfric CH* I, *Natiuitas Sancti Iohannis Baptistae*, p. 386.

emotion has changed the material quality of the mind as well as moving it.

A further example from Ælfric's sermons on control of the mind, more specifically control of emotions, is in *Natale Omnium Sanctorum,* where Ælfric reflects on the Beatitudes:

> Gesibsume sind þa on him sylfum, þe ealle heora modes styrungamid gesceade gelogiað, and heora flæsclican gewilnunga gewyldað swa þæt hi sylfe beoð godes rice.[55]
>
> They are peaceful in themselves, they who regulate in themselves all their mind's (e)motions with reason, and dominate their fleshly desires so that they become God's kingdom themselves.

Ælfric turns the more outward-looking interpretation of *beati pacifici* of Matthew 5. 9 into an introspective meditation on making peace within oneself.[56] He refers to restraining the mind's agitated movement (*styrung*) with reason (*gesceade*). This shows that Ælfric at least saw reason and emotion as two distinct areas of mental action. Here reason is an active faculty used to control the wayward and wilful movement in the *mod,* presumably by applying an equal and opposite force so that the mind remains still. The opposition of motion and stillness, or here

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[55] *Ælfric CH* I, p. 494.

[56] An Old English translation of Matthew 5. 9*,* translates this as *eadige synt þa gesybsuman*, blessed are the peaceful, *The Old English Version of The Gospel,* ed. R. M. Liuzza (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1994), p. 9, which itself inverts the outward looking sense of the Vulgate which employs *pacificus*, peacemaking as opposed to *tranquillus* or *placidus*.

peace, is again underlined as is the importance of controlling the mind and the body. The ultimate result of this success, once stillness is achieved, is that such a man himself becomes the Kingdom of Heaven, presumably because stillness is only of the heavenly kingdom; this also refers back to the idea of the individual as ruler of his self-kingdom.

Ælfric uses the metaphor of the sea's movement in contrast to the stillness of dry land to connect the idea of movement with earthly life and stability with heaven. The stillness of heaven is related to its immutability. No influence can move it, unlike Earth where movement and change are symptomatic of transience.[57] We saw in the previous example how successful mental control leads to a divine peace or stillness allowing the good Christian to become the heavenly kingdom himself. In *Natale Sancti Andree Apostoli*, he uses the image of the apostles as fishers of men where they fish the souls of men *fram woruldlicum gedwyldum to staþolfæstnysse lybbendra eorðan, þæt is to þam ecan eðle* (from worldly error to the steadfastness of the land of the living, that is to the eternal home), and Christ *geclypode his leorningcnihtas of þære yðigendan sæ, for þan þe he hi ateah fram woruldlicum styrungum to þære gastlican stilnysse and to heofonlicum drohtnungum* [58] (called His disciples from the wave-tossed sea, because He led them from worldly agitation to spiritual stillness and to the heavenly life). The control of any mental or spiritual turbulence is

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[57] Stability and stillness are linked, stillness being a requisite for stability. Boethius, as we saw in 1.2.2, contrasts the moving and turning creation with God, who is *still* and *gestæðig. OEB* I,B Text, Chapter 39, p. 363.

[58] *Ælfric CH* I, p. 507

seen as a step towards God and eternal life, as stasis is equated with God and eternity whilst movement is equated with sin and mortality.[59]

Ælfric links sin to uncontrolled emotions in *Dominica in Media Quadragesime*: *se feorða leahtor is weamet, þæt se man nage his modes geweald, ac buton ælcere foresceawunge his yrsunge gefremað*[60] (the fourth sin is anger, that a man does not have control of his mind, but without any foresight activates his anger). The absence of *forsceawung* makes it clear that this emotion is produced in the absence of any rational thought processes. Sin and emotion seem closely linked. A sinner may make sacrifices *æfter ðeawlicum andgite* (in a figurative sense) if he has preserved his morals in innocence, as in this way he *þa unsceadwislican styrunga on stæððignysse awendað* (turns the irrational stirrings to sedateness).[61] In other words, control of the mind, control of wayward passions or emotions consists of stilling the uncontrolled movement of the mind. In Anglo-Saxon Christian thought, as we have seen, the mind is frequently described in physical terms. God represents stillness and stability, thus a still mind is closer to God. For Boethius, or at least in the Alfredian reading of Boethius, it is the natural desire of all living things to return to that divine stillness.[62] Excessive emotions cause mental turbulence and movement, taking man away from the stillness of God and potentially leading him to

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[59] These sea / land parallels are particularly useful in interpreting the imagery in *The Seafarer* as will be demonstrated in chapter four below.

[60] Ælfric *CH* II, p. 124.

[61] Ælfric *CH* II, p. 120.

[62] See 1.2.3 above.

perdition. Wisdom recognises that Mod's excessive sorrow in the beginning of the *Consolation* has turned Mod, or the mind, away from wisdom: *sona swa ic þe ærest on þisse unrotnesse geseah þus murcniende ic ongeat þæt þu wære ut adrifen of þines fæder eðele, þæt is of minum larum* (as soon as I first saw you in this grief, lamenting in this fashion, I realised that you had been driven from your father's country, that is, from my teachings).[63] Excessive emotion, whether it is sorrow or anger, turns the mind, causes it to move and to move away from God. Boethius uses an image of exile – being driven away from one's father's home – to signify a loss of wisdom; emotional thought is instinctive and precludes rational thought, therefore wisdom, and so a man becomes an exile from his own good sense. Worse, he becomes estranged from heaven and risks losing his eternal home if he does not regain control. For Ælfric mental control of the mind and body allows man to resist bodily desires and excessive emotions thus maintaining a divine stability.

Ælfric links the body to temptation. Having described each of the five senses in *Dominica III. Post Pentecosten* he goes on to link the physical senses with the mind:

> se færð and fandað þissera fif andgita, se ðe þurh fyrwitnysse and unstilnysse hi aspent on unnyt. Hefigtyme leahter is ungefoh fyrwitnys; ac we sceolon awendan urne lec fram yfelre gesihðe, urne hlyst fram yfelre spræce, urne swæcc fram unalyfendum

[63] *OEB* I, C Text, *Prose 4*, p. 391, and translation *OEB* II,p. 101.

> ðigenum, ure nosa fram derigendlicum stencum, ure handa and ealne lichaman fram fullicum and leahterlicum hrepungum, gif we willað becuman to ðam estum þæs ecan gereordes. [64]
>
> he goes and tests these five senses who through curiosity and unstillness squanders them on frivolity. Intemperate curiosity is a grievous disgrace; but we must turn our view away from evil sight, our hearing from evil speech, our taste from unpermitted consumptions, our smell from harmful stenches, our hands and all our body from foul and intemperate touchings, if we intend to come to the bounty of the eternal banquet.

Here Ælfric clearly links the body and the mind with this idea of movement and stasis and control of the mind. The controlling mind must steer the body away from the temptations of the senses, and not give in to curiosity and 'unstillness'.

Will is the controlling force of the mind, the reins or helm of the ship of the mind. Man cannot be lost but through his own will or lack of it. Diabolical intervention and temptation can only do so much: *of ðære næfre nan, buton he self wolde, ne wearð adrifen, þæt is of his godan willa* (from that, that is from his good intentions, no-one was ever exiled unless he himself wished it).[65] In other words a man can only be lost if he allows himself to be lost. Ælfric makes the same point in his

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[64] *Ælfric, CH* II, *Dominica III. Post Pentecosten,* p.215.

[65] *OEB* I, C Text, *Prose 4*, p. 391, and translation *OEB* II, p. 102.

exegesis of the passage on the temptation of Christ in the wilderness: *hi moton ure afandian, ac hi ne moton us nydan to nanum yfele, buton we hit sylfe agenes willan doon* [66] (they [devils] can tempt us, but they cannot force us to any evil unless we do it ourselves of our own will). The verb *willan* and the noun *willa* therefore take on an especial significance in this contact.

Teaching or *lar* can be used to influence the mind to good or to evil. It is the aim of the good shepherd to influence the minds of his flock through the teaching of right thinking and of the devil to do the opposite. The devil's teaching is discussed at length in the chapter on *Juliana*, but teaching of another kind is also significant in *The Battle of Maldon* where Byhrtnoð teaches his men not only how to stand and hold their weapons, but also how to focus their minds correctly. In each case, external forces aim to influence the mental control of the individual, for good or ill.

In *The Old English Boethius*, Mod explains in *Meter 11* that all creation is in movement, that each thing is striving after its own interests but countered by its opposite and the whole is controlled by God's 'bridle'; as if He were controlling a chariot led by wild and wayward horses:

> æfre ne magon þu unstillan
> woruld-gesceafta weorðan gestilde
> …

[66] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Dominica Prima in Quadragesima*, p. 268.

Hæfð se alwealda  ealle gesceafta

gebæt mid his bridle;

…

Swa hæfð geheaðærod  hefon-rices weard

mid his andwealde  ealle gesceafta,

þæt hiora æghwilc  wið oðer winð,

and ðeah winnende  wreðiað fæste… (18-19, 22-3, 31-4)

for the moving worldly creatures

cannot ever be made still,

…

The almighty has curbed all creatures

with his bridle...

…

Thus the guardian of the heavenly kingdom has restrained

all created things with his power

so that each of them struggles against the other,

and yet in struggling they firmly support the other…[67]

The exception to this is the mind of man. *Meter 11* ends with Wisdom wistfully singing:

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[67] *OEB* I, C Text, *Meter 11*, p. 430, and translation *OEB* II, p. 127. From a Boethian standpoint, it would seem that stillness on earth is impossible. For Ælfric, however, it is possible in the mind, as we saw in his interpretation of the *beati pacifici* where those who achieve mental stillness by regulating their emotions with reason *become* God's kingdom themselves. This mental stillness equates the mind with the kingdom of heaven because only the kingdom of heaven is truly still.

Eala sigora God,

wære þis mon-cyn  miclum gesælig,

gif heora mod-sefa  meahte weorðan

staþolfæst gereaht  þurh þa strongan meaht,

and geende-byrd,  swa swa oðra sint

woruld-gesceafta. (96b-102)

Oh God of Victories,

this human race would be greatly blessed

if their minds could be securely

controlled and organised through that strong

power just as other worldly

creatures are.[68]

The Old English translator of *Boethius* is clearly signifying the *mod-sefa* as the wayward will that needs controlling. The *eala* of this final lament seems to question the value of free will; Mod, of course, will not go that far, but the point is made. It is our own free will that allows us to make mistakes and to find ourselves in the anxious turbulence of our own wrong thinking. Balance is repeatedly stressed as being the ideal. Opposing forces balanced against each other become still and cancel each other out. Similar opposing forces are the stuff of *Maxims I*: *swa biþ sæ smilte*, / *þonne hy wind ne weceð* (54-55, so is the sea calm

[68] *OEB* I, C Text, *Meter 11*, p. 432, and translation *OEB* II, p. 128.

when the wind does not wake it). Here too the natural opposition of sea and land, where the movement of the sea tests the steadfastness of the land, is paralleled with control of the mind:

> Styran sceal mon strongum mode.  Storm oft holm gebringeþ,
> geofen in grimmum sælum;  onginnað grome fundian
> fealwe on feorran to londe,  hwæðer he fæste stonde.
> Weallas him wiþre healdað,  him biþ wind gemæne.  (50-3)

> A man must steer a strong mind. Often a storm brings the sea, the ocean, to cruel conditions; begins to bring violent waves forward onto the land, [to see] whether it stands fast. The cliffs hold against them, the wind is common to them [both].

The tumultuous movement of the sea tests the land and the wind causes the violent movement of the sea. The land has to withstand both and stay in place – stasis resisting movement. This is clearly being linked to the idea of the man steering and controlling the power that is his mind; a man must keep his mind from moving in response to the external pressures of emotions or temptations just as the cliffs withstand the sea and the wind. Similar imagery of violent movement of sea and wind occurs in *The Seafarer*.[69]

[69] See below, chapter four.

The importance of balance in relation to emotional restraint is underlined in Alfred's version of Gregory's *Pastoral Care* and this offers a deeper insight into the Anglo-Saxon understanding of emotion.

> On oðre wisan sint to manianne ða gladan, on oðre ða un[n]rotan. Ðæm oferbliðum is to cyðanne ða unrotnessa ðe ðæræfter cumað, and ðam unbliðum sint to cyðanne ða gefean ðe him gehatene sindon. Geliorngen ða bliðan on ðære ðreaunga ðæt hie him ondræden, and gehieran ða unbliðan ða lean ðæs gefean ðe hie tohopiað.
>
> …
>
> Monige beoð ðeah bliðe and eac unbliðe ðara ðe for nanum woruldðingum nahwæðer doð, buton for ðæs blodes styringe and for medtrymnesse. Swaðeah is ðæm to cyðanne ðæt hie hie warenigen ægðer ge wið ða ungemetlican blisse ge wið ða ungemetlican unrotnesse, forðæm hiera ægðer astyreð sumne unðeaw, ðeah hie ungewealdes cumen of ðæs lichoman mettrymnesse. Ðæm oferbliðan oft folgað firenlust, and ðæm unrotan irre. [70]
>
> The glad are to be admonished in one way, the unhappy in another. To the excessively happy is to be made known the sadness that comes after, and to the unhappy is to be made known the rewards that are promised for them. The happy are to

[70] *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care,* Chapter XXVII, ed. by Henry Sweet (London: Trübner for EETS, 1871), pp. 187-8.

> learn from the sufferings that they should dread, and the unhappy should hear of the reward of the joys they are hoping for.
>
> …
>
> However, there are many who are happy and also unhappy for no worldly reason at all, but for the movement of the blood and sickness. So then it is for them to know that they should take heed either against unmeasured bliss or against unmeasured sorrow, because they both stir some evil practices, though they come involuntarily from the sickness of the body. Lust often pursues the over-joyful and anger the unhappy.

Gregory ends the chapter with a warning to avoid the danger of falling into one extreme by fighting so hard against the other.[71] Gregory defines dangerous emotions as those which are excessive, taking one to either side of a moderate and peaceful norm. These excesses lead to vices, in an echo of Cassian's earlier teachings. Gregory recognises that certain excesses are due to bodily sickness and imbalance, presumably influenced by the classical idea of the four humours or perhaps just an understanding of what we today would call mania or depression. Although there is less apparent fault or wilfulness in such excesses, they must be fought in the same way. Many of these vices

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[71] I feel it reasonable to refer to Gregory as the author here because, as Sweet remarks, 'compared with the other works of Alfred, the *Pastoral* is a very close rendering – no original matter is introduced, nor are sentences expanded into long paragraphs as in the Boethius', Henry Sweet, *King Alfred's Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care* (London: Trübner for EETS, 871), p. xli.

and the mental excesses which cause them correspond to what we would call emotions.

Lockett argues that the Anglo-Saxons 'did not conceive of reason and emotion as different classes of thought'; the examples given above show that they did. She gives Alcuin's *De Ratione Animae*, Alfred's *Boethius* and Ælfric's Nativity Homily as exceptions, because these texts 'replicate the Platonic tripartition of the soul into the rational, the irascible, and the concupiscible.'[72] The examples given above are from a slightly broader palette; they do not treat the question of the tripartite soul directly, but they do seem to be marking difference between emotional responses and rational thought. It can be argued that some of the poetry follows this type of reasoning as the following chapters will attempt to demonstrate.

### 1.3 Social Importance of the Interplay of Mental and Physical Acts

In specifically Christian texts we see patterns of balance between mental and physical acts. They are also evident in less overtly Christian texts, such as law codes. Alfred's first law focusses on the importance of oath keeping, at length, before going on to detail specific laws for specific physical crimes: *æt arestan we lærað þæt mæst þearf is þæt æghwelc mon his að and his wed wærlice healde* (in the first place, we teach that it is most needful that each man carefully keep his oath and

[72] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 34.

his bond).[73] The oath clearly underpinned the organisation of early medieval society, and we may reasonably suppose that its importance predated Christianity. The significance of an oath lies in the fact that it is an outward manifestation of mental intention. The mental intention, once made public, is all the stronger and it governs and dictates subsequent physical behaviour. Later, in Æþelred's reign his sixth set of laws, authored by Wulfstan, begins with a phrase reminiscent of the opening of *The Benedictine Rule*: *þæt is þonne ærest þæra biscpa frumræd, þæt we ealle fram synnum georne gecyrran* (first of all the primary ordinance of the bishops is, that we all zealously turn from sins),[74] before moving on to increasingly physical deeds to be performed or punished. This set of law codes has several references to thought and understanding, such as, *smeage man symle on æghwilce wisan hu man fyrmest mæge ræd aredian, þeode to þearfe* (constant thought should be taken in every way how best to determine what is advisable for the public good).[75] The connection of the mental or spiritual and the physical suffused all aspects of Anglo-Saxon society and the terms used to express these relationships were often similar.

To sum up, it seems from a the study of texts examined here, that educated Anglo-Saxons considered the relation between mental and

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[73] *Die Gesetze Der Angelsachsen*, Vol. 3, ed. by F. Liebermann (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1898), p. 46.

[74] *Die Gesetze Der Angelsachsen*, Vol. 3, ed. by F. Liebermann (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1898), p. 46. Translation from *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I, Part One: Edmund to Canute* ed. and tr. by A. J. Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp. 90-1. Translation is Robertson's.

[75] VI Æþelred 40, in Liebermann (1898), p. 256. Translation, Robertson (1925), pp. 102-3.

physical acts to be significant and important. Furthermore that balance between such acts was desirable and any excessive mental activity or state was considered dangerous or harmful. Mental control was needed in order to maintain an appropriate mental state, this being one of stability and stillness, associated with wisdom and God as opposed to movement and agitation which was associated with mortality. Mental movement and agitation was associated with a negative idea of emotion or passion and this, along with other types of wrong thinking, led inevitably to wrong action and perdition, whilst right thinking conversely led to right action and salvation.

It is the hypothesis of this thesis that a similar understanding of mental and physical acts and the relation between them can be discovered in some of the poetic work.

### 1.4 Critical Influences and Methodological Approach

This thesis is an analysis of the way Anglo-Saxon poets use an interplay of mental and physical action to add layers of meaning to their work with reference to three much studied poems. It is also, therefore, an analysis of those poems: *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Seafarer* and *Juliana*. Current critical approaches to the poems are discussed in the relevant chapters below. However, very little criticism has centred on the relation between mental action and physical action.

Peter Clemoes' seminal piece, '*Mens absentia cogitans*',[76] examined the Anglo-Saxon understanding of mental action with specific reference to *The Seafarer* and highlighted comparisons between this poem and contemporary examples of classical Christian thought on the mind and the power of the mind to travel. A central element of Clemoes' study is the question of the unified mind. This question is taken further by Leslie Lockett in *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies* where it is placed in opposition to the vernacular tradition embodied in what she refers to as the 'hydraulic model'.[77] These studies, however, focus on the mind and not on the interaction of mental action with physical action.[78]

This thesis is indebted to Peter Clemoes' *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* where he considers the relation of thought to physical action and its development over time.[79] Clemoes demonstrates with reference to *Beowulf* that early texts show the 'basic concept of inherited potentials producing characteristic action'.[80] He develops this in his chapter 'Active Being and Narrative Living' through analysis of the following quote from *Beowulf* where Wiglaf describes his understanding of his leader's prowess:

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[76] Peter Clemoes, '*Mens Absentia Cogitans* in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*' in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. Derek A. Pearsall and Ronald A. Waldron (London: Athlone Press, 1969), pp. 62-77.

[77] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*.

[78] Clemoes' work is important to an understanding of *The Seafarer* and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 below.

[79] Peter Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[80] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. xiii.

Ða ic æt þearfe gefrægn þeodcyninges
andlongne eorl ellen cyðan,
cræft ond cenðu, swa him gecynde wæs (2694-6)

Clemoes translates this as:

Then I learned that at the time of need for the king
of the people the warrior standing upright showed
fighting spirit, ability in action and boldness, as was
natural to him by birth. [81]

Clemoes' deconstruction of this passage demonstrates clearly how in earlier Anglo-Saxon thought, action was directed by nature more than will. It is worth quoting in full:

> [Beowulf] possessed certain potentials for action by virtue of his *gecynd*, his inherent nature, and that was the central fact which needed stating about him at this supremely testing moment. By comparison, other (we might think important) considerations, such as the training he had received, did not rank a mention. In Anglo-Saxon eyes what really mattered about any being at all – be it human or inhuman, animate or inanimate, natural or manufactured

[81] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. 74.

> according to our classifications – was the potential, or potentials, for action which he/she/it had received from his/her/its origin.[82]

Beowulf has a potential for right action as a result of his inborn nature, his genetic patrimony in modern terms. This view, central to the warrior ethos, changed radically as Christian doctrine exerted greater influence over literary texts, and by the time we get to *The Battle of Maldon* at the end of the tenth century, it is clear that birth will only have an influence on action when the actor makes a conscious decision to take this into account, 'the afraid and the unafraid separated out from one another by demonstrating an individual disregard or regard for a link between personal integrity and public behaviour' and this 'rested on individual considerations as diverse as pride in a grandfather's rank (218-19), fear of reproach from neighbours (249-52a) and dread of remorse (315b-16)'.[83]

Clemoes' book is divided into two parts, the first part dealing with the 'poetry of aristocratic warrior society' and the second part with the poetry of 'the new religion'.[84] *Beowulf* looms large in the first part and is the yard stick for comparison in the second. In the context of *Beowulf*, Clemoes analyses the word pair *eafoð* and *ellen*, 'which, we may infer, summed up warriorship's essential combination of physical and mental power'.[85] Clemoes explains how subsequently the word *eafoð* became

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[82] Clemoes, *Interactions* p. 74.

[83] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. 412.

[84] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. xii.

[85] Clemoes, *Interactions*,. p. 70.

rare, appearing only in *Andreas* and *Juliana* but with a different meaning. In *Juliana* 601 the saint is described as *eafoða gemyndig* (mindful of her strength(s)). In this context the strength is mental and spiritual, not physical. As for *ellen*, it 'had ceased to be the instrument of an individual's will to live in the face of an indifferent fate and had become instead the means of counting on protection from a personal God while he faced up to the perils of this life.'[86] Clemoes shows how in the earlier poetry *ellen* was related to the cognitive process, but was not born from it – 'to the Beowulf poet it was a sort of kinetic energy… cooperating with, but not originating in willpower and mental functions generally'.[87] The effect of Christianity on the understanding of the operation of individual action contingently transformed the Anglo-Saxon concept of the individual *per se*. Clemoes writes, 'for the age-long view that individuality was determined by social values and that warrior aristocracy was the determining group the church substituted an individual ultimately answerable to Christ the Judge';[88] he explains the consequence of this on the understanding of the mind

> the effect which the concept of a transcendent thinking self had on poetry was a general one: it produced not so much a sharper definition of identity as an increased emphasis on the individual's representative mental experience.[89]

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[86] Clemoes, *Interactions*,. p. 71.

[87] Clemoes, *Interactions*,. p. 69.

[88] Clemoes, *Interactions*,. p. 363.

[89] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. 392.

An individual's potential for right action becomes a result of individual mental control, right thinking leading to right action no matter the ancestry, rank or sex of the individual concerned.

Clemoes looks closely at the interaction of thought and action in his consideration of the word *cræft* which 'denoted an innate talent which spanned both active being and narrative living.[90] It signified an ability to control action from potential to performance … it clearly afforded poets freedom to express insights right across the spectrum of action from inception to accomplishment, from mental to physical and from good to bad.'[91] The control of action from conception to performance is a recurrent concern that goes beyond the employment of the word *cræft*, but this offers an excellent example of the importance that this sequence had to Anglo-Saxon poets.

Despite indicating a changing relation between thought and action, Clemoes largely focuses on the mental aspect of the equation; an exploration of the way poets present the relation between thought and action is a logical extension of this aspect of Clemoes' work.

Anglo-Saxon emotion has recently been the subject of groundbreaking research. The most influential work in relation to this thesis is Alice Jorgensen's unpublished paper, 'Textual Memory and Emotional Culture: The Legacy of Neoplatonism in the Old English Boethius'. In her deconstruction of the Wheel of Fate image in Chapter

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[90] Clemoes defined 'active being and narrative living' as the 'basic concept of inherited potentials producing characteristic action' (see above).

[91] Clemoes, *Interactions*, p. 78.

39 of the B Text version of the *Old English Boethius*, she notes the increased importance given in the Old English text to the opposition of motion and stillness. This 'contrast between stability and motion… expresses the difference between a God's-eye view of this world and the view of those absorbed in its quotidian doings, but also between psychological and physical calm and distress'.[92] The imagery of stability and movement links stability to the divine and movement to mortality and error and specifically to 'psychological affliction',[93] seeing 'psychological affliction as physical motion'.[94] The importance of the opposition of movement to stasis, equating stasis with wisdom and movement with emotion, is central to this examination of the relation of mental to physical action. The mind is frequently described in physical terms and the sense of its movement directly relates to this trope which Jorgensen has identified in Boethius. Cynewulf exploits the opposition of movement to stasis in both mental and physical acts in *Juliana*. Similarly in *Maldon* steadfastness and movement are presented in terms of right and wrong action, and in all three texts, movement is linked to emotion.

This research does not aim to further a psychological or anthropological understanding of the Anglo-Saxon mind, but it is to be hoped that the results will perhaps contribute to a better understanding of the Anglo-Saxon world picture. Stanley Greenfield wrote that

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[92] Jorgensen, 'Textual Memory', 2015, p. 2. See above 1.2.2 and 1.2.3.

[93] Jorgensen, 'Textual Memory', p. 3.

[94] Jorgensen, 'Textual Memory', p 7.

interpretational validity is 'however elusive and ever-receding ... a desideratum of our critical activity'.[95] An analysis of the poetic manipulation of the interaction of mental and physical acts may advance our understanding of the poems, shedding new light and, in some cases, offering solutions to longstanding cruces.

At times I have borrowed the terminology from Speech Act Theory as it is useful in differentiating certain types of speech act. John Searle argued that speech can be performative, that is to say that it can be used to carry out actions. He made a distinction between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts, and it is these terms that I have borrowed. The illocutionary act is a speech with meaning, such as giving an order, 'chase away your horses from the battlefield' and the perlocutionary act is the resulting effect on the hearer: 'He means business, I will chase my horse away and make sure I fight well.'[96] Whilst I have occasionally made use of these terms, I have not applied Speech Act Theory itself as an analytical method.

The analysis of the texts has not been undertaken in an explicitly comparative way, although points of comparison may well be drawn as a result. Rather each poem is analysed in depth from the point of view of the relationship between thought and action. As a result the chapters are quite distinct in approach and content. There are two chapters on *Maldon*, the first identifying the patterns relating to mental and physical

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[95] Stanley B. Greenfield, *The Interpretation of Old English Poems* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.29.

[96]John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

action and an analysis of the ways in which they contribute to our understanding of the poem, the second considering what this reveals about the poet's attitude towards his subjects and the potential use this may have had as propaganda. The poem is considered within the context of other contemporary accounts of the battle and contemporary political, historical and hagiographical accounts. The relation of thought to action in *The Seafarer* is employed in a way that is quite different from that in *Maldon* and its outlook is also quite other. Where *Maldon* is a record of a real historical event with political implications, *The Seafarer* is a spiritual exploration of the human condition that has much more in common with the homilies and, as Clemoes has shown, a degree of patristic thought. Finally, *Juliana*, as hagiography, belongs to yet another genre and has equally distinct sources and analogues and here too the relation of thought to action is treated quite differently, focussing to a large extent on the battle to maintain mental control and by extension physical control in the face of a demonic onslaught. The symbolic battle here is not unlike the presentation of *The Battle of Maldon*, although the foe is different as are the principal stakes. What is common to all three poems is a conscious reference to the relation between the mental and the physical, despite the widely divergent ways that this relation is employed. There is no sense that this unites them into a new sub-genre; the evidence as we have seen above is that this interaction of mental and physical acts was central to the Anglo-Saxon way of viewing the world, at least when that view was from a Christian perspective, and it permeates a wide variety of texts.

## 2: *The Battle of Maldon*

> O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts;
> Possess them not with fear. Take from them now
> The sense of reckoning, if th'opposed numbers
> Pluck their hearts from them.[97]

### 2.1 Introduction

If we consider the two main categories of Anglo-Saxon protagonist, the Hero and the Saint, we will see that with regards to their self-government there are two basic dangers that face them: cowardice and temptation respectively. In *Maldon* we see heroes who, just as the protagonists of *Guthlac* or *Genesis B* have to fight off temptation, have to fight off the type of thinking that leads to cowardly actions. Some manage successfully, as Guthlac does, others, like Adam, fail. The Hero who has to control his thoughts in order to act correctly, however, does not fit into the usual *sapientia et fortitudo* model that Kaske applied to *Beowulf*.[98] Kaske demonstrates the importance of balance between these two qualities and shows how the poet provides characters to contrast against Beowulf who have either *fortitudo* or *sapientia*, but not both. Hygelac's recklessness in attacking the Franks brings his downfall; Kaske remarks on **'**the absence of a single epithet for him

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[97] *Henry V,* IV. 1. 286-89. All quotations from *Henry V* are from W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Thomson, 1995).

[98] R. E. Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo* as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*', *Studies in Philology*, 55 (1958),423-456.

expressing a variant of *sapiens,* though he is described repeatedly as *fortis*'. He gives as a direct example of this the lines: *hyne wyrd fornam, syþðan he for wlenco wean ahsode, / faehðe to Frysum* (1205-7, fate destroyed him when he, through pride, obtained woe, feud with the Frisians).[99] Interestingly the term for pride here, *wlencu,* does not suggest thought but an innate characteristic, and so 'recklessness', as Kaske puts it, sums up Hygelac's flaw, recklessness being suggestive of absence of thought and here of *sapientia*. Byrhtnoð's flaw, famously described as *ofermod* by the poet is certainly suggestive of thought, being a *mod-* compound.[100] Byrthnoð shares this epithet with the fallen angel who before his fall was exclusively guilty of wrong thinking, never being given the opportunity to act. Whether or not this epithet carries the same value here remains to be seen.

If the *Maldon* heroes do not fit the *sapientia et fortitudo* framework outlined by Kaske, then we might question whether they are a newer type of hero, moulded on a more Christian framework which allows for weakness and admires the overcoming of weakness rather than its absence.

There is a pattern of balance between mental and physical acts in *The Battle of Maldon* which demonstrates the necessity of right thinking in order to obtain right action as the following tables will show. This chapter will seek to explore the significance of this pattern in interpreting the poem.

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[99] Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo'*, p. 440. Translation is my own.

[100] See 2.2 below.

## **2.1.1** Tables showing balance between mental and physical acts

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4a | *hicgan to handum* | Preparation for physical act as direct order from Byrhtnoð. | 4b | *and [hicgan] to hige godum* | Preparation for mental act as direct order from Byrhtnoð. |
| 9 -10a | *þe þam man mihte oncnawan þæt se cniht nolde / wacian æt þam wige* | Intention to maintain positive mental focus inspired by Byrhtnoð. | 10b | *þa he to wæpnum feng* | Anticipation of physical action. |
| 13b | *He hæfde god geþanc* | Mental state inspired by Byrhtnoð. | 14 -15a | *þa hwile þe he mid handum healdan mihte / bord and bradswurd* | Corresponding physical state. |
| 20 -21a | *[Byrhtnoð] bæd þæt hyra randas rihte heoldon / fæste mid folman* | Preparation for physical act as direct order from Byrhtnoð. | 21b | *and ne forhtedon na* | Preparation for mental act as direct order from Byrhtnoð. |
| 80 -81 | *Ælfere and Maccus, modige twegen, / þa noldon æt þam forda fleam gewyrcan* | Mental quality and resolute intention – men are chosen by Byrhtnoð in recognition of these qualities. (Note the choice of *modige* with *mod* root and negation of negative action.) | 82 -83 | *hi fæstlice wið ða fynd weredon, / þa hwile þe hi wæpna wealdan moston* | Resolute action as ordered by Byrhtnoð. |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 122 | *[hyssas] stemnetton* | Physical steadfastness. | 122 | *stiðhicgende* | Mental steadfastness. |
| 123b | *hogodon georne* | Mental anticipation of physical act. | 124-5 | *hwa þær mid orde ærost mihte / wigan mid wæpnum* | Physical act anticipated. |
| 138 | *Gegremod wearð se guðrinc* | Byrtnoð's mental state. Note again choice of *mod* root. | | *he mid gare stang / wlancne wicing* | Byrtnoð's action following mental state. |
| 140a | *Frod wæs se fyrdrinc* | Reference to Byrhtnoð's experience – an element of his mental strength. | 141b | *hand wisode* | Deft physical act reflects experience. Note the transposition of agency to Byrhtnoð's hand as if his physical entity is separate. |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 205-6 | *wlance þegenas, / unearge men* | The remaining men attempt to maintain the balance – their mental state as men who are 'proud' and 'undaunted'. | 206 | *efston georne* | The physical action encapsulates a mental action of eagerness. Since Byrhtnoð's death the tactics seem to have changed. Where before the Anglo-Saxons were immobile – steadfast and resolute – and the Vikings were associated with speed and urgency, now the remaining soldiers seem eager to advance beyond the shield-wall – eagerness perhaps suggesting precipitation. |
| 207 | *hi woldon þa ealle oðer twega* | The warriors prepare themselves mentally, anticipating and intending one of two possible outcomes. | 208 | *lif forlætan oððe leofne gewrecan* | Intended actions |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 212 -224 | *Gemun[aþ]...beot... cunnian...wylle...gec yþan...Ne sceolon...ætwitan... Me is þæt hearma mæst...* | This expression of mental activity is considerably longer than any so far. It encompasses memory, future intention (the vow), knowledge, intention, present consideration of future reputation / memory and present emotion and motivation. | 225 -8 | *he forð eode, fæhðe gemunde, / þæt he mid orde anne geræhte / flotan on þam folce, þæt se on foldan læg / forwegen mid his wæpne* | The action is shorter in comparison and seems to involve the killing of one Viking. There is balance, a life is taken for a life, but there seems to be a slight imbalance here in the importance given to the mental acts in comparison to the physical. That this warrior is young further adds to the sense of disequilibrium – before it was the experienced warriors who accessed memory to encourage and instruct the inexperienced ones. |
| 228 -9 | *Ongan þa winas manian, / frynd and geferan* | Mental act of exhortation becomes mutual, following Byrhtnoð's final instructions. | 229 | *þæt hi forð eodon* | Physical action of advancing. |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 233<br>-5 | *Us is eallum þearf /<br>þæt ure æghwylc<br>oþerne bylde /<br>wigan to wige* | Now warriors, showing understanding of Byrhtnoð's commands and tactics, realise they must encourage one another. | 236<br>-7 | *þa hwile þe he<br>wæpen mæge /<br>habban and healdan* | The oft repeated formula of battle action is anticipated and paired with the need for encouragement. We are reminded that in Byrhtnoð's case, he went beyond this balance as he continued his encouragements even after he could no longer wield his weapons, further demonstrating his superior mental capacity – his *ofermod*. |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 246-52 | *Ic þæt gehate, þæt ic heonon nelle / fleon fotes trym, ac wille furðor gan, / wrecan on gewinne minne winedrihten. / Ne þurfon me embe Sturmere stedefæste hælæð / wordum ætwitan, nu min wine gecranc, / þæt ic hlafordleas ham siðie, / wende fram wige* | Leofsunu demonstrates formal formation of intention through his vow. He looks forward to his future reputation as well as back to the memory off his lord's death | 253b-4 | *He ful yrre wod, / feaht fæstlice, fleam he forhogode* | His mental state – anger - is linked to his present action of advancing. Note that much of Leofsunu's intentions and thoughts are presented negatively as what he did not do or intend to do. |
| 258-9 | *Ne mæg na wandian se þe wrecan þenceð / frean on folce, ne for feore murnan* | Dunnere's advice addresses the soldier's thoughts and intentions to avenge their lord – like Byrhtnoð he helps them to achieve their intention successfully through his advice in guiding their mental state. | 260 | *þa hi forð eodon, feores hi ne rohton* | The action performs the advice and so is perfectly balanced. |

**Fig. 1: Table Showing Balance Between Mental and Physical Action in *The Battle of Maldon*.**

| Line | A | Function | Line | B | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 273b-6 | *Eadweard se langa, / gearo and geornful, gylpwordum spræc / þæt he nolde fleogan fotmæl landes, / ofer bæc bugan, þa his betera leg.* | Eadward's mental state is ready and eager and he expresses his intention to stand firm and avenge his lord. | 277-9 | *He bræc þone bordweall and wið þa beornas feaht, / oðþæt he his sincgyfan on þam sæmannum / wurðlice wrec, ær he on wæle læge.* | Eadward's physical actions mirror his mental intention and preparation perfectly as he avenges his lord and lies dead in the same way, emphasised through the repetition of *licgan*. |
| 289-292 | *he hæfde ðeah geforþod þæt he his frean gehet, / swa he beotode ær wið his beahgifan / þæt hi sceoldon begen on burh ridan, / hale to hame, oððe on here cringan* | As Offa lies dead we are given a retrospective glance at his intention before the fight, simultaneously aware that he was able to fulfil his vow and his mental preparation was therefore successful. | 294 | *he læg ðegenlice ðeodne gehende* | We had a flashback to his mental preparation and now forward to his present state as a result of his noble action – the mental preparation and the end result are offered in an ellipsis which leaves the action to the imagination. |
| 314-315a | *Her lið ure ealdor eall forheawen, / god on greote* | The significant action in this balance is passed. Byrhtnoð has been killed and, it would seem, hacked to pieces. | 315b-316 | *A mæg gnornian / se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð* | The mental activity is the possibility of a present intention to leave and its future consequence. |

## 2.2 *Ofermod* : a source of contention

Byrhtnoð's flaw is defined by the poet as *ofermod*. Literary criticism on *The Battle of Maldon* has tended to see the passage containing this term, lines 86-90, as the crux of the poem. On its interpretation the meaning of the poem, and more especially the nature of the character of Byrhtnoð, depends. A brief overview of the main critical arguments pertaining to *ofermod* will be useful before considering how a contextualisation of the terms within a specific pattern will affect any interpretation of the contentious passage:

> Ongunnon lytegian þa laðe gystas,
> bædon þæt hi upgangan agan moston,
> ofer þone ford faran, feþan lædan.
> Ða se eorl ongan for his ofermode
> alyfan landes to fela laþere ðeode. (86-90)

> The hateful foreigners began to act cunningly,

pleaded[101] that they be allowed to have passage,

to go over the causeway, to lead the soldiers.

Then the nobleman began due to his *ofermod*

to yield too much land to the more hateful people.

The main issue with the term *ofermod* is that in other contexts it implies sinful pride, a criticism of Byrthnoð that jars uncomfortably in an otherwise eulogistic account. Tolkien wrote that 'they are lines in fact of severe criticism, though not incompatible with loyalty, and even love'.[102] George Clark, however, argued for a positive interpretation, on the basis that, 'in the concrete social terms that an Anglo-Saxon audience might most readily have conceived "pride" (*superbia*), Byrhtnoth's *ofermod* and his actions would have been understood in "a good sense"'.[103] The most famous exploration of the term is Gneuss' in-depth study based on an examination, not only of all the different glosses and

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[101] The verb *biddan* is problematic for translation purposes as its meaning is ambiguous. DOE gives: 'ask, pray, exhort, urge, direct, enjoin, command', commenting that 'the semantic gradation ... is such that the exact meaning at each occurrence cannot usually be established'. Bosworth Toller gives: to ask, pray, intreat, beseech, bid, order, require, ask, make a request. *Biddan* cannot be translated with the same value throughout the poem, for instance when Byrhtnoð *bæd* the men *þæt hyra randas rihte heoldon,* line 20, he is clearly giving an order, not making a request. However, in line 262 when the warriors *god bædon*, they must be requesting and cannot be ordering. It would seem logical that when this word is used of the Vikings, they are, ostensibly, making a request; however, in some way Byrhtnoð seems to feel it as a compulsion. Honour seems to dictate that he cannot refuse. It is perhaps this – putting his honour above everything else – that the poet considers proud, if pride is what he is implying by the term. The compulsion masked as request may well be what constitutes the deceit. There are other examples of this type of compulsion from the Vikings, see 3.4 and 3.5 below.

[102] J. R. R. Tolkien, 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son : III *Ofermod*', *Essays and Studies* new series 6 (1953), 1-18, reproduced in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 143-150, (p. 147).

[103] George Clark, 'The Hero of *Maldon*: *Vir Pius et Strenuus*', *Speculum*, 54 (1979), 257-82, (p. 281).

interpretations given so far for *ofermod*, but also of its meaning in other contexts, both prose and poetry as well as that of similar constructions such as *oferhygd*; Gneuss concluded that *ofermod* must realistically be accepted to mean pride and that it is a negative term.[104] Whilst logical, as both Cavill and Clark point out, this cannot be the final word, because Byrhtnoð is presented as 'an outstanding Christian, a model if not a saint'.[105] The sin of pride was deadly, Cavill reminds us; it was Lucifer's sin and thus makes a mockery of Byrhtnoð's moving prayer for the safety of his soul. Cavill also finds a flaw in Gneuss' argument, that although Gneuss remarks upon the polysemy of *mod* and *modig*, he fails to consider that '*ofermod* might have a similar polysemy'.[106] Cavill's conclusion is particularly useful and will be the basis for my own reassessment of the term within the context of a larger structural pattern of balance and excess:

> *Mod* is the characteristic which distinguishes the good from the bad on the English side. As Gneuss has shown, the first element *ofer-* can have intensive force, and it may be that that is the sense to be understood here, where ordinary *mod* is so important. But it would not be entirely inappropriate for the English leader to have an excess of it, and the context, with *landes to fela*, suggests excess. Byrhtwold's maxim, "mod sceal þe mare" (313), sees the

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[104] Helmut Gneuss, '*The Battle of Maldon* 89: Byrhtnoð's *Ofermod* Once Again', *Studies in Philology*, 73 (1976), 117-137.

[105] Paul Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*, Lines 84-90: A Review and Reassessment', *Studia Neophilologica*, 67 (1995), 149-64, (p. 153).

[106] Cavill, 'Interpretation', p. 156

> approaching end of the battle in terms echoing those that started it: it started with *ofermod* and will end demanding more and more *mod* from those who remain.[107]

Cavill is suggesting an element of word play. The word is not entirely to be taken in its usual way as signifying pernicious pride, but literally as the sum of its parts, that is as an excess of *mod*.[108]

### 2.3 *Mod* in Maldon:

Soon-Ai Low's study of *mod* demonstrates that often it is less polysemous than it might appear, and that its interpretation is often largely dependent on context.[109] She gives an example from *Genesis A*, *hire mod astah* with the translation 'her (Hagar's) pride mounted up', commenting, 'though the notion of pride is obviously expressed here, it seems less clear that assigning the sense 'pride' to *mod* is strictly

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[107] Cavill, 'Interpretation', p. 156

[108] More recently Michael Matto's fascinating reading of *Maldon* as a 'war of containment' points out that the episode of the Viking crossing is 'underscored by the striking number of occurrences of the word *ofer'* which he argues, 'increases the significance of the passage because of the importance of maintaining boundaries to Byrhtnoð's concept of heroism.' The use of the compound *ofermod* 'marks a fifth use of the *ofer* in the passage' and Matto concludes that 'by echoing the ominous repetition of *ofer* within the narration of Byrhtnoð's thought-process, the poem brings the psychology of his decision-making together with the schema of containment already established through the various geographic images and the image of the shieldwall.' Michael Matto, 'A War of Containment: The Heroic Image in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 74 (2002), 60-75 (p. 67).

[109] Soon-Ai Low, 'Pride, Courage and Anger: The Polysemousness of Old English *Mod*' in *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, ed. by Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 77-88. Low further explores the possibility that the polysemy it does have is a result of its Indo-European and Germanic roots and reflective of a changing and developing psychology.

necessary. The metaphor implicit in the verb *astigan* 'to ascend' depicts a mind inappropriately exalted'.[110] The same can be said of the construction *ahefan for his ofermod* employed in *Instructions to Christians* (130). If we consider the use of *mod* elsewhere in *Maldon*, we will see that it is mostly used in a positive sense:

- Ælfere and Maccus are a ***modige*** *twegen* (80, a strong-minded pair)
- *þa se eorl ongan for his* ***ofermode****...* (89, then the nobleman began, because of his *ofermod…*)
- *hloh þa,* ***modi*** *man* (147, the brave / great-hearted / proud man laughed)
- ***modiglice*** *manega spræcon* (200, many spoke bravely)
- ***mod*** *sceal þe mare* (313, *mod* must [be] the greater)

*Modiglice* appears in *Andreas*, in a positive sense, to describe three men, one of whom is God in disguise: *he ðær lidweardas,* / *þrymlice þry þegnas <gemette>,* / *modiglice menn, on merebate* / *sittan siðfrome, swylce hie ofer sæ comon* (245-7, he met there ship-guards, three magnificent thanes, *modiglice* men, sitting journey-bold in their sea-ship, as if they had come over the sea). The same term appears in the sermon *De temporibus Anticristi* (attributed by Napier to Wulfstan) to describe the Antichrist: *and rihtlic bið, þæt se godes wiðersaca Antecrist fealle niðer into helle to ðam ealdan deofle his fæder fram þære stowe,*

[110] Low, p. 79.

*þe he swa modiglice mid woge him geahnode* (and it is fitting that God's enemy, Antichrist, fell down into Hell, to that old devil his father from that place, that he so *modiglice* with perverseness had appropriated for himself).[111] That the same word can be used to describe both God and the Antichrist is revealing of its ambiguity, even given the difference of usage between verse and prose. Whilst it may convey an element of pride which is perhaps only appropriate for God, it obviously has no pejorative sense out of context.

*Modig* is more commonly found and while it is often associated with bravery e.g. *Exodus*: *þenden modiges meðel monige gehyrdon* (255, while many listened to the speech of the 'brave' man), it is also associated with pride, glossing *arrogantes* and *superbus*.[112] However in *Andreas* it seems to carry a different signification: *geweotan ða ða witigan þry, modige mearcland tredan*, (801, then the three wise [ones] departed, *modige* they trod the wasteland). The three men in question are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who have just been resurrected to spread God's word. Neither bravery nor pride seem to be fitting in this context. It seems more linked to the idea of wisdom. As such it demonstrates again what an ambiguous term *ofermod* is, but reminds us that at base it is linked to the mind.

An exploration of the patterns used by the poet in the construction of the poem as a whole will provide a framework to understand whether

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[111] Arthur Napier ed. *Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen uber ihre Echtheit* (Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1883), p. 201.

[112] For example in the interlinear version of the *Benedictine Rule: beon ðe modig na* glosses *non esse superbum – The Rule of St Benet,* Logeman, p. 20. See *DOE* for further examples.

these elements can be understood to have a positive or negative connotation in the context of the poem. An understanding of the function of these patterns will not only enable a clearer understanding of the significance of some of these troubling terms, but of the poem as a whole.[113]

## 2.4 The Patterns:

### 2.4.1 Hands and Hearts – Patterns of balance between mental and physical actions and the significance of excess

Certain patterns in the poem have already been identified – Bartlett identified an envelope pattern, or chiasmus;[114] Lord also sees chiasmus in the poem[115] and Phillips writes persuasively on mimetic word order;[116] Laborde identifies a variety of parallelisms[117] and Phillpotts sees certain patterns of repetition as evidence of Old Norse influence.[118] However, beyond seeing these patterns as evidence of

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[113] Reference to the poem 'as a whole' is a figure of speech since we do not have the poem in its entirety; however, examination of the patterns present may also enable us to postulate more confidently what could be missing.

[114] Adeline Courtney Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 9-10.

[115] Albert B. Lord, 'Ring Composition in *Maldon*; or, a Possible Case of Chiasmus in a Late Anglo-Saxon Poem', in *The Ballad and Oral Literature*, ed. by Joseph Harris (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 233-342.

[116] Helen Phillips, 'The Order of Words and Patterns of Opposition in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Neophilologus*, 81 (1997), 117-128.

[117] E. D. Laborde, 'The Style of *The Battle of Maldon*', *Modern Language Review*, 19 (1924), 401-417.

[118] B. S. Phillpotts, '*The Battle of Maldon* : Some Danish Affinities', *Modern Language Review*, 24 (1929), 172-190. See 2.4.4 below.

Norse influence, oral tradition (Lord), or as a means to offset monotony (Laborde), little has been said to show how such patterns may affect meaning at a more fundamental level.

The most common patterns in Anglo-Saxon poetics are those of opposition. These patterns may have been influenced by St Augustine's teaching that the antithesis of good and evil enriches 'the course of the world history by the kind of antithesis which gives beauty to a poem'; antithesis, he argued, 'provides the most attractive figures in literary composition'.[119] Typically these antitheses would be: good-evil, light-dark, above-below, hot-cold and so on. Another type of pattern runs throughout *Maldon* with the collocation of thought and action. These are not antithetical; on the contrary, thought and action are elements which must work together as will be shown. Thought here has become a necessary prelude to successful action; the balance between the two, or the lack of it, provides an overarching theme.

Engberg writes 'a healthy man is one who is both mentally and physically able, that is a man whose mental and physical abilities are balanced';[120] whilst I agree that the importance of a balance between the mental and physical is crucial to our understanding of the poem, I disagree that these are presented as innate qualities in the men who are acting in the poem. Indeed it is Byrhtnoð who attempts to impart this balance in the first instance, and the repetition of the verbs *onginnan*

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[119] St Augustine, *The City of God*, XI. 18, ed. G. R. Evans and tr. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), p.449.

[120] Norma J. Engberg, '*Mod - Mægen* Balance in *Elene*, *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Wanderer*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 85 (1984), 212-226, p.216.

and *weorðan* often introduce a progression in these attempts. Further patterns of repetition or echoing of words and ideas appear and are interlaced within a larger pattern of balance and excess. In place of a consistent focus on the opposition of two sides that a description of battle naturally offers, we have instead cause and effect,[121] which, coupled with the periodic references to time and fate, gives a certain sense of inevitability.

Unlike *The Battle of Brunanburh,* where the battle is described almost entirely in terms of actions with a lexis centring on weapons and deeds, *The Battle of Maldon* reveals that the poet is at pains to establish a balance between the physical and mental acts that a warrior may perform in battle. The warrior has both incorporeal and physical means at his disposal. By incorporeal I mean those elements that are mental, psychological or spiritual. His physical means are his body – most notably hands and arms, his physical strength, his weapons and armour; the mental acts in *Maldon* fall under several categories:

- Being resolute or steadfast
- Focussing mentally
- Accessing memory
- Forming and maintaining intention
- Understanding or becoming aware

[121]Michael Kightley observes, 'the poet makes the poem as highly causal as possible, by providing instance after instance of causes, many of them followed shortly by direct effect. He is, therefore, not only describing events, but also constructing a series of causal links between those events'. Michael R. Kightley, 'Communal Interdependence in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 82 (2010), 58-68, (p.60).

- Accessing and sharing experience

These mental acts refer to what today we would call ‘psyching’. The men access their memory to remember the vows they have made, the advantages their lord has given them and what they owe in consequence, and the reputation of their family name, all of which serve to strengthen them in their resolve. They form the intention to fight well and hold their ground. The older warriors can also access previous experience and use this to inform themselves and those around them. The men listen to their leaders and comrades and the encouragement given enables them to maintain or renew their resolve. All of these acts are necessary preludes to right action; equally the absence of these, or the presence of other more negative acts such as focussing on the risk of death will lead to a loss of resolve and ultimately flight. The shield wall stance of Byrhtnoð’s tactics makes this an opposition between stasis and movement – standing your ground or running away.There are other actions which seem to bridge mental and physical action, such as encouraging, giving orders, explaining, instructing and requesting. These are speech acts, but they can be aligned to both mental or physical actions, so encouragement, for example, will produce mental resolution which will then enable successful physical action.[122]

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[122] The terminology adopted from Speech Act Theory is useful in differentiating certain types of speech act. See: John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

Dolores Warwick Frese writes that 'the poetry…everywhere in Maldon, insists on being perceived as utterance, consciously heard and spoken'. [123] Few critics today would argue that the utterances in *Maldon* are records of what was actually said, and so, as Frese argues, they must be seen as dramatic devices employed by the poet. Byhrtnoð's instructions aim to influence the minds of his soldiers – he is teaching them to control their own minds. In contrast to the way that the devil's teaching (*deofles lar*) aims to provoke movement in the mind of a Christian to turn it away from God, Byhrtnoð's teaching encourages steadfastness of mind and body. Steadfastness and stasis are ideals for both the soldier of Christ and the English *fyrd*.

The attributes identified above overlap to some extent with Kaske's *sapientia*; the qualities of *sapientia* he identified for Beowulf were: 'practical cleverness, skill in words and works, knowledge of the past, ability to predict accurately, prudence, understanding, and the ability to choose and direct one's conduct rightly'.[124] Such qualities are drawn on by Byrhtnoð and he uses his own experience to direct and control his men's mental focus. However, what we have here is not a presentation of passive qualities but mental acts of resolution and intention. The mental strength presented in the poem seems to emanate primarily from Byrhtnoð himself, his example and exhortations leading his faithful followers to emulate and adopt his approach.

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[123] Dolores Warwick Frese, 'Poetic Prowess in *Brunanburh* and *Maldon*: Winning, Losing, and Literary Outcome' in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 83-100 (p.92).

[124] Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo*', (p. 425).

I have deliberately omitted acts of courage from the list, as courage seems to be, in the *Maldon* framework at least, a by-product of successful mental control, a way of defining successful physical acts.[125] This poem does not deal in terms of bravery and cowardice; they are qualities of personality and in the *Maldon* world there are only brave acts and cowardly acts. It is clear in *Maldon* that each man is capable of either. If Godric is described by Offa as *earh* (238, cowardly) it is a judgement based on his actions and not on his potential to act. The question is not to be brave, but to control one's thoughts and focus them in the right way – forward in intention, backward in memory and accessing experience and focussing on the immediate acts of holding a shield or swinging a sword, keeping a shield wall or moving forward and not thinking about death other than to accept it. Eadric looks backward to the vow he made and forward in intention to support his leader. His mental state, *god geþanc,* is linked to his physical ability to hold his weapons, *he hæfde god geþanc* / *þa hwile þe he mid handum healdan mihte* / *bord and brad swurd* (11-16, he had noble purpose as long as he could hold with his hands shield and broad sword). These mental acts successfully performed will lead to positive acts and failure to perform these mental acts correctly will lead to acts of cowardice, but the potential for each man to do either is there.Janet Bately's in-depth study of the vocabulary of bravery in both *Maldon* and *Beowulf* finds that for the most part the words such as '*mod* and compounds in *mod*, are, like *hyge* and its compounds, wholly dependent on the contexts in

[125] This presumes that the translation of certain mind terms such as *hige* are not accurately rendered directly by terms for courage.

which they are used for their interpretation in any positive sense';[126] Bately concludes 'in *Maldon*, what bravery words there are in that part of the poem that has come down to us are linked to the hope / expectation / intention of brave behaviour (or braveness of mind), rather than to specific actions of boldness or bravery'.[127] This is a significant nuance. The men are not innately brave or cowardly; they all have the potential to act in a brave or cowardly way. It is the success or failure of their mental preparation that will determine the outcome of their behaviour. This preparation will take the form of focussing attention on correct stance and weapon holding and away from thoughts of death;[128] remembering vows and remembering what they owe to their lord; anticipating their future reputation and how it will affect their kin; forming the intention of killing the enemy for glory or for revenge and thinking of their comrades in arms. Failure to perform these acts correctly, so thinking of death, forgetting what is owed to their lord or mistakenly believing that their lord has fled will lead to an act of cowardice in the form of flight.

Whatever happened in the opening of the poem, now lost, must have been highly significant as what follows implies a change of tactics and thought patterns. It is what prompts Byrhtnoð to order his men to chase

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[126] Janet Bately, 'The Vocabulary of Bravery in *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon*', in *Unlocking The Word Hoard: Anglo Saxon Studies in the Memory of Edward B. Irving Jr.,* ed. by Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 274-301, (p. 285). Soon-Ai Low has similarly concluded that the interpretation of *mod* depends on context. See 2.3 above.

[127] Bately, p. 294.

[128] See 2.4.4 below where it is shown that, to a degree, mental strength is dependent on physical strength.

their horses into the woods – indicated by *þa*, line 2 – which in turn prompts Offa's kinsman to free his hawk and to send it into the woods after the horses. We will probably never know what the missing lines were, but the patterns of repetition in the poem might offer a clue, as will patterns involving the verb *weorðan* which, as we will see later, introduce significant moments in the poem. We have the two last words of the missing pasage, *brocen wurde*. All other references to things being broken are linked to shields: lines 241-2 when the cowards flee, the army is *totwæmed*, broken up, and the shield wall is *tobrocen* (broken). In line 279, conversely in an act of bravery, Eadward *se langa* breaks the shield wall the better to fight and finally in line 297 battle is raging as shields crash, expressed as *ða wearð borda gebræc* where again we have the collocation of *bord* (shield) with *brecan* (to break) and the verb *weorðan* (to become) acting here as an auxilliary. It is therefore a valid hypothesis that a shield wall is the subject of that first line. The verb *weorðan* in the form *wurde* could either be a preterite or a subjunctive. Since there is no further mention of something that has been broken, it appears more likely that it is the subjunctive and something caused Byrhtnoð to take action 'lest the shield wall be[come] broken', thus prompting him to get rid of the horses as a tempting means to a quick getaway. Given that they have not yet confronted the Vikings, a tempting possibility is that the English troops have arrived and seen the extent of the Viking army for the first time – a negative reaction to this prompting Byrhtnoð's fears. Whether or not this is the case, it is clear in Byrhtnoð's command to chase the horses away that

he is aware of the possibility of flight and, we learn later in line 198, this potential for cowardly action has already been anticipated by Offa. Whatever prompted this sequence of actions and reactions necessitated a demonstration of Byrhtnoð's resolution and provoked a series of resolutions in his followers.

Critics, such as Shippey, see Offa's warning as evidence that 'Offa was clearly right, where Byrhtnoth was wrong';[129] this is to ignore the implications of Byrhtnoð's order for the men to chase away their horses into the woods.

2.4.1.2 Balance in section I, lines 1-88

The table at the end of this chapter shows the evidence for a pattern of balance between mental and physical acts as defined above. The first ten lines of the poem extant contain a complex interweaving of thoughts prompting actions and actions prompting thoughts.[130]

brocen wurde.
Het þa hyssa hwæne  hors forlætan,
feor afysan,  and forð gangan,
hicgan to handum  and to hige godum.

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[129] T. A. Shippey, 'Boar and Badger: An Old English Heroic Antithesis?', *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985), 221-39 (p.231).

[130] Although the poem is structured in two main parts: before and after the death of Byrhtnoð, I have divided the first part into two at the moment where Byrhtnoð allows safe passage to the Vikings l.89. This moment, which the poet describes as due to the leader's *ofermod*, could be described in classical terms as his *hamartia.*

Þa þæt Offan mæg ærest onfunde,

þæt se eorl nolde yrhðo geþolian,

he let him þa of handon leofne fleogan

hafoc wið þæs holtes, and to þære hilde stop.

Be þam man mihte oncnawan þæt se cniht nolde

wacian æt þam wige, þa he to wæpnum feng. (1-10)

...be broken.

[He] then commanded each of the warriors to leave his horse

to drive [it] far off and to walk forth,

to focus thoughts on hands and noble [state of] mind.[131]

When Offa's kinsman first discovered that,

[namely] that the nobleman did not intend to tolerate cowardice,[132]

he then let fly from his hands his beloved

hawk towards the woods, and advanced to the battle.

From that [a] man could understand that the young man did not intend to weaken at the battle when he took weapons.

Whatever broke or was in danger of breaking in line 1 prompted Byrhtnoð to order the men to chase their horses away. This is

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[131] There is some debate about the exact meaning of *hige*; it is sometimes translated as 'courage', but, as Bately has shown, although it can be associated with courage in certain contexts, it does not carry that meaning in and of itself.

[132] The translation of *irgð* as 'cowardice' is not entirely satisfying; however if it does signify cowardice it would suggest that either Byrhtnoð anticipated the cowardly behaviour of certain of the men who fled, or that he knew that in a battle any of his men had the potential to perform a cowardly act if they failed to keep the correct mental focus. BT gives: 'sluggishness, cowardice, timorousness, pusillanimity' for *irgþ*; the term may signify not so much cowardice as lack of vigour or intensity.

suggested by the adverb *þa;* whether it is sequential or causal, Byrhtnoð's decision seems prompted by whatever had just occurred. His order, an act in itself,[133] obliges the men to balance the physical acts of driving off their horses and marching forward with the mental acts of focussing on their hands and a noble frame of mind. It is very similar to Hnæf's exhortation to his men in *The Finnsburh Fragment*:

> Ac onwacnigeað nu  wigend mine,
> habbað eowre linda,  hicgeað on ellen,
> windað[134] on orde,  wesað onmode!  (10-12)

> But awake now my warriors,
> take your shields, focus your minds on courage,
> turn to the front, be resolute!

The balance of mental and physical acts is there. Significantly, however, Hnæf asks his men to focus on *ellen,* where Byrhtnoð does not. In *Maldon,* on seeing the physical act of chasing away the horses, Offa's young kinsman performs the mental acts of first understanding his leader's mental state i.e. not to tolerate cowardice or slackness, and then of forming the intention to maintain a strong mental state himself which will balance his physical state of weapon holding. The verb *wacian* applies to both his mental and physical strength. Just as Offa's

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[133] The command is a speech act, bridging the space between thought and action. See 2.4 above.

[134] Following Tolkien who keeps manuscript *windað on orde*, 'turn to the front'.

kinsman understood Byrhtnoð's mental resolution on seeing the consequent physical actions, so, we are told, anyone watching this young man would see him releasing his hawk and sending it to the woods after the horses and take this as a sign of his intention not to weaken either mentally or physically.

The verb *willan*, here in the negative phrase, *se earl nolde* (6) and echoed in line 9, *se cniht nolde* embodies the idea of intention; we learn what the warriors did or did not intend through the responses of others to their actions. *Willan* appears no fewer than twenty times in the poem, clearly underlining the importance of intention in the poet's equation of mental and physical balance.

The chasing away of the horses is a significant physical act and may signify more than one mental act. We are told by the poet that it is interpreted as signifying Byrhtnoð's intention to not tolerate *irgð*. *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* for 994, 999 and 1010 tells us that the Vikings took horses, in 999 and 1010 after having gained possession of the battlefield. The wording in both cases is similar, almost formulaic, 999: *Þa ahton þa Dæniscan wælstowe geweald and naman þa hors and ridan swa wide swa hi woldon sylf* [135] (then had the Danish control of the place of slaughter and they took then horses and rode as widely as they themselves wanted), and 1010: *Þa Dæniscan ahton wælstowe geweald and þær wurdon gehorsode and syððon ahton Eastengle geweald,* [136] (the Danish had control of the place of slaughter and there

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[135] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A Collaborative Edition*, Vol. VII, MS.E, ed., Susan Irvine (Cambridge: Brewer), 2004, p. 63.

[136] Ibid., pp. 67-8.

were horsed and afterwards they had control of East Anglia) echoing *Maldon* 94-5, *god ana wat / hwa þære wælstowe wealdan mote,* (God alone knows who may control this place of slaughter). For this reason Scragg surmises that Byrhtnoð's order was to prevent the Vikings from getting the horses; this seems a sound assumption as the Chronicle implies that this was a real and serious danger.[137] If this is the case it shows Byrthnoð was taking precautions against the possibility of defeat to limit the amount of damage the Vikings could wreak. However this does not explain why it is taken as a message by Byrhtnoð's own troops. It seems logical to assume that although any horses used to come to battle would be left behind the shield-wall, they would not normally be chased away because they would be needed for the return trip. This advance to battle now seems to be on a one-way ticket. They are not going to need their horses as they may well not return. Beyond this, there is a further symbolic element: horses were very valuable possessions; that the men are parting with earthly treasures implies a preparation for death.[138] This is further enhanced when Offa's kinsman releases his 'beloved hawk'; the emotive term *leofne* underlines the

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[137] Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 68, n.2.

[138] The lives of good Christians often relate a giving away of earthly treasures in preparation for death. In Cuthbert's account of the death of Bede, the holy man gives away his few treasured possessions, "I have a few treasures in my little box: pepper, handkerchiefs and incense. Run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery to me, so that I can distribute to them these little gifts which God has given me", from 'Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede' in *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and tr. by Leo Shirley Price and D.H.Farmer (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 359.

significance of the separation.[139] We are reminded later, when Odda's son steals Byhrtnoð's horse, just what valuable treasures horses were, given like golden rings as rewards. These acts of separation then are an outward sign of an interior mental resolution and they are taken as a sign of this by any onlookers; thus the poet puts the audience in the position of onlooker and directs us to interpret what we 'see' in this way. Eadric continues the balance:

> Eac him wolde Eadric  his ealdre gelæstan,
> frean to gefeohte;  ongan þa forð beran
> gar to guþe.  He hæfde god geþanc
> þa hwile þe he mid handum  healdan mihte
> bord and brad swurd;  beot he gelæste
> þa he ætforan his frean  feohtan sceolde.  11-16

> Likewise Eadric wanted for himself to support his leader,
> [his] lord in the fight; he began then to carry forth
> [his] spear to battle. He had noble purpose
> as long as he could hold with his hands
> shield and broad sword; he fulfilled his vow
> when he had to fight before his lord.

[139] Matto sees the releasing of the hawk *wið þæs holtes* (8) as 'establishing a boundary between the men's battlefield and the animals' woods', the significance of which is heightened when later the cowards flees to those woods. Matto, 'War of Containment', p.62

Here again we have balance; Eadric's mental act of intention to support his leader is balanced with the physical act of carrying his spear to the battle. Much like the loosing of the hawk, the act is a sign of the resolution preceding it. His noble purpose is balanced against his ability to carry his weapons. The fulfilling of the vow is a balance in itself. The vow, a speech act, is an outward manifestation of inward resolution and the keeping of the vow is the action. It is implied here that Eadric further performed an act of memory in remembering the vow as he went to fight (15-16).

The poet's focus returns to Byrhtnoð as he ranges his troops:

> Ða þær Byrhtnoð ongan beornas trymian,
> rad and rædde, rincum tæhte
> hu hi sceoldon standan and þone stede healdan,
> and bæd þæt hyra randan rihte heoldon
> fæste mid folman, and ne forhtedon na. (17 -21)
>
> Then Byrhtnoð began to array the warriors there,
> [he] rode and instructed, showed the men
> how they should stand and hold the place,
> and ordered that [they] hold their shields properly
> firmly with [their] hands, and not be afraid at all.

The physical act of standing firm is balanced with the mental act of not being afraid. It is perhaps interesting that this idea is expressed in a

negative; it demands that the men avoid fearful thoughts not that they adopt brave ones. The absence of the notion of bravery is particularly marked. This same method is used by Dunnere after Byrhtnoð's death, when he says *ne mæg na wandian se þe wrecan þenceð* / *frean on folce, ne for feore murnan* (258-9, [he] cannot flinch at all who thinks to avenge his lord on the [opposing] army; nor can he mourn / pay heed to his life). Attention is drawn to the mental act of intention as well as the avoidance of fear (implied by *wandian*) and thinking of death; these are necessary mental acts in order to accomplish physically this intention. Being brave is a nebulous concept, what exactly would one focus on? These acts of avoidance, though expressed in the negative, are realistic and rational.[140] By coupling his instruction with a reference to shields, Byrhtnoð gives balance here; a reminder of the defensive properties of the shield may help the men to retain the confidence needed to avoid being afraid. Byrhtnoð's own positive mental state seems to depend on, or at least be augmented by, proximity to his *heorðwerod*, which he *holdost wiste*, (24, knew to be most loyal). Later events will prove this to be an error of judgement. The inclusion of this detail, therefore, is perhaps dramatic irony.

The next section of the poem provides a pause in the English preparation for battle. The Vikings send a messenger to challenge the English and a flyting sequence ensues where any obvious pattern of

[140] Of course modern psychology will tell us that this is negative suggestion and that the result will be the opposite of that intended; to a modern reader this may provide further explanation for the cowardly flight.

mental and physical balance is suspended.[141] After the exchange there is a period of waiting, and where before we had balance, we now have imbalance and excess. Thus far all action has been preparatory. After witnessing the tense flyting match between their leader and the Viking messenger, the men want to engage in combat and the wait becomes unbearable:

> Het þa bord beran  beornas gangan,
> þæt hi on þam easteðe  ealle stodon.
> Ne mihte þær for wætere  werod to þam oðrum;
> þær com flowende  flod æfter ebban,
> lucon lagustreamas.  To lang hit him þuhte
> hwænne hi togædere  garas beron. (62-7)

> [He] ordered the warriors then to carry their shields, to go
> so that they all stood on the river-bank.
> The troops could not [get to each] other because of the water;
> The flood-tide came flowing after the ebb-tide,
> locked sea-currants. It seemed to them too long
> until they might carry their spears together.

Time is an important element in this battle; Byrhtnoð's mental tactics are akin to what modern athletes refer to as 'psyching', and for this to work, the physical action needs to follow without too much delay or the

[141] This passage is analysed in detail below at 3.3.

carefully nurtured focus on weapons and hands and intention will give way. The men are eager to carry their spears to the fight and so the wait is ‘too long’. The balance between mental and physical action has been lost, giving way to excess – excess in the sense of an imbalance between one or other of the mental or physical sides of the equation, here implied in the phrase *to lang*. Excess in the poem tends to indicate danger to the English side. The sense of balance and opposition is echoed in the movement of the water, the ebb and flow of the sea currents.

> Het þa hæleða hleo  healdan þa bricge
> wigan wigheardne  se wæs haten Wulfstan,
> cafne mid his cynne,  þæt wæs Ceolan sunu
> þe ðone forman man  mid his francan ofsceat
> þe þær baldlicost  on þa bricge stop.
> Þær stodon mid Wulfstane  wigan unforhte,
> Ælfere and Maccus,  modige twegen.
> Þa noldon æt þam forda  fleam gewyrcan
> ac hi fæstlice  wið ða fynd weredon
> þa hwile þe hi wæpna  wealdan moston. (74-83)

> Then the protector of heroes commanded to hold the causeway
> a war-hardened warrior who was called Wulfstan,
> bold as was his kin, he that was Ceola’s son
> who pierced the first man with his spear

who there most boldly advanced on the crossing.
There stood with Wulfstan unafraid warriors,
Ælfere and Maccus, a strong-minded pair.
They did not intend to take flight from the ford
but they defended resolutely against the enemies
while they were able to wield weapons.

As the tide changes, Byrhtnoð orders his men to hold the causeway. Wulfstan, a battle-hardened warrior, is experienced and with him are Ælfere and Maccus, described as *modige twegen* (l.80). Scragg translates *modige* as 'heroic'. It has various meanings, but at base it is *mod* rendered as an adjective. It refers to a state of mind. Their intention is to stay put and defend the causeway; this is balanced against their physical ability to wield weapons.[142] It is made clear that this activity requires both mental and physical strength. This will be the last time that the English will have the advantage. Thus far Byrhtnoð's tactics have been successful and he is referred to as the protector of heroes. The Vikings are about to practise some form of deceit on Byrhtnoð in order to get safe passage across the causeway and from then on the English advantage is lost.

2.4.1.3 Balance in section II, lines 89-180

[142] For a full exploration of the 'while he could hold weapons' formula, see 2.4.3 below.

The next section of the poem takes us from Byrhtnoð's apparent error to his death.

> Ða se eorl ongan,  for his ofermode,
> alyfan landes to fela  laþere ðeode.
> Ongan ceallian þa  ofer cald wæter
> Byrhtelmes bearn  (beornas gehlyston):
> 'Nu eow is gerymed,  gað ricene to us,
> guman to guþe.  God ana wat
> hwa þære wælstowe  wealdan mote.'  (89-95)

> Then began the nobleman, due to his *ofermod*,
> to yield too much land to the more hateful people.
> Byrhthelm's son began to call out then
> over cold water (men listened):
> 'Now room is made for you, come quickly to us,
> men to the fight. God alone knows
> who may control this place of battle.'

Critics who claim that the word *ofermod*[143] cannot but signify excessive pride invariably refer to the description of Satan in *Genesis B*. However Byrhtnoð's avoidance of agency is not typical of a man with excessive pride. Neither in his first speech to the Viking messenger, nor in this one does he use the first person singular directly. In his first speech he

[143] See above 2.2 and below Chapter 3.

speaks in the name of his people (45, *þis folc)* and of himself in the third person (51, *unforcuð eorl*) as the undisgraced earl. He refers to himself with a possessive adjective in relation to his king (53, [*Æþelred*] *ealdres mines*), and in an object pronoun to give an opinion (55, *me þinceð*) when he claims that the Vikings' proposition seems to him too shameful. Thereafter he uses the first person plural (*we, us, urne*) to refer to the fighting troop collectively. If we compare this to Satan's speeches in *Genesis B* before and after the fall, we will see that Satan's first speech where the sin of pride manifests itself is characterised by the use of the first person pronoun (*ic*) and the second speech after the fall is remarkable for its absence as the fallen angel licks his wounds. The *Maldon* poet does not show a boastful leader in Byrhtnoð's first speech. He is patriotic, and loyal to his king and men, but he does not speak for himself as an individual. In Byrhtnoð's second speech (93-5), individual agency is again avoided, though for different reasons,[144] and the dignified defiance of the first speech is absent. A further example of the expression *for his ofermode* is found in *Instructions to Christians*: *ac se ðe sylfne to swiðe ahefð* / *for his ofermode*, *he bið earm for gode* (130, but [the one] who raises himself up greatly because of his *ofermod*, he will be pitiful before God). Again the contexts are not comparable; Byrhtnoð may have made an error of judgement in the poet's opinion, but he has not 'raised himself up', if anything he is quite humble here – certainly in relation to God. It seems clear in the use of the phrase in

[144] Where in his first speech Byrhtnoð avoids agency to counter the Viking tactic of singling him out for individual responsibility, here he seems to be distancing himself from his decision, one that he knows has changed the balance of power away from the English; it suggests resignation or regret far more than pride.

*Instructions to Christians* that the noun *ofermod* is placed in opposition to the adjective *earm*. For *earm* DOE gives 'miserable, wretched, unhappy' for people, but also 'base' and 'lowly' with reference to animals or social status; where *ofermod* is linked to a high position with *ahefan*, *earm* suggests a low one. Most of the examples of *ofermod* are linked to height or haughtiness. It is clear, particularly at this point in the poem, that Byrhtnoð is not in any way elevating himself. If his reason for letting the Vikings across was an excessive belief in his own powers, why the change in tone – in direct speech – following this term? Where his first speech was defiant and possibly haughty, this speech is not. It is in direct contrast to any expectation of haughtiness that the term *ofermod* invites. Although the note of censure is undeniable, the term *ofermod* understood in its usual sense clashes with the context here. This adds to the argument above that there is an element of word-play here and that the term must be taken in the holistic context; that is in the pattern of mental and physical balance that the poem has established.

Within this pattern it is the use of the prefix *ofer-* and the modifier *to* that are most significant as they signify excess. We have already seen an example of excess linked to Byrhtnoð in the more apparently benign *leofost* (23). This indicated a fault in his thinking, an excessive confidence in his men that events will prove misplaced. Here again, excess signals the break-down of balance and heralds danger for the English forces.

Byrhtnoð is aware that the English have now lost their advantage when he says that God alone knows who will control the battlefield. This can be interpreted in two ways: firstly it may suggest change, thus *now* only God can know, or it may refer to all time, in the sense that fate is already decided: whatever Byrthnoð decides to do or not do, the outcome is predestined by God. Certainly the lines that follow closely at 104-5 imply this: *wæs seo tid cumen / þæt þær fæge men feallan sceoldon* (the time was come when doomed men had to fall).

The battle begins and here for a while all sense of balance is lost. The chaos of war is action-centred:

> Þær wearð hream ahafen;  hremmas wundon,
> earn æses georn;  wæs on eorþan cyrm.
> Hi leton þa of folman  feolhearde speru,
> [grimme] gegrundene  garas fleogan;
> bogan wæron bysige,  bord ord onfeng.
> Biter wæs se beaduræs;  beornas feollon
> on gehwæðere hand,  hyssas lagon.  (106-112)

> Then an outcry was raised up; ravens circled,
> [the] eagle eager for carrion; uproar was on Earth.
> They then let fly from their hand the file-hard spears,
> cruelly sharpened pikes;
> bows were busy, shield received point.
> Bitter was the rush of battle; warriors fell

on either hand, warriors lay [slain].

It is as if the shields and bows have minds of their own and the spears are throwing themselves into the air; the verbs *lætan* and *fleogan* form the same construction as in line 7, when the young warrior let fly his hawk to the woods;[145] we remember that this was seen as a sign of inward resolution. Here, however, there is no mention of inward thought. The first part of the poem shows acts of physical and mental preparation, here there is only physical action. The mental preparation for this onslaught has already taken place and so the bows and shields seem to take agency and fight the battle for themselves. This conveys the terrible chaos of war. The passage is effective and short. Soon, however, the warriors must adapt to the changing situation and so the poet returns us to the men's thoughts as they prepare to react to the events of battle.

Wund wearð Wulfmær,  wælræste geceas,
Byrhtnoðes mæg:  he mid billum wearð,
his swustersunu,  swiðe forheawen,
þær wærð wicingum  wiþerlean agyfen.  (113-116)

Wulfmær became wounded, chose the rest of the slain,[146]
Byrhtnoð's kinsman: he was with swords,

[145] Although the term can be rendered by 'spears flew', the assimilation with the hawk suggests that the spears had the same independent volition as the bird.

[146] 'The rest of the slain' is a figure of speech signifying death.

his sister's son, cruelly hacked,

then were the Vikings given requital.

Again the poet's use of agency has a curious effect. Although to 'choose the rest of the slain' may be a poetic figure, in the context of this poem it does seem to suggest a real choice, a decision on the warrior's part to die this death. Although the Vikings are clearly to blame and requital is sought, they are not given agency in the death; Wulfmær is cruelly hacked with swords, as if the swords themselves had agency or as if this were all part of Wulfmær's choice. By making death a choice, the poet begins to bring us back to the men's mental activity and the need for balance between the mental and the physical.

Byrhtnoð takes the time to thank Eadward, who has avenged the death; a curious pause in the rush of battle. It pulls us back from the chaos of the beasts of battle and returns control to the English soldiers. Not the control that they had in the beginning perhaps, but control at least of their manner of fighting and dying.

Swa stemnetton,  stiðhicgende,

hysas æt hilde,  hogodon georne

hwa þær mid orde  ærost mihte

on fægean men  feorh gewinnan,

wigan mid wæpnum.  Wæl feol on eorðan.

Stodon stædefæste,  stihte hi Byrhtnoð,

bæd þæt hyssa gehwylc  hogode to wige

þe on Denon wolde  dom gefeohtan.  (122-129)

So [they] stood firm, firm of purpose
young men at battle, [they] thought eagerly
which of them with [spear] point might first
take life from doomed men,
warriors with weapons. The slain fell on earth.
[They] stood steadfast, Byrhtnoð exhorted them,
asked that each of the young men direct his thoughts to battle
he who wanted to win glory by fighting the Danes.

Here order, of a sort, seems to have been restored. The men standing firm – physical act – is balanced against their mental act, being firm of purpose. Their mental state is eager as they focus on how to use their weapons to achieve their goal. We see a coming together of Byrhtnoð's earlier instructions on how to think and how to hold weapons as they focus their minds on this. This is briefly interrupted by the news that the slain are falling, but this time there is no sense of chaos; the men stand firm. Once again Byrhtnoð exhorts his men, and once again he directs the men's thoughts, not their actions. They must direct their thoughts to battle if they want to win. What the men can win is not the battle, but glory. At no point has Byrhtnoð talked of winning the battle, yet here it seems more marked that what can be won is limited.

Lines 130-80 focus on an individual confrontation between Byrthnoð and a Viking warrior. The physical exchange of spears and sword blows

echoes the earlier exchange of wits between Byrhtnoð and the Viking messenger (29-61). Within the larger pattern we have a balancing of mental duelling, expressed in a battle of words, with a physical one, each time pitting Byrhtnoð against a representative of the Viking army: *eode swa anræd eorl to þam ceorle, / ægþer hyra oðrum yfeles hogode,* (132-3, thus resolute, the nobleman advanced to the yeoman each intended evil to the other). Again the physical act, advancing, is balanced with a mental one, thinking hate-filled thoughts. The exchange is balanced further by the exchange of spears. However there is a moment of excess expressed by a comparative, *se eorl wæs þe bliþra* (146, the nobleman was the more jubilant). We have noted that excess tends to indicate danger for the English side and as Byrhtnoð laughs in his exultation, at the same time giving thanks to God, he is struck down fatally by a light Viking spear. Here we do have an example of pride; Scragg points out that the description of Byrhtnoð's death, lines 146b-51, also contains subtle criticism by the poet encoded in the poetic structure, 'just at the moment that he is exulting at the skill with which he has disposed of a Viking who attacked him and giving thanks to God for it, he is fatally wounded...Byrhtnoð is struck down in his pride. The turn of Fortune's wheel, following so closely on the mention of God 'the Measurer' [Metod], cannot be coincidental'.[147] As Byrhtnoð lies dying, he manages to show a more positive example of mental excess by continuing to give his warriors encouragement, thus bolstering their mental strength, even though he can no longer wield his

[147] Scragg, ed., *Battle of Maldon*, p. 39.

weapons.[148] This section closes with Byrhtnoð's prayer which, as we shall see, forms part of another internal structural pattern.[149]

2.4.1.4 Balance in section III, lines 90 to 325

Almost immediately after Byrhtnoð's death as he and the two warriors at his side are cut down, a group of soldiers takes flight. Such an act was anticipated in the setting free of the horses in line 2 and all of Byrhtnoð's careful instruction and preparation was an attempt to offset the fear which leads to cowardly acts, including his dying injunction to his men *gangan forð gode geferan* (170, to go forth as loyal comrades in arms). The notion of loyalty and its importance in this kind of battle is central to the poem. This poem not only describes the loss of a battle, but the failure of a system.

We are now pitched into the reality of what happens when the correct mental acts fail. Odda's sons' acts are a negative print of what they should be. *Hi bugon þa fram beaduwe þe þær beon noldon* (185, those that did not want to be there turned away from the battle). *Willan* in the negative gives us the intention of these men; it is in opposition to the intentions of the other loyal warriors.We have seen that right thinking leads to right action and that Byrhtnoð aims to control the thinking of his men in order for them to perform well in battle. On Byrhtnoð's death this influence disappears and some warriors fail to perform the mental acts

[148] See 2.4.3 below.

[149] See 2.4.2 below.

of memory (duty and oaths) and resolution to stand firm and fight, instead forgetting what they owed to their leader and focussing on fear they flee. Their mental acts match their physical acts, but because they are the wrong ones this results in cowardice and flight: *Godwine and Godwig, guþe ne gymdon, / ac wendon fram þam wige and þone wudu sohton* (192-3, Godwin and Godwig did not care about the battle, but turned away from the fight and sought the woods). Here, of course, we are reminded of the lines which open the poem as we have it, where the horses were chased to the woods to avoid just this type of flight. This makes the brothers seem animal-like as they join the horses and the hawk, without giving them the more complimentary animal status of beasts of battle that was accorded the Vikings. There is irony in the fact that it is Byrhtnoð's horse that they take. Whilst Byrhtnoð ordered the men to chase their horses away (2-3), he remained astride his own, only dismounting (23) when he had rallied his troops. Did he keep his horse out of pride, knowing he was the only one who would not flee because he had the greatest mental focus? The horse should have reminded the men of the gifts from their lord, gifts which bound them to him and bound them to stay and fight and further irony is provided because we remember that Byrhtnoð felt happiest amongst the men of his *heorðwerod* because he 'knew' them to be the most loyal. If this knowledge constituted part of Byrhtnoð's mental strength, it was clearly flawed. The poet underlines the importance of the mental acts again by citing the key mental act which the brothers and those who followed them in flight failed to perform: *gyf hi þa geearnunga ealle gemundon /*

*þe he him to duguþe gedon hæfde* (196-7, if they had remembered all the favours that [Byrhtnoð] had done for their prosperity).

It is the act of memory that has failed first and foremost. They have also forgotten the bold words they had spoken earlier in the day. Offa had foreseen this and Byrhtnoð attempted to guard against it. They had started with good intentions, implied in *modelice manega spræcon* (200, many spoke *modelice*), but had not had the mental strength to uphold these intentions without the living presence of their leader and so could not complete the actions that should follow such intention: *eft æt þærfe þolian noldon* (201, after at need they would not hold out).

As is to be expected, excess is present in this passage. There fled *manna ma þonne hit ænig mæð wære* (195, many more than it was in any way fitting). *Mæð* in contrast to the excess of the first half line is indicative of 'due measure' and proportion and effectively stresses the inappropriateness of the contrasting excess.[150] This excess is expressed semantically with the comparative, but there is another imbalance in the men's failure to keep their side of the lord-retainer bargain; they have taken from him but failed to repay their debt of loyalty. This is a social system built on balance that falls apart if that balance is not upheld. We have already seen that excess leads to danger and here it is fatal.

> Þa wearð afeallen  þæs folces ealdor,
> Æþelredes eorl.  Ealle gesawon,

[150] BT: 'due measure, right'.

heorðgeneatas,  þæt hyra heorra læg.

Þa ðær wendon forð  wlance þegenas,

unearge men  efston georne.

Hi woldon þa ealle  oðer twega,

lif forlætan  oððe leofne gewrecan. (202-208)

Then the folk's leader was fallen,

Æþelred's nobleman.[151] All saw,

hearth-companions, that their lord lay [dead].

Then they went forth proud thegns,

undaunted men hastened eagerly.

They all intended one of two [possibilities],

to lose life or avenge the beloved.

This particularly moving passage reminds the listeners of the hierarchical system of loyalty; Byrhtnoð 'belongs' to Æþelred as the retainers 'belong' to him. The possessive suggests a form of kinship; that this relationship is one of love as well as duty is conveyed through the term *leofne*. He is beloved. The men are again having to adapt to a new turn of events in the battle: many men have fled and their leader is dead. Their response is to continue to find a mental and physical

[151] *Folc* is an ambiguous term, meaning both people and army, indeed in legal documents it can even be used to refer to public property – folces fyrdscip 'public warship' (DOE). The parallel with *Æþelredes eorl* indicates that it refers to the people subject to Byrhtnoð in the way that he was subject to his king and therefore belonging to those people as he belonged to his king. The Old English term encompasses both the group and sub-group and so, whilst not entirely satisfying, 'folk' retains an ambiguity, albeit colloquial.

balance. As they move forward physically their minds form the appropriate intention to avenge or die, implying an act of memory in the remembrance of what is expected and what is owed. But the terms used show that this is more than fulfilling an expectation; it is an act of love. There is a change in tactics, however. No longer are the men holding their position, resolute and steadfast, now they are moving forward eagerly and in haste. Any hope of defeating the Vikings is gone; it only remains to die well.

What follows from here to the end of the poem as we have it is a series of portrayals of the last moments of the heroic soldiers as in turn they form their intentions and act, some of them taking Byrhtnoð's role of encouraging and reminding the troops of the right way to think. The first to do this is Ælfwine son of Ælfric.

> 'Gemunu[152] þa mæla  þe we oft æt meodo spræcon,
>
> þonne we on bence  beot ahofon,
>
> hæleð on healle,  ymbe heard gewinn.
>
> Nu mæg cunnian  hwa cene sy.
>
> Ic wylle mine æþelo  eallum gecyþan,
>
> þæt ic wæs on Myrcon  miccles cynnes;
>
> wæs min ealda fæder  Ealhelm haten,

[152] Robinson demonstrates that manuscript *gemunu* is an attested first person form, rejecting the common emendations *gemunaþ* or *gemunan*. *Gemunu*, Robinson tells us, is, though rare, an 'attested first-person singular present indicative form in the *Vespasian Psalter*'. F.C. Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the *Maldon* Poet's Artistry', in F.C.Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp.122-139 reprinted from *JEGP* 75 (1976), 25-40. This gives a tone to Ælfwine's speech that is more personal and more powerful.

wis ealdorman  woruldgesælig.

Ne sceolon me on þære þeode,  þegenas, ætwitan

þæt ic of ðisse fyrde  feran wille

eard gesecan, nu min ealdor ligeð

forheawen æt hilde.  Me is þæt hearma mæst;

he wæs ægðer min mæg  and min hlaford.'

Þa he forð eode,  fæhðe gemunde,

þæt he mid orde  anne geræhte

flotan on þam folce,  þæt se on foldan læg

forwegen mid his wæpne. (212 -228a)

'I remember the times that we often spoke over mead,[153]

when we raised up a vow on the bench,

heroes in the hall, about fierce battle.

Now can be discovered who is bold.

I intend to declare to all my noble lineage,

that I was of a great family among the Mercians;

that my grandfather was called Ealhelm,

a wise alderman fortunate in this world.

Thegns among that people shall not reproach me

with wanting to go from this army

to look for home, now my leader lies

[153] Scragg points out that *mæl*, rather than being a unique form akin to ON *mál* and thus signifying speech, may well be the 'common poetic word for "time, occasion" which frequently occurs in collocation with the verb *gemunan*'… and though in this case it is harder to defend *mæla* as an accusative plural, no safe emendation is possible'.

hewn down in battle. To me is that injury the greatest;
he was both my kinsman and my lord.'
Then forth he went, remembered vengeance,
[so] that he reached one with his spear
a seaman of that army, that lay on land
slain with his weapon.

Ælfwin's speech is relatively long and encompasses a number of mental acts: memory of speeches made, memory of his lineage and memory of his duty of revenge. These will serve to remind him of the importance of honour and his own future reputation. It is a notion that would be familiar to the both sides, clearly belonging to the *deyr fé, deyja frændur* tradition.[154] The memory of boastful speeches and vows may be a reference to the shame of Odda's sons who were the first to flee (186); announcing the names and provenance of his kin will have been unnecessary in the sense that the other men will have known it, but the public declaration of his and their identity assists in his resolve not to bring shame to his family and his name. Ælfwin feels a double

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[154] Deyr fé,
Deyja frændr,
deyr sjálfr it sama;
ek veit einn
at aldri deyr:
dómr um dauðan hvern.

*Hávamál* 77. (Cattle die, kinsmen die, oneself dies just the same. I know one thing that never dies: the judgement of each one dead), *Hávamál,* ed. by David A. H. Evans (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), p. 54. Translation by Andy Orchard, *The Elder Edda* (London: Penguin Classics, 2011), p. 25. Of course, *Hávamál* was not recorded until the thirteenth century, but whether or not it is authentic, the reference to a man's reputation after his death seems likely to reflect a cultural concern.

burden to avenge Byrhtnoð because he was linked to him doubly as kin and lord. These mental acts are accompanied by the physical act of his going forward and killing a Viking with his spear;[155] however, poetically they are not balanced. There are more mental acts than physical ones in both number of acts and number of lines. The structure of the poem is beginning to tend towards an excess of the mental over the physical, foreshadowing Byrhtwold's famous exhortation, as we will see.

Ælfwin's speech acts as a catalyst and all the warriors begin to encourage one another, *ongan þa winas manian / frynd and geferan þæt hi forð eodon,* (228-229, the comrades began to exhort friends and comrades in arms [so] that they went forth). This follows Byrhtnoð's last command and it shows the remaining men using his tactics. Offa is the next to speak and he returns to a balance of physical and mental preparation:

> Us is eallum þearf
> þæt ure æghwylc  oþerne bylde,
> wigan to wige,  þa hwile þe he wæpen mæge
> habban and healdan,  heardne mece,
> gar and god swurd.  (233-237)

> For us all it is necessary
> that [we] each of us encourage the other,
> warrior to battle, while he is able to have and hold

[155] The scathing alliteration of *flotman… on foldan læg* (the seaman… lay on land) poetically stresses that the Vikings are not where they belong, like fish out of water.

weapon, resolute blade,

spear and good sword.

This speech seems more balanced. Encouragement, implying positive mental acts, is balanced against the wielding of weapons.

There is a domino effect as each man declares his intention to fight nobly. Leofsunu is next to speak and he begins formalising his intention through a vow not to flee a foot's space; his intention is to advance and avenge his beloved lord in battle. He too invokes his family, this time near Sturmer, to the same effect as Ælfwin. We are told that he fought resolutely and scorned flight. Again, whilst there are both mental and physical acts, the poet now gives more weight to the mental in both line length and number of acts; following the speech, which is a vocalisation of a series of mental acts, each physical act is described in association with terms suggestive of mental activity: he advanced *ful yrre* (253, very angry), he fought *fæstlice* (254, resolutely) and *fleam he forhogode* (254, he scorned flight), which is really an absence of physical activity as a result of the mental act in *forhogian*.

Next up is Dunnere:

Dunnere þa cwæð,  daroð acwehte,

unorne ceorl,  ofer eall clypode,

bæd þæt beorna gehwylc  Byrhtnoð wręce:

"Ne mæg na wandian se þe wrecan þenceð

frean on folce,  ne for feore murnan."

Þa hi forð eodon,  feores hi ne rohton;
ongunnon þa hiredmen,  heardlice feohtan,
grame garberend,  and God bædon
þæt hi moston gewrecan  hyra winedrihten
and on hyra feondum  fyl gewyrcan. (255-264)

Dunnere then spoke, brandished a light spear,
[a] humble yeoman, [he] called out over all,
ordered / asked that the warriors each avenge Byrhtnoð:
'He who thinks to avenge [his] lord on the [opposing] army
cannot flinch, nor [can he] pay heed to his life.'
Then they went forth, they did not care about [their] life;
then the retainers began to fight fiercely,
fierce spear carriers, and asked God
that they be allowed to avenge their beloved lord
and bring death on their enemies.

This time there is more balance between the mental and the physical acts. Dunnere's exhortation is given as a generalisation rather than an order, perhaps because of his relatively low status;[156] however his implied instructions require mental acts from the men: to form the intention to avenge Byrhtnoð, not to flinch, not to care about losing lives – and the men comply. The repetition of *feorh* underlines the effectiveness of Dunnere's words; thought is literally translated into

[156] Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), p. 124.

action. The mental preparation here does not precede the action, but accompanies it and this allows the men to 'fight fiercely'.

The next man named is the Northumbrian hostage, Æscferð. We are not given his thoughts or words, only told that he did not flinch at the battle-play and that he was eager. These are suggestive of mental activity but it is not explicitly expressed. However his prowess with a bow sets him apart from the other warriors in the amount of damage he is recorded as causing *æfre embe stunde* (271, every few moments), while he could wield his weapons.

Eadward-the-Tall, we are told, is eager and ready. Here the poet again uses the 'did not intend to flee a foot of land' formula, balancing his resolute intention with his bold advance as he breaks the shield wall and avenges his lord before dying. Æþeric does the same; he is eager and determined as he cleaves the shields of the enemy.

In a transitional passage (288-293) the poet reverses the order of events, describing Offa's death before relating his vow and intentions; this is a prelude to another passage where the chaos of war precludes all thought. Lines 295-303 describe the crashing of shields, the rage of the Vikings and the spears are once again given agency. The names given here, Wistan and Wigelm's son, seem lost in the din of battle. The chaos is stoically summed up towards the end of the passage in the phrase *þær was stið gemot* (301, there was a hard encounter). As the slaughtered and doomed men fall to the ground, Oswald and Eadwold bring the men together and encourage them to keep going and make use of their weapons unflinchingly. But this description in reported

speech lacks the conviction of the previous calls to arms. The verb *þolian* (307, to endure), has a passive connotation; it suggests exhaustion. The effect of this following the terrifying description of the sound and fury of battle is a sense that all is lost, when suddenly Byrhtwold speaks up:

> Byrhtwold maþelode, bord hafenode,
> se wæs eald geneat, æsc acwehte;
> he ful baldlice beornas lærde:
> 'Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,
> mod sceal þe mare þe ure mægen lytlað.
> Her lið ure ealdor eall forheawen,
> god on greote. A mæg gnornian
> se ðe nu fram þis wigplegan wendan þenceð.
> Ic eom frod feores; fram ic ne wille,
> ac ic me be healfe minum hlaforde,
> be swa leofan men, licgan þence.' (309 -319)

> Byrhtwold spoke, raised up his shield,
> he was an old warrior, [he] brandished his ash-spear;
> very boldly he exhorted the warriors:
> 'Spirit must be the harder, heart the keener,
> *mod* must [be] greater as our strength diminishes.
> Here lies our leader all hacked up,
> noble in the dust. He will always have cause to regret it

who now thinks to turn away from this battle.
I am experienced in life; I do not intend [to go] from [here],
but by the side of my lord
by so beloved a man, I think to lie.'

And so the poet rounds up the structural pattern of balance between thought and action in this final call for imbalance. It is all over. It only remains to die well. The fatigue that we felt in the poetry of the previous lines is openly acknowledged and channelled to a positive force. The men have little physical strength left, but they do have mental strength. They can all, like Byrhtnoð, show *ofermod*. Taken in the context of the poem as a whole, these words seem to sum up what has been Byrhtnoð's tactic all along – even though excess of this led to error – that the mind and the soul must bear the brunt of the work. At the beginning of the battle a balance was needed: mental strength matching physical strength. Byrhtnoð was criticised for his excess of *mod*, his error being perhaps to over-estimate the physical strength of his troops due to over-confidence in his and their mental strength. Now it is the only strength left to them and they must use it to bolster the flagging physical force. To have *ofermod* is now a requirement.

Byrhtwold further projects the idea of a future memory to aid in their resolve. Those who think to turn away from the battle will always regret it. Like Byrhtnoð, he too is *frod feores* and his experience, a mental / spiritual element – will mean that he will not leave; he has formed the

intention to lie by his lord's side. His words embolden the younger warriors to fight.

In contrast *The Battle of Brunanburh* is devoid of mental process – there are swords, spears and dead bodies, but little reference to the mental or spiritual state of the fighters. The closest reference to mental action in *Brunanburh* is in the negative telling us that the losing Viking *gelpan ne þorfte,* (44, did not need to boast). In *Maldon*, what the Vikings thought or did not think is left unspoken.

This analysis has sought to demonstrate the continuity of the pattern of balance between mental and physical acts, here as a necessary requirement for a successful performance in battle. Any imbalance – deficiency of mental activity or excess of mental activity – is clearly shown to be detrimental to a successful outcome. It is on the mental activity that the physical activity depends and as such mental activity is given greater importance. The structure of the poem is intricate and once identified colours our interpretation. Having identified the pattern of balance and excess which runs through the poem, it is time to consider the minor patterns within the poem that fit into the larger one.

### 2.4.2 Excess

The poet has constructed the poem around a pattern where mental and physical acts are balanced. However, at times, there are examples of excess and these seem to herald disaster for the English side. Excess is conveyed through the use of modifiers such as *to* and *ofer* and in the

use of the comparative and superlative, all of which are indicative of imbalance. These excesses do not necessarily reflect criticism, but they do seem to be linked, directly or indirectly, to disaster for the English and in several cases reflect a lapse in judgement.

• 23-4, *he lihte þa mid leodon þær him leofost wæs, / þær he his heorðwerod holdost wiste* (he then dismounted among [his] men where it was most agreeable to him, where he knew his hearth-troop to be most loyal).

The use of the superlative in *leofost* and *holdost* suggests excess as opposed to balance, and although at this point in the poem this seems a reasonable situation, later events will prove that it is not the hearth troop that is *holdost*, most loyal. Some members will prove to be so, others will not. Amongst the most loyal are men like Dunnere and the Northumbrian who most probably were not in the hearth-troop, Dunnere because he was an *unorne ceorl* (a humble yeoman) and the Northumbrian because he was a hostage. This is not necessarily a fault in judgement, despite the fact that Offa had warned him (198-201) that many men had spoken boldly who would not hold out at need. Byrhtnoð had, after all, taken the precaution against flight by ordering all of the men to chase their horses away.

• 50, *miccle laþre spel* (a much more hateful message).

This example of excess, signalled by the modifying adverb *miccle* with the comparative, is perhaps in response to the numerous invidious references to peace in the Viking messenger's speech: *gebeorge* (31, protection); *grið* (35, truce); *freode* (39, good will); *frið* (39 and 42, peace). It seems appropriate in the context; the Vikings have goaded Byrhtnoð and he needs to show his men that he is able to stand up to them. However the words are indicative of emotion: hatred and repugnance.

• 55, t*o heanlic me þinceð* (it seems to me too shameful)
Byrhtnoð describes himself as *unforcuð* (undisgraced) and the Viking offer is 'too shameful' for him to accept. It can be argued that these words put Byrhtnoð under an obligation to fight which means that the Vikings can use it to set their own terms.[157]

• 57-8, *nu ge þus feor hider* / *on urne eard in becomon* (now that you have come so far hither into our land)
Byrhtnoð obviously considers *þus feor* to be too far, even though the Vikings are still off the coast. This may be irony, or it may refer to the earlier raiding of Folkestone and Sandwich. This distance covered by the Vikings is part of what Byrhtnoð considers to be 'too shameful' and is therefore also governed by an emotional response.

[157] See 3.5 below.

• 66, *to lang hit him þuhte* (it seemed too them too long)

The wait is too long and creates an imbalance between thought and action. Byrhtnoð has carefully prepared the men mentally to control their thoughts in order to fight well, *hicgan to handum and to hige godum* (4), but the men are becoming impatient and perhaps weakening in their resolve as they have too much time to think and no present possibility to act. Again the danger of excess is linked to an emotional response, this time impatience.

• 89-90 *se eorl ongan for his ofermode* / *alyfan landes to fela laþere ðeode* (the nobleman began, because of his *ofermod* to allow too much land to the more hateful people...)

There are three examples of excess here, signified by *ofer*, *to* and the comparative *laþere.* The first is the excess of *mod*, discussed above.[158]The second, 'too much land', is a direct result of Byrhtnoð's excess of *mod.* The poet indicates that the decision to retreat and to make room for the enemy was f*or his ofermode* (89). This reminds the listener of Byrhtnoð's earlier remark (57-8) on the amount of land that the Vikings had already advanced on. The third, 'more hateful' suggests an excess of hatred; it may express Byrhtnoð's feelings, but syntactically the emotion belongs to the narrator here. Lines 89-90 represent a rare narrative intrusion where the poet gives his opinion, both of the hero's decision and the nature of the Vikings. Byrhtnoð is shown to be

[158] See above 2.2.

flawed, but unless the association of excess with emotion is coincidental, then the poet is showing himself to be flawed too.[159]

• 146, *se eorl wæs þe bliþra* (the nobleman was the more jubilant)
The comparative suggesting excess of glee appears anodyne, but Byrhtnoð's laughter, line 147, precedes his death blow: *hloh þa modi man* (then the *modi* man laughed). Scragg believes that this is a sign that Byrhtnoð is cut down in his pride.[160] However, whilst his excess of joy at killing, allied to the adjective *modi*, may be indicative of error, it is immediately followed by a more humble prayer of thanks to God, just as his previous *ofermod* was followed by a humble and resigned acceptance that fate lies in God's hands.

• 195, *and manna ma þonne hit ænig mæð wære* (and many more than it was in any way fitting).
This is ironic understatement; even the fleeing of one man cannot be honourable. The number of men fleeing is both excessive and unfitting, and can only lead to disaster.

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[159] If this is a deliberate detail on the poet's part, it can be compared to *Juliana* where the saint is shown to have a momentary lapse (see 5.4 below) and Cynewulf details his own shortcomings towards the end of the poem, ll. 695ff.

[160] Scragg, *The Battle of Maldon,* pp. 38-9.

• 312-3, *hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre, / mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað* (spirit must be the harder, heart the keener, *mod* must [be] the greater as our strength diminishes). Byrhtwold's famous words bring the pattern of balance and excess full circle. The battle is lost, but honour is not; the men must now embrace this imbalance of mental over physical as it is the only course available. However, here there is no excess of emotion. Byrhtwold is calling for conscious thought and mental focus.

Of these nine instances of excess, seven of them are linked to Byrhtnoð's thoughts, words and actions. This further suggests that we must consider the use of the term *ofermod* in the context of these patterns. Perhaps each of these excesses is an example of his *ofermod*, but then these events define the way the term is to be understood in this context and that is quite different to the way it is to be understood in other texts.

### 2.4.3 The Threefold Repetition of Land, Passage and Mental Imbalance

We have seen how the term *ofermod*, signifying excess, is part of a pattern of balance and excess which runs throughout the poem. We will now see that itis central to a minor, but crucial, pattern within that; one that unites the key moments Whilst it resembles in some respects the

envelope patterns identified by Bartlett,[161] it is not chiastic and therefore rather than providing a circular ring structure, gives a linear one adding to that sense of inevitability, the sense that events are moving forwards inexorably to a fated end. I have labelled the three elements A, B and C:

A = reference to the amount of land that the Vikings have crossed or intend to cross;

B = request for safe passage;

C = imbalance of mental activity.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A 1 | *nu ge þus feor hider / on urne eard in becomon* | 57-8 | now that you have come so far hither into our land |
| B 1 | *ongunnon lytegian þa laðe gystas, / bædon þæt hi upgang agan moston / ofer þone ford faran* | 86-8 | the hateful guests began to practice cunning / deceit, pleaded that they be allowed to have passage to lead soldiers across the ford |
| C 1 | *Ða se eorl ongan for his ofermode...* | 89 | Then the nobleman began, because of his *ofermod*... |
| A 2 | *alyfan landes to fela laþere ðeode* | 90 | to yield too much land to the more hateful people |
| B 2 | *þæt min sawul to ðe siðian mote / on þin geweald, Þeoden engla, / mid friþe ferian* | 177-9 | that my soul might travel to Thee, in Thy power, King of angels, travel with protection |
| C 2 | *mod sceal þe mare* | 313 | mind must [do / be] more |

[161] Adeline Courtney Bartlett, *The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935).

A1 Shows Byrhtnoð criticising the Vikings for encroaching on too much English land and A2 shows the poet criticising Byrhtnoð for allowing them to encroach on even more land. B1 shows the Vikings requesting safe passage across the water and using cunning to obtain it and B2 shows Byrhtnoð asking for the safe passage of his soul through sincere prayer. C1 shows Byrhtnoð's excess of *mod* to be an error and C2 shows excess of *mod* to be the only remaining option.

What does this pattern show? What is its function in the poem? The poet makes it quite clear that the events in B1, C1 and A2 are linked causally. Byrhtnoð's error in allowing the Vikings safe passage across the causeway results in his allowing them too much land. It links to A1 as it reminds us of his earlier speech to the Vikings where he refused their request for tribute and told them they had already come too far and leads to his own death and his need to request safe passage for his own soul, B2. Byrhtnoð's death affects the outcome of the battle leading to the ultimate final stand of his men who must now embrace a mental imbalance, C2, in order to continue their fight to the end. There are aural echoes within this pattern which give it further cohesion. The *laðe gystas* of B1 are echoed in the *laþere ðeode* of A2; the *faran* of B1 finds a half echo in the *ferian* of B2; the modal *motan* of B1 is echoed in B2 and of course the *mod* root of C1 is echoed in C2. Within the larger pattern of balance and excess and the causal nature of the sequence of events, these events are perhaps the most important in the poem. That they are linked together so tightly within a larger pattern indicates this. The land that the men were fighting for is on both sides of the equation,

the errors of the English and the deceit of the enemy on the negative side are counterpoised with Byrhtnoð's good death and the heroic stand and heroic deaths of his men on the positive side.

### 2.4.4 Strength of Mind and Strength of Arms - An 'epic formula' at the Heart of the Poem

Bertha Phillpotts focusses on what she refers to as the 'epic formula' '"he did not flee in the fray, but fought while he had weapons" or "might wield his weapons"'.[162] Such phrases, she explains, were not typical of Old English poetry, but can be found in Scandinavian verse such as in the fragments of *Bjarkamál* and *Hrólfs Saga Kraka*. Whilst these are Icelandic, Phillpotts believes the source to be Danish and therefore a

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[162] Phillpotts, p. 174. See also Randolph Quirk, 'Poetic Language and Old English Metre' in his *Essays on the English Language Medieval and Modern* (London: Longmans, 1968), pp.1-19 where Quirk explores the use of formula in Old English poetry: 'a habitual collocation, metrically defined' which plays on 'the expectation that a sequence of words will show lexical congruity' (p. 2). Quirk concludes that 'the very fact that he could depend on his audience having a firm expectation of certain dependences and determined sequences involving metre, vocabulary and grammar gave the poet his opportunity to stretch linguistic expression...to achieve a disturbing and richly suggestive poetry', (p. 19).

fitting source for these phrases in *Maldon*.[163] Whether or not this shows Scandinavian borrowing, the 'might wield his weapons' phrase clearly forms a pattern in the poem. The significance of the pattern to this thesis is in the way it balances mental and physical acts, showing mental acts to be reliant on physical ones.

Phillpotts sums up the formula as: 'he did not flee in the fray, but fought while he had weapons' or 'might wield his weapons', whereas what we actually have is a balance of mental and physical action; this might more accurately be rendered by 'he did not *intend* to flee in the fray / he intended to maintain a noble purpose as longas he could wield weapons', precise examples being: he did not *intend* to weaken when he took weapons (9-10); he had *noble purpose* as long as he could hold a shield and broad sword in his hands (13-15); they did not *intend* to take flight from the causeway while they were able to wield weapons (81-83); our greatest *need is to encourage* one another, a warrior to battle, while he can have and hold a weapon (233-6); he did not

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[163] One of Phillpotts' main arguments is that the lines are inserted as a 'favourite formula' without care being taken to fit the syntax to the meaning. Phillpotts cites the lines 81-3

> þa noldon æt þam forda fleam gewyrcan,
> ac hi fæstlice wið ða fynd weredon,
> þa hwile þe hi wæpna wealdan moston

as 'clearly [implying] the death of the three defenders of the ford or causeway'. However, the preterite subjunctive plural of *moston* carries a conditional element governed by the form *noldon*, expressing intention, giving 'they did not intend to take flight from the causeway while they were able to wield weapons, but defended resolutely against the enemy'. Phillpotts' point revolves around the use of the negative as reminiscent of Scandinavian rather than English verse and she therefore chooses to ignore the use of the formula in lines 13-15, *he hæfde god geþanc / þa hwile þe he mid handum healdan mihte / bord and brad swurd*, cited above, because it does not have a negative construction.

*flinch*...while he could wield weapons (268-72). The ability to wield weapons is balanced against the ability to maintain firm intention, to offer encouragement, to remain steadfast (implied by the negative of *wandian,* to flinch, turn aside or hesitate). The formula indicates that the ability of the men to maintain a positive mental state is dependent on the condition of their physical ability to hold their weapons. We are then given a contrasting example where Byrhtnoð's ability to wield his weapons is taken away from him whilst his mental strength is maintained. The most significant use that the poet makes of this formula is at the moment of Byrhtnoð's death.

Byrhtnoð is wounded in the arm, and the poet gives a detailed description of this, his sword falls to the ground, *ne mihte he gehealdan heardne mece,* / *wæpnes wealdan* (167-8, he could not hold a hard sword or wield weapons), we are told; and yet he *continues* to encourage his warriors and share his experience with them: *þa gyt þæt word gecwæð* / *har hilderinc, hyssas bylde,* / *bæd gangan forð gode geferan* (168-70, yet the hoary [experienced] warrior spoke that word, encouraged the young warriors, ordered them to go forth, loyal comrades in arms). The juxtaposing of *har hilderinc* with *hyse* reinforces the importance of this encouragement as the white haired warrior shares his experience with younger and less experienced men. Towards the end the remaining heroes will imitate him by inverting the formula and increasing their mental strength in direct proportion to the weakening of their physical strength.

By drawing attention to what may well have been a familiar formula, or at least one that becomes so in the course of the poem, we cannot miss the fact that Byrhtnoð does not fit. The words: *ne mihte he gehealdan heardne mece,* / *wæpnes wealdan* in relation to the formula 'he did not *intend* to flee in the fray as long as he could wield weapons' is significant. The formula shows mental strength to be dependent on physical strength, at least in a battle situation. That Byrhtnoð continues to use his mental strength after he finds himself unable to lift a sword sets him apart and shows his mental strength to be unusual. A similar example of exceptional behaviour at the point of death is given in Bede's description of the death of St Cuthbert. The ageing Wahlstod, suffering from chronic diarrhoea, is cured by the dying saint, and Bede declares: 'nor can it be doubted that this was brought about by the dispensation of the heavenly grace, so that he who had healed many before this, while he was well and strong, should, when at the point of death also cure this man in order that by this sign too it might be plain how strong the holy man was in spirit, though he was weak in body'.[164] If such is evidence of Divine grace, then Byrhtnoð too has something of the quality of a holy man. This is another example of Byrhtnoð's *ofer-mod* in literal terms and is of course imitated by the last men standing as their own deaths approach.[165]

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[164] B. Colgrave, 'Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Beda', in B. Colgrave, ed. and tr., *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 141–308, p. 281.

[165] See 3.2 below for parallels between *Maldon's* portrayal of Byrhtnoð and hagiographical presentation of saints.

## 2.5 Movement and Stasis

Examples of types of interplay between mental and physical actions in Christian texts were identified in the introduction and there is clear evidence of the presence of similar patterns in *Maldon*, most notably in the sustained pattern of balance between mental and physical acts. Mental control is also an important element of the poem. Byrhtnoð trains his troops to direct their thoughts in the right way and we see the thought processes at work in many of the men as they form their intention to stand firm and live up to their oaths. It is possible that the presence of such detail reflects a more Christianised approach, one where right action is not the result of innate qualities (*sapientia et fortitudo*) but a product of right thinking.

The opposition of movement and stasis is also an element in the poem. The 'strength of mind and strength of arms' formula discussed above is associated with a recurring reference to movement or stasis. Byrhtnoð instructs his men on *hu hi sceoldon standan and þone stede healdan* (19, how they should stand and hold the place). Wulfstan, Ælfere and Maccus at 81-2 stand firm as they 'do not intend to take flight' and they are *fæstlic* (firm). Offa immediately follows his exhortation to the warriors to encourage each other while they can hold their weapons by a reference to Godric and the men who fled where movement is associated with wrong thinking (233ff.) and this in turn prompts Leofsunu to declare (246-7) that he will not fly a foot's pace. Eadward-the-Tall vows not to move a foot's space of land, or to move

back (275-6). The verb *bugan* (276) is the same one used to describe those who fled the battle because they did not want to be there (185). Most famous, of course, is Byrhtnoð's movement to make room for the Vikings to cross the Panta. Stasis is associated with right thinking, and movement with error – at least until the battle is all but lost, and then advancing ahead of the shield-wall becomes an act of mental steadfastness and self-sacrifice, a moving towards and embracing of one's fate.

It has been remarked that the English side is associated with stasis and the Vikings with movement and speed, *wodon þa wælwulfas, for wætere ne murnon* (96, the slaughter-wolves advanced, they were not bothered by water).[166] However, we should be careful not to assume that the opposition of movement and stasis has any significance beyond that of tactical warfare. Byrhtnoð is using the shield wall technique, which requires the men to stand their ground. This opposition is common in accounts of battles from the earliest records, and is, of course, the source of similar Christian imagery which takes its figure from warcraft. If we consider Thucydides' description of the attack on the Athenians in Book IV of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, we will see that the situation is not dissimilar to that of Byrhtnoð and his men. Thucydides demonstrates the difficulty of fighting a land army whilst disembarking from a ship when Demosthenes tells his men:

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[166] See Paul Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*, Lines 84-90: A Review and Reassessment', *Studia Neophilologica* 67 (1995), 149-64 (p. 152) and Michael Matto, 'War of Containment', pp. 64-5, 'the static formation of the shieldwall is in marked contrast to the kinetic action we see attributed to the Vikings…the English heroic posture is static, while the Vikings' marauding is an active penetrating force.'

My companions in danger, let none of you now on the eve of battle desire to display his wits by reckoning up the sum of the perils which surround us; let him rather resolve to meet the enemy without much thought, but with a lively hope that he will survive them all. In cases like these, when there is no choice, reflection is useless, and the sooner danger comes the better. I am sure that our chances are more than equal if we will only stand firm, and, having so many advantages, do not take fright at the numbers of the enemy and throw them all away. The inaccessibility of the place is one of them; this, however, will only aid us if we maintain our position; when we have once retreated, the ground, though difficult in itself, will be easy enough to the enemy, for there will be no one to oppose him.

…

You are Athenians, who know by experience the difficulty of disembarking in the presence of an enemy, and that if a man is not frightened out of his wits at the splashing of oars and the threatening look of a ship bearing down upon him, but is determined to hold his ground, no force can move him. It is now your turn to be attacked, and I call on you to stand fast and not to let the enemy touch the beach at all. Thus you will save yourselves and the place.[167]

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[167] Translation by Benjamin Jowett, *History of the Peloponnesian War* IV. 10. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), pp. 8-9.

Interestingly in the opening of this speech Demosthenes, much like Byrhtnoð, instructs his men how to focus their minds before telling them how to act and why. It is clear that controlling your thought and standing your ground are key elements of battle and always have been. The situation of Demosthenes' men is surprisingly similar to the situation of Byrhtnoð's men at Maldon. The attackers, though superior in numbers, are at a disadvantage because they can be picked off by the men on land, as long as those men hold their ground. However 'the inaccessibility of the place ... will only aid us if we maintain our position; when we have once retreated, the ground, though difficult in itself, will be easy enough to the enemy, for there will be no one to oppose him'. These are words which could have been written as a warning for Byrhtnoð.

This sample from Thucydides is evidence that we cannot assume that the presence of certain tropes indicates a Christian perspective. However, in *Maldon* the poet is using the 'foot's pace' formula systematically in relation to mental intention. The ability to stand firm is the result of right thinking and the inability to stand firm is the result of wrong thinking. This much can be deduced from Demosthenes' speech; it is a fact of battle. This is not, however, the way the poet seems to be using the 'foot's pace' formula. By making each warrior an individual with an individual set of decisions and choices – to maintain the intention of standing firm as long as he is able to act, or not to care about the battle and to flee, the overall impression becomes more exemplary, not of battle tactics, but of individual choice.

In order to determine whether or not the patterns in *Maldon* are evidence of a philosophy influenced by Christian writing, it will be necessary to consider the poem in the context of the late tenth century.

## 3: *Maldon* in Context

I am a man more sinned against than sinning.[168]

### 3.1

Close analysis of *The Battle of Maldon* has shown a consistent pattern of balance between mental and physical action. This pattern is picked up and interlaced with other patterns as we have seen. The elements of Christian literature discussed in the Introduction, that is to say a pronounced interaction of mental acts with physical acts, the importance of balance, the danger of mental excess, especially in relation to emotions, and the symbolism of movement and stasis found in the sermons of Ælfric, the *Old English Benedictine Rule* and the *Old English Boethius* are all to be found in *Maldon*. In a specifically Christian context, these elements are aimed at illustrating the importance of a correct mental stance in order to govern the body (and the wayward element of *mod*), in order to ensure eternal salvation. The question remains as to whether the presence of these elements means that the *Maldon* poet is deliberately using patterns and tropes from Christian literature and if so, to what end. To answer this question we must consider the poem in the context of its time. We are fortunate in that *Maldon* is one of the few poems that can be dated with any relative accuracy, the battle itself giving at least a *terminus a quo*. As the text is

[168] *King Lear*, III. 2. 58-9.

based on historical events, there are also independent witnesses to the events, the character of Byrhtnoð and attitudes to the Vikings.

No definitive answer to the question of dating the poem has been given. John McKinnell argues for a later dating on the basis that the term *eorl*, used in the poem to denote Byrhtnoð in place of the title *ealdorman*, 'clearly began to be used throughout England during the reign of Cnut' and that previously the term was used to denote men of Danish origin, being parallel to the Old Norse term, *jarl*.[169] Donald Scragg challenges this interpretation, using the spelling of byrht (bright) in the names (including Byrhtnoð) as being typical of late tenth century with the spelling becoming more usually briht / bryht by the eleventh.[170] I agree with Scragg that linguistic evidence is not definitive, but that a later date poses problems from the point of view of authorial purpose. It seems to me, and this chapter will provide arguments to support this, that the poem has a propaganda element, not least in the naming of the king at lines 53, 151 and 203 which would suggest composition at some time during Æþelred's reign.

### 3.2 The Real Byrhtnoð?

To begin, it makes sense to evaluate the presentation of Byrhtnoð. It is Byrhtnoð's character that may be undermined by the term *ofermod*; he

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[169] John McKinnell, 'On the Date of *The Battle of Maldon*', *Medium Ævum*, 44 (1975), 121-36 (p. 127).

[170] Donald Scragg, '*The Battle of Maldon*: Fact or Fiction' in *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*, ed. Janet Cooper (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press), pp. 19-32 (pp. 26-7). Scragg gives a detailed account of critical opinions on both sides of the argument.

is the one who establishes the importance of mental and physical balance which is emulated by his men, and those critics who have argued for a more Christian reading of *Maldon* have seen Byrhtnoð as something between a saint and a figure of Christ.[171] Byrhtnoð appears in a variety of sources and it will be useful to see how these compare to *The Battle of Maldon* and if there is unanimity.

Byrhtnoð is mentioned only fleetingly in *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle*; MS A places the battle in 993:

> Her on ðissum geare com Unlaf mid þrim and hund nigontigon scipum to Stane and forhergedon þæt onytan, and for ða ðanon to Sandwic and swa ðanon to Gipeswic, and þæt eall ofereode and swa to Mældune. And him ðær com togeanes Byrhtnoð ealdorman mid his fyrde and him wið gefeaht. And hy þone ealdorman þær ofslogon and wælstowe geweald ahtan. And him man nam syððan frið wið, and hine nam se cing syððan to bisceopes handa.
>
> Here in this year Olaf came with ninety-three ships to Folkestone, and they ravaged round about it, and then from there he went to Sandwich, and so from there to Ipswich, and overran it all, and so

[171] For example see: Paul Cavill, 'Heroic Saint and Saintly Hero: *The Passio Sancti Eadmundi* and *The Battle of Maldon*', in *The Hero Recovered: Essays on Medieval Heroism in Honor of George Clark*, ed. Robin Waugh and James Weldon (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), pp. 110-24; Richard Hillman, 'Defeat and Victory in *The Battle of Maldon*: the Christian Resonances Reconsidered', *English Studies in Canada*, 11 (1985), 385-95 and J. E. Cross, 'Oswald and Byrhtnoth: a Christian Saint and a Hero who is Christian', *English Studies* 46 (1965), 93-109.

> to Maldon. And Ealdorman Byrhtnoth came against them (or him) there with his army and fought against them (or him); and they killed the ealdorman there and had control of the field. And afterwards peace was made with them (or him) and the king stood sponsor to him afterwards at his confirmation.[172]

The various versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles disagree on dates; A gives 993 where C and F give 991. Not all the versions of the Chronicle mention the other raids in Folkestone and Sandwich, but none of the Chronicles mention resistance anywhere other than at Maldon at that time; the defeat is followed by an agreement to pay tribute. The accounts in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are generally sparing of detail, so it is significant that Byrhtnoð's name is mentioned. His is one of very few names given and it is given in the context of resistance. As such it is praise indeed; it honours his name and surely was included to preserve his reputation.

The word order from the entry seems to suggest that it is only after Byrhtnoð's death that Olaf and his army *wælstowe geweald ahtan* (gained control of the battlefield). The entry does not record the cowardice of the men who fled, but does imply that it was Byrhtnoð's living presence that was key to the Anglo-Saxon control of the battlefield, or at least the holding off of Danish control. These lines, sparse though they be, find their echo in the poem at 94-95, *God ana wat* / *hwa þære wælstowe wealdan mote*; a significant difference,

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[172] Janet M. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' in Donald Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), Old English and translation pp. 37-8.

however, is that the poet introduces the idea of 'control of the battlefield' before Byrhtnoð's death when he relinquishes control, even though it cannot yet be said to be in the control of the Vikings.

Byrhtnoð also appears in the Latin *Life of St Oswald*, which Michael Lapidge attributes to Byrhtferð of Ramsey, dating it – due to a reference to Archbishop Ælfric as living – to the period between 995 and 1005.[173] Byrhtferth refers to the Vikings as part of the devil's retinue:

> surrexit contra eum princeps Beemoth, cum omni apparatu suo, et satellitibus suis, habens se cum Cerethi [MS celethi] (id est 'mortificantes').
>
> Prince Beelzebub rose up against him, with all his engines of war, and his retinue, having with him the Cerethi (that is 'the deadly ones').[174]

Byrhtferð's account creates a parallel between the opposition of Byrhtnoð and the Vikings and the opposition of heaven and hell. The king is consecrated: *ab Dunstano apostolico viro et coapostolo eius Oswaldo* (by Dunstan an apostolic man and Oswald his fellow apostle).[175] By describing Dunstan and Oswald as if they were Christ's apostles, Byrhtferð gives Æþelred a divine endorsement. For our hero

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[173] Michael Lapidge, 'The *Life of St Oswald*' in Donald Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 51.

[174]Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, Latin, p. 51 and translation by Lapidge p. 54.

[175] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, Latin, p.51 and translation my own.

we have *gloriosus dux Byrihtnoðus cum commilitonibus suis* (the glorious commander Byrhtnoð and his fellow soldiers).[176] Here Byrhtferð attributes the loss of the battle to the sins of the people of England, citing Jeremiah. He adds about Byrhtnoð, 'when the aforesaid leader was killed, ealdormen and thegns, men and women, everyone of either sex, were deeply moved'.[177] This is indicative of the love, respect and fame attached to Byrhtnoð's name. Both Byrhtferð and the writers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle suggest that Byrhtnoð was well known, respected and in Byrhtferð's account clearly loved by many people. This makes the note of censure in the poem all the more surprising. The *Liber Eliensis* relates a version of the story which has been altered to give an initially successful battle against the Vikings, where Byrhtnoð 'met them with an armed force and destroyed nearly all on the bridge over the water'.[178] It is surely significant that in seeking to alter the story to show their dead patron more favourably, the monks of Ely chose to focus on the specific detail where the poet implies that Byrhtnoð made an error. This is suggestive that *something* crucial to the battle's outcome happened on the causeway; something that was *common knowledge*. If this is the case, then the composers of the respective works must have chosen to deal with this episode in different ways, those of the *Liber Eliensis* by reversing the situation, and the *Maldon*

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[176] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, Latin, p. 53 and translation by Lapidge, p. 54.

[177] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, translation by Lapidge, p. 55.

[178] Alan Kennedy, 'Bryhtnoth's Obits and Twelfth-Century accounts of The Battle of Maldon' in Donald Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), translation p. 67.

poet by facing up to it, rationalising the decision in relation to Byrhtnoð's character, and moving on.

A further interesting detail in *Liber Eliensis* which finds its echo in the poem is where we are told that Byrhtnoð was 'so devoted to his country that he would rather die than suffer an unavenged injury to his country'.[179] The poet gives us his version of Byrhtnoð's response to the Vikings proposal: *to heanlic me þinceð* / *þæt ge mid urum sceattum to scypum gangon* / *unbefohtene, nu ge þus far hider* / *on urne eard in becomon* (55b-58, too shameful it seems to me that you with our coins should go to [your] ships unfought, now that you have come so far into our land). *Liber Eliensis* refers to an injury to Byrhtnoð's country; this is significant. It puts Byrhtnoð's concerns at a national, rather than a local level.[180] Similarly the poet refers to *urne eard* (58) and to *Æþelredes eard* (53) surely evocative of England as a whole rather than just the environs of Maldon. If this is the case, then the injury to the country had already taken place when the Vikings raided Folkestone, Ipswich and Sandwich, and money had already been taken, if not yet from Maldon. When Byrhtnoð speaks these words, he is committing himself to a fight, and this may explain his response to the Viking request if it was the only way to fight them.

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[179] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, translated by Kennedy, p.67.

[180] John D. Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', *Mediaevalia*, 17 (1975), 89-121, sees the 'three references to Æthelred as significant, for they transform what might otherwise seem a merely local encounter into an issue of national importance' (p. 91) and he cites George Clark, 'the narrator portrays Byrhtnoth as the defender and spokesman of England, not as a provincial of Essex', 'T*he Battle of Maldon*: A Heroic Poem', *Speculum*, 43 (1968), 52-71 (p. 58).

Where all versions agree is that Byrhtnoð was a great and charismatic leader of men; the *Life of St Oswald* tells us that he 'bravely exhorted his men in the battle array',[181] and *Liber Eliensis* that he was 'fluent in speech, strong in his power'; he inspired loyalty: 'all the leaders of the province faithfully bound themselves to Byrhtnoth as leader, as to an invincible protector'.[182] These qualities are clear in the *Maldon* poet's depiction of the man. The anecdote which appears in both *Liber Eliensis* and the *Ramsey Chronicle*, describing Byrhtnoð refusing to sit down and eat without his men after a long march ('I will not dine alone without the men, as I do not seek to fight alone without them'),[183] reflects his reputation as a good leader who must have inspired loyalty and love. It would seem that this was a man who spoke well and treated his men with respect, who honoured his duty to them as he expected them to honour their duty to him and that in a world falling apart he stood out as a man who said no to the Vikings. This vision of Byrhtnoð is not undermined by the *Maldon* poet for all the discussion over the terms of criticism.

What then of Byrhtnoð's interaction with the Vikings? Again we can look to *Liber Eliensis* for an external clue, where behind the apparently cosmetic rearranging of the facts, some elements of the truth may be appearing. This account describes two battles, one where Byrhtnoð is victorious and one where the Vikings return for revenge and kill him. In

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[181] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, translated by Lapidge p. 54

[182] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, translated by Kennedy, p. 67.

[183] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991* translated by Kennedy, p.67.

the second encounter the Vikings send word, taunting the English leader with the shame of cowardice to persuade him to do battle:

> Quem portum nacti, ut audiunt Brithnodum ista in suos perpetrasse, statim mandant se ad ulciscendos eos adventasse ipsumque inter ignavos habendum, si non audeat cum eis conferre manum.
>
> When they reached the harbour and learned that it was Byrhtnoth who had done these things to their men, they at once sent word that they had come to avenge them, and that they would hold him a coward, if he would not dare to join battle with them.[184]

The passage continues with:

> Quibus nuntiis Brithnodus in audaciam concitatus, pristinos socios ad hoc negotium convocavit et cum paucis bellatoribus, spe victorie et nimia ductus animositate, iter ad bellum suscepit et precavens et properans, ne hostilis exercitus saltem unum passum pedis se absente occuparet.
>
> Moved to boldness by their messengers, Byrhtnoð summoned together his former comrades for this matter and, led by the hope

[184] Extract from *Liber Eliensis* in 'Byrhtnoth's Obits and Twelfth-Century Accounts', Alan Kennedy in Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, pp. 59-80, Latin, p. 64, translated by Kennedy, p.67.

> of victory and his excessive boldness, he set out with a few soldiers on the road to battle, taking precautions and hastening lest the army should occupy as much as one foot of land in his absence.[185]

Again we find echoes to the poem that suggest a shared understanding of the character of Byrhtnoð, the behaviour of the Vikings and the outcome of the battle. The taunt might explain why Byrhtnoð allowed the Vikings passage. Most significantly we have *nimia animositate* – excess of heart / courage / spirit. Gaffiot gives *ardeur*, *energie* and also *animosité* for *animositas*, which convey more of a sense of passion than the modern English translations do.[186] This leads to the obvious question, might not *ofermod* be equivalent to *nimia animositate*? Gneuss dismisses this idea out of hand, referring to *Liber Eliensis* as a 'garbled version of an earlier historical account' even admitting the possibility that this account could be the poem.[187] He dismisses the idea because it refers 'not to a leader who opens up to the enemy a ford or bridge (sic), but to one who hurriedly marches to the battlefield'. The point is surely that he rushes to the battlefield *cum paucis bellatoribus*, therefore criticism is implicit here too. The two texts are clearly linked in some way by versions of the story or contemporary 'common knowledge' and as such it seems entirely logical to assume that

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[185] Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991*, Latin, p. 64, translated by Kennedy, p.67.

[186] *Dictionnaire Gaffiot: Latin-Français* (Paris: Hachette, 1934).

[187] Gneuss, p. 129.

*ofermod* could render *nimia animositate* as well as *superbia*. If the poem was the source for the *Liber Eliensis* account, then clearly this was the translator's understanding of *ofermod* in this context. Indeed as an indication of meaning it is a good deal more logical, maintaining a hint of criticism and definite excess without being in any way damning as this eulogistic version testifies. The poet's precise choice of term would seem to be, to an extent, chosen to fit into the pattern of balance and excess described above.

The passage in *Liber Eliensis* may offer a clue as to the nature of the cunning practised by the Vikings. Here their taunt of cowardice is made with knowledge of Byrhtnoð's character. Although in *Liber Eliensis* the dividing of the battle into two separate occasions is 'garbled' as Gneuss puts it, it may be foolish to ignore an element of this idea entirely. It is highly unlikely that Byrhtnoð earned his widely recorded reputation on the negative outcome of this one battle. Despite having no extant records of Byrhtnoð's involvement in any other conflicts, logic suggests that he must have won other battles before this one, and the presence of a Northumbrian hostage in his troop is strongly suggestive of his having successfully conducted battles further north. That *Liber Eliensis* makes no mention of other battles is curious, but if this were his only battle – one that he lost through error – then clearly the accounts of the Battle of Maldon were an entirely political construct, an interesting idea, but unlikely. 'Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth', said Sherlock Holmes,[188] therefore we can assume

[188] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Chapter 1: The Science of Deduction' from *The Sign of Four: A Sherlock Holmes Adventure* (London: William Collins, 2015), p. 6.

that Byrhtnoð had fought before. If those he fought before were Vikings, it may well be that they knew his character, or at least his reputation, and used it. The taunt of cowardice in *Liber Eleinsis* implies it, as do the words of the Viking messenger in *The Battle of Maldon*.

In both *Liber Eliensis* and *The Battle of Maldon*, the Vikings resort to mental manipulation, a typically demonic tactic, in order to defeat the English. In each version, even the brief account in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it is Byrhtnoð who is presented as key to the outcome and so it is Byrhtnoð that the Vikings target.

### 3.3 The Vikings in the Poem

> ‘Me sendon to þe  sæmen snelle.
> Heton ðe secgan  þæt þu most sendan raðe
> beagas wið gebeorge;  and eow betere is
> þæt ge þisne garræs  mid gafole forgyldon
> þonne we swa hearde  hilde dælon.
> Ne þurfe we us spillan,  gif ge spedaþ to þam.
> We willað wið þam golde  grið fæstnian.
> Gyf þu þæt gerædest  þe her ricost eart
> þæt þu þine leoda  lysan wille,
> syllan sæmannum  on hyra sylfra dom
> feoh wið freode  and niman frið æt us,
> we willaþ mid þam sceattum  us to scype gangan,
> on flot feran  and eow friþes healdan.’ (29-41)

‘Bold seamen have sent me to you.
They commanded me to say that you must quickly send
rings in exchange for protection; and it is better for you
that you pay off this spear-storm with tribute
than that we deal out such hard battle.
There is no need for us to kill us [i.e. each other] if you are wealthy
[enough] for that.
We want to fix a truce with the gold.
If you that are the most powerful here decide
that you want to ransom your people,
give the seamen according to their own judgement
money for good-will and accept peace from us,
we want to go to the ships with the money,
to go out to sea and keep peace with you.’

*Liber Eliensis* refers to messengers and whilst it is possible that Byrhtnoð and the Vikings may have communicated via a messenger, here, as in the *Life of St Edmund*,[189] it is a convenient literary device which allows the hero to have the last word.

The Viking messenger starts the exchange, presenting the terms of what is, to all intents and purposes, a protection racket – *beagas wið gebeorge* (31). The falsely peaceful words of the Vikings, so apparently eager to avoid bloodshed, whilst being the cause themselves of that

[189]Ælfric, ‘St Edmund, King and Martyr’ in *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. G.I. Needham (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 47-9.

violence, serve to annoy both the audience and the hero of the poem. The Vikings are, as is their custom, giving Byrhtnoð an unreasonable choice: pay and avoid bloodshed or be responsible for the deaths of your men.

The messenger shifts between personal interaction – *þe, þu* and general address, *eow* – so as to ensure that Byrhtnoð's army will also be listening and be influenced by the words.[190] The language is, whilst maintaing a veneer of polite request, rife with presumption: *eow betere is* is not couched in conditionals or softened by modality, it is presented as a fact, placing the speaker in an apparent position of superiority – the one who knows what is best. He refers to the threat of combat as *þisne garraes* – *this* spear storm – as if the battle were actually underway, promoting their potential for threat into something present and palpable, giving it immediacy and magnifying the menace. The messenger threatens *swa hearde hilde,* again implying that it will be more than the English can handle. The recent events in Ipswich and Folkestone make this quite likely. The Vikings are depicted as using tactics that we would class as psychological today, as if they are aware of Byrhtnoð's personality and equally aware of his men's potential for

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[190] Dolores Warwick Frese observes that, 'the poetry here, as everywhere in *Maldon*, insists on being perceived as utterance, consciously heard and spoken,' from ' Poetic Prowess in *Brunanburh* and *Maldon*: Winning and Losing, and Critical Outcome' in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honour of Stanley B. Greenfield* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 83-100. Much has been written about this famous flyting sequence. See Earl R. Anderson, 'Flyting in *The Battle of Maldon*', *NM*, 71 (1970), 197-202. F. C. Robinson in 'Some Aspects of the Maldon Poet's Artistry' in *The Tomb of Beowulf* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 122-39, reprinted from *JEGP*, 75 (1976), 25-40, argues that the messenger's speech 'may contain the first literary use of dialect in English', p.123. See also J. E. Cross in 'Mainly on Philology and the Interpretative Criticism of *Maldon*' in G. B. Irving and R. B. Berlin, ed., *Old English Studies in honour of John C. Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 235-53 and Paul Cavill, 'Heroic Saint and Saintly Hero'.

cowardice. The messenger diverts agency for the threat of attack away from the Vikings and onto some nebulous necessity, *ne þurfe we us spillan gif ge spedað to þam*, but if the English do not make this substantial payment in full and quickly, they will be responsible for the violence that will ensue. He goes on to outline their wish, which is to get back into their boats with treasure and leave the English in peace. He invites them *niman frið at us*, to accept peace from us, as if this were a gift that the Vikings had to bestow.

It has been noted that the Viking messenger's speech has clear echoes in religious poetry, such as *The Dream of the Rood*. Line 37, *þæt þu þine leoda lysan wille* (that you want to ransom your people) has been compared to *The Dream of the Rood* line 41, *þa he wolde mancyn lysan* (when He wanted to ransom mankind). Hillman sees the poet presenting Byrhtnoð as a Christ figure, whilst Cavill sees the Viking messenger inviting Byrhtnoð to see himself that way.[191] This places the Vikings in the position of tempter, tempting Byrhtnoð to see himself as a Christ figure and offering him the power to redeem his people. This would suggest either knowledge of Byrhtnoð's character or an assumption that all Christian leaders think this way and / or a dramatic device to demonise the speaker. There are echoes of another Anglo-Saxon poem, *Christ and Satan*. Line 32, *gyf þu þæt gerædest þe her ricost eart* is similar to Satan's taunt to Christ *gyf þu swa micle mihte hæbbe* (672, if you have so much power). In both cases the 'tempter'

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[191] Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), p. 119; Cavill makes reference to Hillman, 'Defeat and Victory in *The Battle of Maldon*: The Christian Resonances Reconsidered', *English Studies in Canada,* 11 (1985).

tries to provoke the hero into proving his own power or wealth. Satan, much like the Vikings, makes unreasonable propositions, offering Christ dominion over a land and people that is not his to give: *loca nu ful wide ofer londbuende.* / *Ic þe geselle on þines seolfes dom,* / *folc and foldan* (683-5, look now widely over the land dwellers. I will give you in your own judgement, the people and the land); this echoes the lines in *Maldon*, *þæt þu þine leoda lysan wille* / *syllan sæmannum on hyra sylfra dom, feoh wið freode* (37-9, if you want to ransom your people give the seamen, in their own judgement, money for good will); the phrase *folc and foldan* is put in Byrhtnoð's mouth as he speaks to defend his land and people. It is possible that the text of *Christ and Satan* was familiar to the poet and perhaps expected to be familiar to the audience. Whether this is a deliberate echo, or just a familiar trope, the Vikings hold the same role as the devil and use the same methods of mental manipulation.[192] It follows that Byrhtnoð is in the position of exemplary Christian if not saint. The Viking messenger, much like the devil in *Juliana* or other hagiographical texts, uses his wiles to influence the thought processes of his listeners, encouraging them to perform physical acts that will lead to their perdition.

The Vikings are practising a form of cunning in lines 29-41 as discussed in 3.3 above. It is curious that the term *lytegian* is reserved for the apparently innocent request to cross the causeway. It has been conjectured that the poet criticises Byrhtnoð for taking his heroism to an excessive degree and sacrificing the lives of his men. From a modern

[192] For a further consideration of *lytegian* see 3.5 below.

Christian or humanist standpoint, this is indeed damning. However from a heroic, even a Christian-heroic standpoint, it is not. The *Life of St Edmund*, estimated to have been written at roughly the same time as *The Battle of Maldon,* indicates that, had Edmund had the opportunity to fight, he would have done so. Not knowing that his men are already dead the saintly king exclaims, *me nu leofre wære þæt ic on [ge]feohte feolle* (it were now preferable to me that I fall in battle), to which his bishop replies, *eala þu leofne cyning, þin folc lið ofslagen and þu næfst þone fultum þæt þu feohtan mæge* (alas, beloved king, your people lie slain and you do not have the forces to allow you to fight).[193] A leader, especially a heroic one, who contemplates falling in battle is a leader who contemplates falling with his men. Edmund does not envisage winning the battle, as he sees himself falling, therefore he is envisaging a hopeless battle where he, and one must assume his men, would die. The course of action Edmund claims he would have preferred is very similar to the one taken by Byrhtnoð and to consider it as an example of pernicious pride is anachronistic. If the saintly Edmund could be portrayed as contemplating such an action, it must have been perfectly respectable.[194]

### 3.4 Byrhtnoð's response to the Vikings

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[193] Ælfric, *Lives of Three English Saints*, p.48.

[194] For a detailed comparison of *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Passio Sanct Eadmundi*, see Paul Cavill, 'Heoic Saint and Saintly Hero'. Cavill argues persuasively that there are numerous parallels between the two texts which provide 'insights into the concerns of the age', p. 121.

‘Gehyrst þu, sælida,  hwæt þis folc segeð?
Hi willað eow to gafole  garas syllan,
ættrynne ord  and ealde swurd,
þa heregeatu  þe eow æt hilde ne deah.
Brimmanna boda,  abeod eft ongean,
sege þinum leodum  miccle laþre spell,
þæt her stynt unforcuð  eorl mid his werode,
þe wile gealgean  eþel þysne,
Æþelredes eard,  ealdres mines
folc and foldan.  Feallan sceolon
hæþene æt hilde.  To heanlic me þinceð
þæt ge mid urum sceattum  to scype gangon
unbefohtene  nu ge þus feor hider
on urne eard  in becomon.
Ne sceole ge swa softe  sinc gegangan:
us sceal ord and ecg  ær geseman,
grim guðplega,  ær we gofol syllon.’ (45-61)

‘Do you hear, seaman, what this people has to say?
They want to pay you tribute with spears,
poisoned tip and ancient swords,
the war-gear tribute that will be of no use to you in battle.
Report back again, seamen’s messenger,
tell your people a much more hateful message,

that here stands an undisgraced nobleman with his troop,
that will defend this homeland, Æþelred's land, my prince's
people and land. The heathen must fall
in battle. Too shameful it seems to me
that you with our coins should go to [your] ships
unfought now that you have come this far into our land.
You must not win treasure so easily:
spear and sword shall first arbitrate,
fierce battle play, before we pay tribute.'

This psychological skirmish, so similar to the one between the Redeemer and the Tempter, is essential in revealing Byrhtnoð's mental superiority and the Vikings' manipulative cunning which will soon reappear. Byrhtnoð, *yrre and anræd* (44, angry and single-minded), throws back the Viking messenger's words, twisting them to carry a new and violent meaning as Cavill demonstrates, ' Byrhtnoth throws back the alliterating phrases with slight changes which reverse the meaning and expectation of the Vikings: *to gafole – garas* (as tribute – spears, 46) *sceattum – to scype* (with money – to ships, 56), *grim guðplega – gofol* (grim battle-play – tribute, 61)'.[195] The words become spears, thrown back at the aggressors in the same way that Wulfmær later sends back a very real spear to his attacker. This is in response to the Vikings' implicit suggestion that they have martial superiority, their

[195] Paul Cavill, *Maxims,* p.118.

vaunting *eow betere is* / *þæt ge þisne garræs mid gafole forgyldon* (31-2). Byrhtnoð does not say that the Vikings will not get the gold, only that they will not get it without a fight. This may be litotes or simply glorious defiance. When the Vikings smirk, *ne þurfe we us spillan*, (34), the ambiguous 'we don't need to kill each other' or alternatively 'get ourselves killed', Byrhtnoð takes it as the latter and tells them that yes, they will die. His fateful maxim, *feallan sceolon* / *hæþene æt hilde* (54-55, the heathen must fall in battle) is puzzling becausethe poet knew the battle's outcome. Why have Byrhtnoð say this when it undermines, not only Byrhtnoð's credibility, but God's?This can be understood differently if we accept that Byrhtnoð did not expect to win. If we take his words more literally, that the Vikings will not get gold without a fight, then this phrase does not mean that the Vikings will lose, merely that they will suffer heavy losses, that many of them will die and their blood will be shed, despite their hopes to the contrary implied in their demand for tribute. The word *feallan* may further be interpreted as a warning that when they fall (die) they will fall in another sense as well; as heathens they will fall, as Satan fell, to damnation, whilst the Christian soldiers will not.

At mental battle Byrhtnoð is stronger; he sends back *miccle laþre spell* (50, a much more hateful message), and reminds both the Vikings and his own people of the importance of being *unforcuð* (51, undisgraced), a spiritual / mental quality superior to the physical one of being alive. This is a notion that fits into both the Christian and the heroic world and an element of the poem that adds to its force.

The poet balances the position of the two men with the repeated verb *standan*, suggestive of resolution and of a kind of stand-off. He gives three verbs for the Viking's illocutionary act: *clypian* (25, to call, cry out); *mælan* (26, to speak) and *abeodan* (27, DOE – to announce, proclaim, deliver a message / command / word, to act as spokesman). The noun denoting what he spoke is *word* (26), the simplest and most noncommittal description, but it is qualified as being spoken fiercely and in threat. The dramatic technique of delaying the content of the message by preceding it with a series of almost synonymous words for the speech act itself is relatively common in AS literature, the most famous example being Satan's speech in *Genesis B* where the verbs *maþelian* (347), *sprecan* (347) and *cweþan* (355) precede the fallen angel's words. If *mælan* is neutral, both *clypian* and *abeodan* suggest force, *clypian* in volume and *abeodan* in meaning. The threat that the Vikings give Byrhtnoð is presented as a choice. Such unreasonable choices are the stock-in-trade of devils, but are also to be found in Old Norse literature. *Gisli's Saga*, for example, is structured around a series of unreasonable choices presented to the characters and their response to these choices determines whether or not they are honourable men in a heroic context. In the opening of *Gisli's Saga* is described a berserk called 'pale-faced Bjorn' who went about 'challenging men to fight if they would not give in to his demands'.[196] In offering peace in exchange for gold, Vikings are either lying or dividing the kingdom; Byrhtnoð and his men will know what has happened further north and

[196] *The Saga of Gisli,* tr. George Johnston (London: Dent, 1973), p.1.

that the Vikings have taken treasure from other towns – they will not keep peace with the kingdom, but only with those parts of the kingdom where money has been taken or tribute paid. When Byrhtnoð refers to his intention to protect Æþelred's *eard* (53), he is giving a reminder that this is a kingdom and not a set of individual places.[197] The words which follow are designed to produce an effect on the listeners, firstly on the leader to whom the message is addressed and secondly on the men who cannot but overhear. The reaction aimed for in the men must be to weaken their resolve, to frighten them and to make them wonder if the fight is really necessary. In Byrhtnoð it plays on Christian pride (he is offered the possibility of preventing bloodshed), and a sort of goading which will be designed to anger him and destabilise his own mental control. Byrhtnoð knows that mental control is crucial to successful action. He uses his own mental strength to bolster the mental strength of his men. Both the Vikings and Byrhtnoð know that what is said will affect the mental state of the men and both attempt to manipulate them. Byrhtnoð must counter the effect of the messenger's words on his men and fight the temptation offered him. He does this successfully, demonstrating his superiority on the mental battlefield.

The Viking aims the speech at Byrhtnoð, but Byrhtnoð replies in the voice of the people. The verb *hatan* is again present. It is the

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[197] Ryan Lavelle considers that Æþelred had 'a sense of national identity in his role as promulgator of royal laws… the legal use of the term England (*Engla-lond*) suggests that Æthelred was very conscious of this sense of nascent Englishness'; he remarks that although the term was hardly new, 'here [*II Æthelred*] , King Æthelred was using it in a very specific sense to refer to a legally coherent political unit', p. 78. If this is the case, then it is quite plausible that the poet is picking up on this growing sense of national identity.

messenger who has been commanded to give the message. As speaker he distances himself from responsibility for his words, thereby depriving Byrhtnoð of direct response. Despite this, his words seem personal: ***we*** *swa hearde hilde dælon*. The words suggest that the Vikings have the martial superiority thus making it sensible to pay off the 'spear storm' with tribute. This is insult disguised as advice. It may also indicate a knowledge of Byrhtnoð's wealth and thus put him in a difficult position – that of being capable, through personal financial sacrifice, of preventing bloodshed – *gif ge spedaþ to þam*; despite the use of the plural pronoun, the Vikings will have assumed that the most powerful man there present was, in all probability, also the richest.

In balance with the introduction to the Viking's speech, Byrhtnoð's speech is also introduced with three verbs for the illocutionary act which follows: *maðelian, mælan* and *agyfan andswaru*. This poem is all about balance. Byrhtnoð answers not in his own voice but in the voice of his *folc* sending back verbal blow for verbal blow in complex wordplay cleverly removing the personal focus that the Vikings gave him and speaking for his people, his king and his land. Again the speech has an ostensible audience, the Vikings, and a secondary one, his own men. The perlocutionary act counters that of the messenger and restores and heightens the patriotic fervour and intention of his men who in fighting for their lord are fighting for themselves, their land, their king and their God (implicit in the reference to heathen).

Byrhtnoð does not entirely succeed in controlling his own emotions, however. He feels anger; he is *yrre* and *anræd* (34). In a Christian

context this is a weakness. The devil's use of mental manipulation is aimed at encouraging the Christian to abandon rational thought and give in to his emotions, and the Vikings' tactics are similar.

### 3.5 *Lytegian* and Viking Deceit

> *Restant igitur caeduntque sub arcem*
> *acephali; quoniam Christum perdunt, caput ipsum*[198]

The verb *lytegian* (86) only appears in *Maldon*; its adjectival form *lytig* means crafty or sly and is often associated with Satan – *ðæt lytige dioful* (that crafty devil).[199] The verb is probably cognate with *lytegan* (to seduce). The adjective describes a speaker who attempts to influence the mind of the listener, encouraging him to believe the speaker or to act in a way that is beneficial to the speaker and pernicious to the listener and it must be assumed that the cognate verb is indicative of this. In *Maldon* the perlocutionary act is hinted at without the illocutionary act being given.

Critical speculation as to the nature of the Viking deceit has ranged from taunts of cowardice to accusations of homosexuality. Cavill argues convincingly that although the Vikings are depicted as acting deceitfully

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[198] Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, (Book 2, 409-10, These Danes are headless men indeed, for they know not Christ, the Head of us all) from Nirmal Dass, ed. and tr., *Viking Attacks on Paris: The Bella Parisiacae Urbis of Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris, Leuven and Dudley MA: Peeters, 2007), Latin, p. 86 and translation p. 87.

[199] *GPC*, p. 415.

this does not mean that the English leader was taken in, 'it seems that Byrhtnoð was practised upon, not deceived'.[200] It is more useful to think in terms of trickery or cunning rather than deception. The speculation over what was said varies and will only ever be speculation, but most critics agree that the aim of the ploy was to obtain safe passage. It is curious that the poet has chosen not to give the Vikings' words in reported speech when, as Frese points out, the poem is constructed around 'utterance'.[201] It is possible that the Vikings are using Byrhtnoð's earlier speech to force his hand. In his *to heanlic* speech (55-8) we have seen that Byrhtnoð commits himself and his men to fight because he has declared that it would be too shameful to let the Vikings leave with 'our coins' now that they had come so far into 'our land'. The use of pronouns is significant: *urne eard* is *Æþelredes eard* and therefore the damage has been done, the Vikings have already taken English money and Byrhtnoð has committed himself to a fight. If the Vikings make the obtention of *upganga* the condition of fighting at all, Byrhtnoð has little choice but to agree and so he is, for his *ofermod*, obliged to let them pass, but the *ofermod* was not in standing back to let them cross, but in committing himself to a fight under any conditions. Finally the Vikings have things on *hyra sylfra dom* (38) after all.

Viking deceit and trickery has precedent. The late 9th century poem *Bella Parisiacae Urbis* by Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, listed as

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[200] Paul Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*, Lines 84-90: A Review and Reassessment', *Studia Neophilologica*, 67 (1995), p.149. A thorough overview of the critical debate concerning what the Vikings might have said is given here.

[201] Dolores Frese, 'Poetic Prowess', p. 91.

*Descidia Parisiace polis* in Æðelwold's booklist, was known in Anglo-Saxon England most probably from the middle of the tenth century.[202] The extracts below describe the long drawn out siege and offer examples of Viking duplicity:

> Sed quia conflictus talis superare nequibat,
> Militibus clamare: 'Fidem,' cepit, sed inanem,
> 'Ad nostram properare, viri, nolite timere.'
> Pro dolor. Aloquiis sese credunt male finctis. (Book I, 556-559)

> But unable to be triumphant in the fight, they called out
> To the twelve warriors: 'We give you our oath' – falsely sworn –
> 'Come out to us, O worthy men. You have nothing to fear.'
> Alas the twelve put their trust in this oath falsely given.[203]

A further example from the same poem is when the Viking ships find themselves trapped, the Danes again resorting to trickery:

> At vero veniam deposcunt, obsidibusque
> Iusiuranda parant aliud non tangere litus
> Ni Sequanae gressumque referre cito velut ante...
> Hoc nostris violare Danos ingens erat horror.

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[202] See Frederick M. Biggs, Thomas D. Hill, Paul E. Szarmach and E. Gordon Whatley eds., *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture, Vol. I: Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Acta Sanctorum* (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 15-16.

[203] *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, Latin, p. 86, translated by Dass p.87.

Unde forum foedus pariter commune fiebat, (Book II, 411-413 and 416-417)

Thereupon, the Norsemen sued for peace; offered hostages,
And swore an oath that they would land on no other shore than that
Of the Seine and would fall back to their prior positions…
But we feared that the Danes would not stand by this assurance;
And yet, because of it, both us and they, abided in peace.[204]

What is interesting is that the Parisians, although they more than suspected that the Danes would not keep the oath, somehow felt obliged to comply. Several lines later we find the Danes are now in a position to move their boats, at which point they break their oath and attack. These situations are strikingly similar to *Maldon*, showing the Danes had a reputation for resorting to trickery as soon as they found themselves at a disadvantage.

### 3.6 *Maldon* as a propaganda tool:

'tis true that we are in great danger;
The greater therefore should our courage be.[205]

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[204] *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, Latin, p. 86, translated by Dass, p.87.

[205] *Henry V*, IV. 1. 1-2.

Shakespeare has King Henry speak these lines before the battle of Agincourt. The similarity to Byrhtwold's words are striking. There are other similarities: Agincourt was a battle where the odds were stacked against the English, far outnumbered with a mixed troop of experienced and inexperienced men. It was a play written at a time when faith in an ageing monarch who had once herself been a valiant leader making one of the greatest rallying speeches in battle ever uttered in the English language was waning and here too the playwright is at pains to record the glory not just of the king, but of the men of all ranks who fought that day. *Henry V* is a beautiful piece of propaganda and it may well be that *The Battle of Maldon* is too.

If *Henry V* was written to bolster the flagging popularity of Elizabeth I, it is equally possible that *Maldon* was written to bolster the popularity of an unpopular and failing king. It is significant that Æþelred's name is mentioned twice in this poem, firstly by Byrhtnoð in his heroic rejection of the Viking's demand for tribute: *her stynt unforcuð eorl mid his werode, / þe wile gealgean eþel þysne, / Æþelredes eard, ealdres mines* (52-3). The triplet and emotive use of *eþel þysne,* also irresistibly reminds the modern reader of John of Gaunt's famous 'this earth, this realm, this England' and not without irony.[206] Gaunt in this speech criticises Richard for leasing England, just as Æþelred will be criticised for metaphorically leasing out England's peace to the Vikings through

[206] *Richard II* . II. 1. 40-68. All quotations from *Richard II* are from W. Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Arden Shakespeare, ed., Charles R. Forker (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

the giving of tribute.[207] Richard II is 'unkinged' – a suitably Anglo-Saxon construction – and a generation later Henry V faces the problem, as his father did before him, of an illegitimate claim to the throne, one that Elizabeth I was also accused of. The usurpation and murder of Richard II, albeit by popular demand, was a guilt that weighed heavy. Henry tells the audience that, 'Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay, / who twice a day their withered hands hold up / toward heaven to pardon blood; and I have built / two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests / sing still for Richard's soul' (4.I). Although Henry V himself had no hand in the death or even the overthrow of Richard II, he feels guilty about it; it weighs on his conscience. Similarly Æþelred acceded to the throne through the murder of his half-brother. Whether it weighed heavy on his conscience or not, it was borne in the mind of the people and most probably held against him, given the cult of sainthood that rose around

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[207] From Henry of Huntingdon's twelfth century *Historia Anglorum*, where the advice to pay tribute is described as *infausto* (disasterous) to Kipling's poem *The Dane-geld* where the practice is described as bringing 'oppression and shame', successive generations have criticised Æþelred's reign for this policy. For Huntingdon, see Alan Kennedy, 'Byrhtnoth's Obits', p. 63; the reference to Kipling is from Ryan Lavelle, *Athelered II King of the English 978-1016* (Charleston: History Press , 2002), p. 73. Jonathan Wilcox's reading of *Maldon* in, '*The Battle of Maldon* and The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 976-1016: A Winning Combination' *Enarration*, 3 (1995), 31-50, looks at the poem in the context of the repeated accounts of failure, treachery and cowardice in the Chronicle. The most damning report of the policy being the entry for 1011 in the C Chronicle which Warwick quotes and translates (p. 43)
:

> Ealle þæs ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh unrædas, þæt man nolde him a timan gafol beodon, oþþe wið gefeohtan, ac þonne hi mæst to yfele gedon hæfdon, þonne nam mon frið and grið wið hi; and naþelæs for eallum þissum griðe and gaffe hi ferdon ægweder flocmælum, and heregodon ure earme folc, and hi rypton, and slogon.
>
> All those disaster befell us through bad policy, in that they were never offered tribute in time nor fought against; but when they had done most to our injury, peace and truce were made with them; and for all this truce and tribute they journeyed none the less in bands everywhere, and harried our wretched people, and plundered and killed them.

his brother's memory. It is worth looking in detail at Sir Frank Stenton's account of Æþelred's reign and its problems.[208]

> On the evening of 18 March 978 Edward was murdered at Corfe in Dorset under circumstances of abominable treachery which shocked men who were ready to tolerate any crime of frank violence...According to the earliest account of the murder [in the eleventh-century *Life of St Oswald*] his brother's retainers came out to meet him with ostentatious signs of respect, and then, before he had dismounted, surrounded him, seized him, and stabbed him. [209]

No one was accused, we are told, and the king was buried 'without any service or honour'.

> [Æþelred ] began to reign in an atmosphere of suspicion which destroyed the prestige of the crown...For many years the instinctive loyalty of the common people, on which earlier kings had always been able to rely, was obliterated by the wave of popular emotion which carried King Edward into the ranks of sainthood.[210]

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[208] Recent studies have shown a more positive interpretation of Æþelred's reign, such as Ryan Lavelle, *Æthelred II*, and Levi Roach, *Ethelred The Unready* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016). The facts outlined by Stenton, however, remain the same.

[209] Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 373.

[210] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 373-4.

Stenton outlines Æþelred's lack of confidence and ineffectiveness in battle and as a king, with 'acts of spasmodic violence' and an 'air of mistrust which overhangs his relations with his nobles.' It was, says Stenton, 'the reaction of a weak king to the consciousness that he had come to power through what his subjects regarded as the worst crime committed among the English peoples since their first coming to Britain'.[211] This is a king, then, in great need of a bit of positive propaganda; a king who was cursed by the memory of one 'warrior-saint' for whose death he is held responsible, and is, in this poem, defended by another 'warrior-saint' who gave his life out of loyalty to him in an astounding display of the importance of loyalty *above all else*.

The poet has incorporated a pattern in the appellations given to Byrhtnoð that underlines the sense of loyalty attached and parallels the appellations given the king, reinforcing the social structure of upward loyalty in the poem and expected in Anglo-Saxon society. A clear pattern emerges where before Byrhtnoð's death he is referred to by name or rank, minimally by 'he' and at times he is effaced completely by ellipsis. After his death he is almost exclusively referred to with possessive forms. This is best illustrated by a table. The line in bold indicates the point where Byrhtnoð dies.

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[211] Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 373.

| | References to Byrhtnoð | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | | ellipsis – there is no extant subject with the verb form *het* – commanded. |
| 6 | *eorl* | nobleman / ealdorman |
| 11,<br>12,<br>16 | [from Eadric's point of view]<br>*his ealdre*<br>*frean*<br>*frean* | <br>his leader<br>lord<br>lord |
| 17 | Byrhtnoð | Byrhtnoð |
| 22,<br>23,<br>24 | *he*<br>*he*<br>*he* | he |
| 28 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 51 | [Own point of view]<br>*unforcuð eorl* | undisgraced nobleman |
| 62 | | ellipsis – there is no subject with the verb form *het* – commanded. |
| 74 | *hæleða hleo* | protector of heroes |
| 89 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 92 | *Byrhtelmes bearn* | Byrhtelmes' child |
| 101 | Byrhtnoð | Byrhtnoð |
| 132 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 135 | *wigena hlaford* | lord of warriors |
| 138 | *guðrinc* | warrior |
| 140 | *fyrdrinc* | warrior |
| 146 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 147 | *modi man* | brave (?) man – note use of *mod* root. |
| 151 | *æþelan Æþelredes þegen* | noble Æþelred's thane |
| 154 | *beorn* | warrior |
| 158 | *þeoden* | prince |

| | References to Byrhtnoð | |
|---|---|---|
| 159 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 160 | *beorn* | warrior |
| 162 | Byrhtnoð | Byrhtnoð |
| 165 | *eorl* | nobleman |
| 169 | *har hilderinc* | hoary (grey-haired) warrior |
| 184 | *hyra frean* | their lord |
| 180 | *his hlaford* | his lord |
| 204 | *hira heorra* | their lord |
| 208 | *leofne* | beloved |
| 222 | *min ealdor* | my leader |
| 224 | *min mæg and min hlaford* | my kinsman and my lord |
| 232 | *ure þeoden* | our prince |
| 233 | *eorl on eorðan* | nobleman on earth |
| 240 | *ure hlaford* | our lord |
| 248 | *minne winedrihten* | my beloved lord |
| 250 | *min wine* | my friend |
| 257 | Byrhtnoð | Byrhtnoð |
| 259 | *frean* | lord |
| 263 | *hyra winedrihten* | their beloved lord |
| 276 | *his betera* | his superior |
| 278 | *his sincgyfan* | his treasure-giver |
| 289 | *his frean* | his lord |
| 290 | *his beahgyfan* | his ring-giver |
| 294 | *ðeodne* | lord |
| 314 | *ure ealdor* | our leader |
| 318 | *minum hlaford* | my lord |

This pattern underlines the relationship of Byrhtnoð to his men; in the reciprocal and balanced system the men owed him loyalty and the possessive associated with his memory makes of him a treasured possession. The exception is Dunnere who does not use the possessive to refer to Byrhtnoð perhaps because his relationship to Byrhtnoð was different. He was almost certainly not a receiver of rings; however his loyalty is equally strong – stronger than that of some of the men who owed Byrhtnoð more. Byrhtnoð in turn refers to his king using the possessive.

The second mention of Æþelred's name is after the death of Byrhtnoð and the fleeing of the cowards. Offa, we are reminded, had foreseen that *þær modelice manega spræcon* / *þe eft æt þærfe þolian noldon* (200-1) and immediately after this we are told, *þa wearð afeallen þæs folces ealdor,* / *Æþelredes eorl* (202-3, there lay fallen the people's leader, Æþelred's nobleman). The poet links the king's name to the name of a man who has given his life refusing to give in to the Vikings' demands and who demonstrates the importance of the oath and the remembrance of that oath. This is a man whose followers equally demonstrate the importance of their oaths and allegiance to their lord in battle, who act heroically because they are able through an act of memory to access their oaths and maintain the intention of respecting those oaths. We have an upward chain of loyalty from man, to battle-chief, to king, to God and this in turn reminds the audience of their own

duty of loyalty to their king and to the remembrance and keeping of their own oaths.

The shame attached to the names of those who have failed to act correctly because they have failed to remember their duty, their oaths and what they owed to their lord adds to the effectiveness of the propaganda. That many fled, as we have seen, from a mistaken belief that Byrhtnoð himself had fled, has a contemporary piquancy as the Anglo Saxon Chronicle under Æþelred II shows that chiefs fleeing the battle was a fact of the time: *ðonne se heretoga wacað, þonne bið eall se here swiðe ge hindred,* [212] (when the commander weakens, then all the army will be greatly hindered).

Ryan Lavelle surmises that there was 'a large Viking army. It was able to sit firm, perhaps safe in the knowledge that it would be difficult for the English to bring to bear an opposing force of similar size."[213] If the Vikings did indeed have the advantage of numbers, experience and confidence, it may have been imprudent to prolong the action too long. The Vikings could sit out the wait as long as it took; the inexperienced English soldiers, already showing signs of wavering as Byhrtnoð's decision to get rid of the horses suggests, may have lost what mental resolve they had if the wait continued under the taunting of the Vikings who had the comfort of their ships and provisions. Lavelle asks: 'If the Viking force returned to their ships, then what was to stop them from embarking and landing to wreak havoc elsewhere within ealdorman

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[212] Cavill, 'Heroic Saint', p.120.

[213] Ryan Lavelle, *Athelered II King of the English 978-1016* (Charleston: History Press , 2002), p. 67.

Byrhtnoth's jurisdiction?'[214] It is a historian's question, considering the poem as a window through which the reality of the battle may be glimpsed. It may explain Byrhtnoð's action, but not the poet's judgement of that action.

Byrhtnoð is given importance in *The Life of St Oswald*, written approximately a decade after the battle. Byrhtnoð fought 'alongside his personal retinue' and the writer remarks, 'how bravely, how boldly the battle leader exhorted his men in the battle array'; he is described as having ' swan-white hair' and we are told that 'alms and holy masses gave him consolation...prayers and good deeds uplifted him'.[215] This account presents Byrhtnoð in a saintly light, whilst agreeing with the poem in the insistence on the importance of the leader's experience and encouragement in 'exhorting his men'. Furthermore it adds the less convincing detail that although the English lost, the Danes had scarcely enough men left to man their ships. Whilst unlikely, given their subsequent success in obtaining tribute, it nevertheless conveys the idea that Byrhtnoð and his men's sacrifice was perceived as worthwhile.

That there was little resistance to Viking attack and that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded instances of leaders fleeing the battlefield all point to a breaking down in the fabric of Anglo-Saxon society at the time, despite England's great wealth, the first minting of English rather than regional monies and the 'lavish feasts for nobles at

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[214] Lavelle, *Athelered II,* p. 70.

[215] Michael Lapidge, 'The *Life of St Oswald*' in Donald Scragg, ed., *Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp.54-5.

monasteries'.[216] This society was based on a chain of loyalty and a notion of bond, clearly evidenced from the laws of Alfred: *æt arestan we lærað þæt mæst þearf is þæt æghwelc mon his að and his wed wærlice healde* (in the first place, we teach that it is most needful that each man carefully keep his oath and his bond),[217] to continued references to loyalty and bonds in Shakepeare.[218] The uninspiring nature of the king coupled with examples of cowardice from the top would render fragile this structure. *The Battle of Maldon* has a function in reminding the audience of the importance of these bonds, not just in victory, but in and of themselves. The references to Æþelred which could be seen to endorse the king through a flawed but saintly hero further serve to remind listeners of the importance of loyalty and resistance even without hope of victory. As such the poem itself becomes a mental act – a reminder to remember the battle, remember the loyalty and develop the intention to do the same.

Recent criticism of *Maldon* interprets the poet's intention from a very different perspective. Leonard Neidorf argues that the poem advocates the paying of tribute and deliberately presents the Vikings in a neutral light, referring to the poem's 'puzzlingly benign representations of the Vikings'.[219] He sees this portrayal as the poet's response to Æþelred's

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[216] James Campbell, 'England, c.991', in *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*, ed. by Janet Cooper (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 1-19.

[217] Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, p.60.

[218] For example, Cordelia tells Lear, 'I love your majesty according to my bond', *King Lear,* I. 1. 92-3. All quotations from *King Lear* are from W. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Arden Shakespeare, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Methuen, 1997).

[219] Leonard Neidorf, '*II Æthelred* and the Politics of *The Battle of Maldon*', *JEGP,* 3 (2012) 451-473, p.452.

policy of paying tribute and 'the demands that a policy of tribute payment would exert on a poet depicting recent Viking conflicts'.[220] He goes on to explain that the 'poet's muted treatment suggests...that he was working in a context where a more incendiary representation would have been either impolitic or impermissible'. This idea that the poet was under pressure not to offend the Danes reflects a modern politically correct approach that is at best anachronistic; after all, the year 1002 saw both a payment of tribute and the St Brice's day massacre.

John D. Niles makes a similar argument, claiming that the version of events as is presented the poem is an example of mythopoesis. He sees the extant opening as hinging on the issue: 'should the English accept the terms of peace that the Vikings offer them'.[221] There does not seem to me to be any sense in the tone of the poem or the way the situation is presented that the poet sees this as a question to be considered. Niles argues that the subsequent loss is then seen to demonstrate that the other option was the better one, but this view rather belittles the importance the poet gives the men's resolution and sense of honour.

Michael Kightley's analysis of the poem offers a much more interesting interpretation.[222] He sees the poem as 'an extended exploration of the relationship between the individual and the community at large, and it presents the fateful battle as evidence for the

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[220] Leonard Neidorf, '*II Æthelred II*', p.452.

[221] Niles, (1994), p. 94.

[222] Michael R. Kightley, 'Communal Interdependence in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Studia Neophilologica*, 82 (2010), 58-68.

thorough dependence of the entire community – be it military, regional, racial or national – on each of its component members'.[223] Kightley proposes that we reconsider whether the poem really has loyalty to one leader as the central theme, arguing that it is not just about the named men's relation to Byrhtnoð, but to each other. Evidence of this, Kightley argues, is the fact that when Byrhtnoð dies, he is not replaced by a second-in-command, but by the group itself. A further element highlighted by Kightley is the symbolism of the shield wall, 'the defensive capability of the whole is much greater than that of the sum of its parts'.[224] The wall is less about community building, Kightley explains, more about 'dependence on the community'. Where this argument fails a little is in the poet showing acts of heroism by men stepping out of the shield wall. The threat of the breaking of the wall may well have been the prompt for Byrhtnoð's precautions in the opening, as we have seen. The flight of Godric is also given as proof of this communal interdependence, as 'a single retainer decides the fate of an entire army';[225] whilst I agree to a certain extent, it is an idea that only works in the negative. There was no positive act that one individual could have performed at this point that would have had the opposite effect. This brings us back to the importance of Byrhtnoð. His actions were, while he was living, enough to keep the troop together; his mental strength and his insistence on the correct balance between mental and

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[223] Kightley, p. 58.

[224] Kightley, p. 59.

[225] Kightley, p. 62.

physical preparation, as we have seen, were enough to keep his men together. The moment he was no longer there, despite the efforts of his men to follow his example, the battle was lost. He was the linchpin, and the poet's consistent use of possessive forms attached to Byrhtnoð's name after his death (see above) further underlines the fact that, for the poet, loyalty to Byrhtnoð, echoing Byrhtnoð's loyalty to his king, is central to the poem.

However, the idea of communal interdependence is an important element. When Byrhtnoð refers to Æþelred's land (53), he means England, and here he is at cross purposes with the Vikings who intend to keep peace only with this locality upon payment, as was their habit. The Vikings promise to keep the peace if they are paid. Byrhtnoð will have been aware that the Vikings had already attacked and taken tribute from Ipswich and possibly also Folkestone and Sandwich, therefore the peace that they are offering is local and by offering it they are, in effect, dividing the kingdom. This makes Byrhtnoð's self-definition as defender of Æþelred's land and people a poignant reminder that this is one kingdom and that there can be no piecemeal peace.

### 3.7 *Maldon* and VII Æþelred

If this poem is in part linked to the politics of late tenth-century England, it is perhaps more to do with Æþelred's policy of atonement, rather than

being an attempt to placate the Vikings.[226] Many of the contemporary thinkers saw the endless raids and atrocities as punishment by God for the sins of the English. Wulfstan makes this clear in his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*[227] and in Æþelred's seventh code of laws, which he composed. In VII Æþelred the king ordered a series of masses to be said across the country, including a mass *contra paganos* (against the heathens), with accompanying collection also *contra paganos*. Although the mass and collection were to be performed *omni congregatione* (by the whole congregation), this specific detail is not included in the Old English version of the law code, but only in the Latin.[228] This set of rules is curiously concerned with the inner spiritual life of the people of England as well as their deeds or misdeeds. The logic is of course that the Viking raids were a punishment from God, but it adds a curiously spiritual element to the law codes.

These can hardly have been popular measures, requiring as they did both money and suffering where the whole congregation must spend three days on nothing but bread, herbs and water and go to church barefoot. Whilst not explicit, there must also have reigned an oppressive sense of being watched, as failure to comply would be fined. Perhaps most surprising is a law requiring everyone to *clipian inweardre*

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[226] Simon Keynes attributes Æþelred's policy to a change in influence, 'it was under the influence of different men (rather than in response to the Viking invasions) that he began to make amends for the indiscretions of his youth), Simon Keynes, 'The Historical Context of The Battle of Maldon' in Donald Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 81-113, p. 98.

[227] Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos Quando Dani Maxime Persecuti Sunt Eos, Quod Fuit Anno Millesimo. .VIII. ab Incarnatione Domini Nostri Iesu Cristi*, in Bethurum, pp. 267-75.

[228] Liebermann (1898), p. 261.

*heortan georne to Criste* (call eagerly to Christ with inward heart).[229] Æþelred was clearly conscious of the importance of mental acts as well as physical ones in his desperation to find a solution to the Viking raids and so at this point certain mental acts were even prescribed by law.

At a time when people's innermost thoughts weresubject to the law, the importance given to mental acts in the poem cannot but be significant. The Vikings are not portrayed in a 'neutral light' as Leonard Neidorf claims, on the contrary, they are given the role of devils. We have seen the way their speech echoes the devil's speech in *Christ and Satan*, and how the verb *lytegian* is linked to devilish manipulation. However, just like devils, they cannot ultimately be blamed for the loss of the battle, just as a devil cannot ultimately be blamed for the loss of a soul. The loss is due to the failure of the some of the defenders to stand firm and maintain the correct mental and physical stance, be they *miles Christi* or *miles Byrhtnothi.*

## 3.8 Conclusion

We have seen that Byrhtferð of Ramsey's version of the Battle of Maldon in his *Life of Saint Oswald* creates a parallel between the opposition of Byrhtnoð and the Vikings and the opposition of Heaven and Hell.[230] The *Maldon* poet avoids doing this so overtly but does employ the same kind of tropes that we find in homiletic literature

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[229] Liebermann (1898), p. 262

[230] See above 3.2.

concerned with balance of mental and physical acts, the danger of excess, movement and stasis, and above all the importance of mental control where the rational part of the mind must control the wayward part of the mind.[231] The depiction of the Vikings is not free from a comparison with devilish practices. The echoes of Satan's temptation of Christ in *Christ and Satan*, point to a discrete comparison being made.[232] The battle for the control of the English soldiers' mental focus during the flyting is not unlike that for the human soul pulled between Christian exhortation and devilish temptation.

As long as Byrhtnoð survives, he manages to help maintain the mental control of his men; however on his death the 'spell' is broken and many of the men take flight. A similar impression is given in the Chronicle description: *and hy þone ealdorman þær ofslogon and wælstowe geweald ahtan* (and they killed the ealdorman there and had control of the field) where it is implied that the Vikings only had control of the field after Byrhtnoð's death.[233]

The poet has shown Byrhtnoð making an error with the famous reference to *ofermod* and *landes to fela*, but neither here, nor in any of the other witnesses to the character of Byrhtnoð is he depicted as considering himself superior. Indeed the tale of his refusal to eat without his men, hagiographical or not, clearly points the other way.[234] Byrhtnoð

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[231] See above 1.2.1 - 1.2.4.

[232] See above 3.2

[233] Janet M. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' in Donald Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), Old English and translation pp. 37-8.

[234] See above 3.6.

is depicted as showing humility. This humility is also found in the poem exactly at this critical juncture where he reflects out loud that the outcome is something that *God ana wat* (94). However, whether or not the *Maldon* poet was employing *ofermod* to suggest pernicious pride, he was certainly claiming that Byrthnoð made an error; significantly he does not make excuses for him.

A key idea in the poem is that each individual is ultimately responsible for his own actions and for his own self control. Even if the slips are the result of mental manipulation from the enemy (kept deliberately vague, but implied in the verb *lytegian*), the fault lies with the individual in the same way that tempting devils are not responsible for our sins, *hi moton ure afandian, ac hi ne moton us nydan to nanum yfele, buton we hit sylfe agenes willan doon* [235] (they…can tempt us, but they cannot force us to any evil unless we do it ourselves of our own will).[236] This concern with individual mental processes finds its echo in VII Æþelred where the king attempts to control the mental / spiritual acts of his subjects.[237] Had the poet put the blame for the loss of the

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[235] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Dominica Prima in Quadragesima*, p. 268.

[236] If we consider the role of the Vikings as tempters, one effect of withholding the precise words of the Vikings when every other utterance is made public to the audiences within and without the poem, is to enhance the impression that these words were for Byrhtnoð alone, just like the whisperings of the tempter. The poet hides the words that tempted Byrhtnoð to err, although realistically it is unlikely they went unheard by others, and shares the words of his prayer which were unlikely to have been public. The effect of this is to show Byrhtnoð giving in to temptation on a private level and making a mistake for personal reasons (*for **his** ofermode*) but publicly showing him to be having a good death. There is something of the exempla in this. Even the greatest of men can make a mistake, but it is never too late to turn back to God. If *mod* is the wayward part of the mind that needs to be controlled, then at this point, despite the poet's insistence on Byrhtnoð's ability to control not just his own mind, but that of his men, then here, momentarily, he fails.

[237] See 3.7 above.

battle on the superiority of the Viking army, this message would have lost all impact.

The *Liber Eliensis* supports the impression we have of Byrhtnoð's character – both in his quality as a great soldier and a good man. It also supports the reference in the poem to Byrhtnoð's loyalty being at a national rather than local level (53) when we are told, 'he would rather die than suffer an unavenged injury to his country'.[238] This reinforces the interpretation that his *to heanlic* speech (54-7) committed him to fight the Vikings even on their own terms.

In sum the presentation of the character of Byrhtnoð in *Maldon* and the deceitful and manipulative nature of the Vikings is in step with the characterisation elsewhere. It seems possible, even probable, that the poem was intended in part as propaganda intended to bolster, not only English morale (or at least resolve), but also the reputation of an unpopular king. Showing Byrhtnoð as slightly flawed, even though largely saint-like, makes sense in such a context. More importantly the importance of mental action in the poem echoes the importance given to mental action in the law.

The overriding importance given to mental control and individual responsibility would seem to be linked to an overtly Christian way of thinking, and, as Tolkien indicated, this heralds a new type of Christian hero, one who is on the way to becoming chivalric.[239]

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[238] Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, translated by Kennedy, p.67 See above 3.2.

[239] Tolkien, 'Homecoming of Beorhtnoth', p. 144.

## 4: *The Seafarer*

> *O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself the king of infinite space — were it not that I have bad dreams.*[1]

### 4.1 Thought and Action in *The Seafarer*

Hamlet's reflections on the power of the mind stem from a longstanding philosophical quest to understand the mind or soul's quasi divine ability to be anywhere and everywhere whilst the body remains fixed in place; a quest that stretches at least as far back as Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *De Anima* and was certainly of interest to such Anglo-Saxon thinkers as Alcuin, Ælfric and Alfred – and that, as Death might say, is only the As.[2] This relationship between body and mind is central to consideration of the relation between mental and physical actions at the heart of this thesis and indeed to any interpretation of *The Seafarer*.

It will be useful to give an overview of the most significant critical interpretations of the poem before considering how an examination of the poet's treatment of mental and physical acts can contribute to a fuller understanding of the poem.

Hamlet's 'bad dreams', a symptom of his melancholy disposition, explain his paradoxical ability to see the beauty and vibrancy of life on Earth as few others can whilst reducing that vision to one of death; he

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[1] *Hamlet* II. 2. 254-6.

[2] Marcus Zusak, *The Book Thief* (London: Transworld, 2007), p. 13. 'I can be amiable. Agreable. Affable. And that's only the As'. This novel where Death is the narrator opens, 'Here is a small fact: you are going to die'; a comment which seems not out of place in relation to *The Seafarer*.

sees ‘the brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire’, but to him it is nothing but ‘a foul and pestilential congregation of vapours’, the ‘goodly earth’ becomes a ‘sterile promontory’ and man, the god-like beauty of the world, is to him ‘quintessence of dust’. The irony of Hamlet’s speech is that he can see the beauty of the earth and heavens more keenly than anyone; it is not Rosencrantz or Guildenstern who will notice the ‘majestical roof fretted with golden fire’ or compare man to angels and gods. Similarly the seafarer sees the coming of spring with a poet’s eye: *Bearwas blostmum nimað, byrig fægriað,* / *wongas wlitigað, woruld onetteð* (48-9), (Groves take blossoms, cities grow fair / meadows grow beautiful, the world hastens), and yet he reduces all this to the dark oxymoron *þis deade lif* / *læne on londe* (65-6), (this dead life, transitory, on land).

*The Seafarer* is a poem that contains many paradoxes, some of which have caused heated critical debate. Although it seems complete, with few apparent scribal errors, and is rarely in any of its expression obscure, the interpretation of the poem has been one of the longest running objects of debate and dissent in the world of Old English studies. The apparent contradiction between the initial negative depiction of seafaring and the subsequent eagerness to set sail led to a theory that the poem was a dialogue between an old experienced sailor and a young inexperienced one. This theory, propounded by Rieger[3]

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[3] Max Rieger, ‘*Der Seefahrer*. Als Dialog Hergestellt’, *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 1 (1869), 334-37.

and later by Kluge[4] was debunked by Lawrence[5] in 1902. Although Pope[6] revisited the idea with his 'dramatic voices' theory in 1965, he retracted it nine years later, since when this unsatisfying hypothesis seems to have been firmly laid to rest. The paradox, however, remains problematic as does the question of the poem's unity.

The poem presents an abrupt change at line 66b from a first person account of seafaring to an eschatological homily with no apparent reference to seafaring whatsoever, which again calls into question the unity of the poem. Lawrence considered that the original poem continued only to line 102; this theory was accepted by Krapp-Dobbie[7] and many others and remained the consensus opinion for some time. Whitelock proposed that the seafaring part of the poem be taken literally because 'we are given no hint of any kind that the beginning of the poem is anything other than a realistic description'.[8] Her solution to the

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[4] Friedrich Kluge, 'Zu altenglischen Dichtungen, 1. Der *Seefahrer*', *Englische Studien* 6 (1883), 322-37.

[5] W. W. Lawrence, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', *JEGP* 4 (1902), 460-80.

[6] John C. Pope, 'Dramatic voices in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honour of F. P. Magoun, Jr.* ed. J. B Bessinger and R. P. Creed (New York: NYUP, 1965), 164-93; and 'Second Thoughts on the Interpretation of *The Seafarer*', *ASE* 3, (1974), 75-86. See also, Stanley B. Greenfield, 'Attitudes and Values in *The Seafarer', Studies in Philology* 51 (1954), 15-20; Stanley B. Greenfield, '*Min*, *Sylf*, and Dramatic Voices in *The Seafarer*' *JEGP* 68 (1969), 212-20. Stanley B. Greenfield, '*Sylf*, Seasons, Structure, and Genre in The Seafarer', *ASE* 9 (1980), 199-211.

[7] George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, *ASPR III, The Exeter Book* (London: Routledge and New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. xxxix.

[8] Dorothy Whitelock, 'The interpretation of *The Seafarer*', in *Early Cultures of Northwest Europe*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1950), 261-72 reprinted in *Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968), pp. 442-57, p.443.

literal nature of the seafaring and the unity of the poem was to propose interpreting the speaker as a *peregrinus*.

Today the poem is generally considered to be a unified whole, and most critics feel that the first part does indeed have symbolic elements; Klinck observes, 'modern scholarship tends to explain the apparent paradoxes in the first half of the poem and the absence of any reference to seafaring in the second by a symbolic reading, whereby the voyage, which may or may not exist on a literal level, has a deeper, spiritual significance'.[9]

Other cruces include the interpretation of *forþon*, and whether its function is causal or sequential; the problem of *sylf cunnige* at line 35, which if translated most obviously as 'experience for myself' seems to contradict the earlier accounts of previous seafaring experience; and the interpretation of the famous passage lines 58-63, where the seafarer's *hyge* breaks free. Is the *hyge* the soul, the mind or both? Is the *anfloga* the same thing or does it refer back to the cuckoo? The interpretations vary from the literal to the metaphorical, and while most see this as a Christian expression, Vivian Salmon and G. V. Smithers see this as a shamanistic reference and link the *hyge* to its ON cognate *hugr;* Smithers sees this as evidence of a soul that wishes to leave the body.[10]

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[9] Anne L. Klinck, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p.37.

[10] Vivian Salmon, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, and the Old English Conception of the Soul', *Modern Language Review* 55:1 (1960), 1-10. G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* (continued)', *Medium Ævum* 28 (1959), 1-22, p. 16ff.

Since Peter Clemoes demonstrated the influence of Alcuin's *De Anime Ratione Liber* on the composition of *The Seafarer*,[11] several critics have explored the various philosophical lines of thought at play in the Anglo-Saxon corpus, most notably M. R. Godden in his highly influential 'Anglo-Saxons on the mind'.[12] What Godden has clarified is the divide between the classical view of the unity of the soul comprising a tripartite identity of memory, will and understanding, largely influenced by St Augustine of Hippo, and the vernacular view which saw the mind, thoughts and emotions as part of the transient body defined by Lockett as 'a body composed of both unthinking flesh and thinking flesh, the latter being the organ of the mind'.[13] Clemoes' essay, focussing on lines 58-63, asks whether the poet's vision is influenced by the classical tradition that sees mind and soul as one, or the vernacular tradition more common to poetry where the mind, like the body, is ephemeral. Clemoes argues for a literal interpretation of this passage, whilst other critics see it as symbolic of the speaker's eagerness to depart.

A clear understanding of which elements are literal and which symbolic would seem to lie at the heart of any satisfactory explanation of the poem, and of any attempt to tackle the various cruces which present themselves to the reader.

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[11] Peter Clemoes, '*Mens absentia cogitans* in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', in *Medieval Literature and Civilisation*, ed., D.A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron (London: Athlone Press, 1969).

[12] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind'.

[13] Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p.41.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that certain Anglo-Saxon poets employed a conscious approach to the presentation of the relation between mental and physical actions;[14] that is to say that they created patterns of balance or imbalance between the two types of action which then provide further layers of meaning to their work and colour the lens through which the works must be read.

The *Seafarer*-poet is one such. An examination of the distribution of mental and physical acts shows that in the first part of the poem the poet has deliberately assigned the description of physical acts to the forces of nature whilst studiously avoiding reference to any physical or corporeal activity in the narrator despite the fact that he is ostensibly recounting his days at sea; he has furthermore described some of the narrator's interior mental acts in physical terms. The marked and violent movement of nature is perhaps a reminder that *eall ðios unstille gesceaft and þeos hwearfiende* (all this moving and turning creation)[15] is constantly striving to return to the stillness that is God, a reminder that encourages the narrator, himself static but trapped and subject to the painful thrashing of emotions and uncontrolled thoughts, to follow. A deconstruction of these patterns of balance and imbalance between mental and physical acts will facilitate a new reading of the poem and enable us to consider whether any of the longstanding cruces may be resolved.

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[14] By physical acts, I mean acts performed by any physical body and by mental I mean acts performed by the mind, spirit or soul. See Introduction.

[15] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 39, p. 363, and translation *OEB* II, p. 83.

## 4.2 Distribution of mental acts and physical acts in *The Seafarer*

### 4.2.1 Distribution of mental acts and physical acts*:* lines 1-66a

Mæg ic be me sylfum  soðgied wrecan,
siþas secgan,  hu ic geswincdagum
earfoðhwile  oft þrowade,
bitre breostceare  gebiden hæbbe,
gecunnad in ceole  cearselda fela,
atol yþa gewealc,  þær mec oft bigeat
nearo nihtwaco  æt nacan stefnan
þonne he be clifum cnossað. (1-8a)

I can tell a true riddle[16] about myself,
speak of journeys, how I in days of toil,
often suffered time of hardship,
have endured bitter heart-care,
experienced in [the] keel many abodes of worry,
the terrible heaving of the waves, where often came upon me
oppressive night-watch in the prow of the ship
when it slams near the cliffs.[17]

[16] The noun, *gied,* indicates a song or riddle. See below 4.5.

[17] The verb *cnossian*, only appearing here, is presumably a variant of *cnyssan* and would normally mean to crash against. DOE suggests ‘toss, pitch or perhaps to strike or clash’.

The poem opens with a statement of ability, *ic mæg*, I can. The ability professed by the speaker is to speak or tell, *wrecan* and *secgan,* a reference to speech acts. The verbs which follow, however, relate only the mental responses of the seafarer to physical acts and not the performance of the acts themselves. The verb *þrowian* tells us of the narrator's suffering; he has suffered *geswincdagum*, days of toil. The toil in question is not described, nor does the speaker indicate that he performed it himself, merely that he 'suffered' it. The other reference to physical activity is that of the night-watch; the narrator tells us that *þær mec oft bigeat* / *nearo nihtwaco.* This is an oddly convoluted expression as the verb *begietan* / *begitan* means to take, acquire or seize. So rather than a verb to describe the performing of the night watch, the poet has used a construction which gives agency to the act and not the actor, indicating that the night-watch seized or came upon the speaker.[18] It is a curiously passive depiction of seafaring which in itself

[18] A similar construction, as Klinck points out, is also found in *The Wife's Lament* lines 32 and 41. For the female narrator of *WL* it is longing for her departed lord that assails her, and is, as such, a logical construction, similar to the collocation of *niman* (to take) with emotions. For our seafarer, however, it is an onerous task that has assailed him.

is a very active occupation.[19] The verb *begietan* is suggestive of forceful action, but that action is ascribed to the task and not the man performing it.

Other verbs relating to the seafarer in this extract are *gebidan*, to endure, and *cunnian*, to experience. Both verbs refer to the *bitre breostceare* of line 5. The poet has used a perfect construction with *habban* to indicate past experience that has a present effect.[20] By indicating that the seafarer experienced and endured bitter heart-care or anxiety, the poet suggests a passive and emotional response on the part of the speaker, thus implying a more active role for the cares themselves.

In contrast to the lack of reference to physical action in the seafarer, there is pronounced and violent action on the part of the waves and the boat. The action of the waves is a terrible surging; the noun *gewealc* is the nominalised form of *gewealcan,* whilst *cnossan* (to crash against), describes the action of the prow of the boat as it crashes near the

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[19] Night-watch in the prow of a boat, as any sailor will tell you, is a stressful experience, the point being to look out for rocks and signal them to the steersman in order to avoid wrecking. *Stefn* can also refer to the stern of the ship. This would make more sense if our seafarer is really alone in the boat, although this assumption seems now to be questioned as Jennifer Neville writes in a students' introduction to Old English, 'The Seafarer probably wasn't the only person on his ship, but, as far as he was concerned, he was utterly deserted, left freezing and alone…'. From 'What else is there? Joyous play and bitter tears: The *Riddles* and the Elegies' in *Beowulf and Other Stories: A New Introduction to Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures*. ed. Richard North and Joe Allard (London, Pearsall Education, 2007), p. 146.
Normally the watchman in the prow would signal dangers to the steersman; however a lone sailor would be forced to crane his neck and strain his eyes to watch the rocks whilst simultaneously adjusting his course in consequence. The seaman appears to be standing (he focusses on the coldness in his feet), thus implying he is not rowing, but under sail, which would provide a further task in the trimming of the sail to fit his course.

[20] For the significance of the poet's use of tense, see below.

rocks. In contrast, these verbs indicate not only action, but violent action.

Calde geþrungen
wæron mine fet,  forste gebunden,
caldum clommum,  þær þa ceare seofedun
hat ymb heortan,  hungor innan slat
merewerges mod. (8b-12a)

My feet were pinched
by cold, fettered by frost,
in cold chains,  there the anxieties sighed
hot around my heart,  within hunger tore
the mind of the sea-weary man.

Here we have some verbs suggestive again of violent physical action: *þringan* (to pinch), *bindan* (to bind) and *slitan* (to rend). However the agents of these actions are cold, frost and hunger. The images indicate that the seafarer's body is imprisoned and held captive whilst the mind and heart are attacked. *Seofian* (to sigh), is not usually an aggressive term, but the use of the preposition *ymb* and the adjective *hat* give a sense of oppressive movement and threat as if the anxieties are encircling the heart and laying siege to it. The narrator is under attack from emotions (anxiety) and other bodily reflexes (hunger) that he cannot seem to control. Here again the action of sighing, albeit one

requiring minimal physical effort, is attributed not to the speaker but to the worries that assail him. The actions of pinching and binding are performed by the elements of nature in the form of cold and ice. The seafarer, disembodied and dismembered, suffers in the feet, the heart and the mind. There is a clear offsetting of the physical and mental, where the feet represent the human body and physical action, which is restrained, and the heart and mind represent the mental / spiritual side of the man which seems to be under attack, beset by encircling anxieties and rent by hunger. There are examples in the homilies of feet being symbolic of physical activity: for example in Ælfric's *Natale Sancti Stephani*, a woman is described as hanging herself in a noose *þæt heo fotum span*[21] (that she had spun with her feet); a less gruesome example is in *Depositio Sancti Cuthberti* where the saint asks for seeds to plant on Farne so that *he mid his foton hine fedan moste*[22] (so that he could feed himself with his feet). In both cases where PDE would refer to the work of a person's hands, the Old English refers to it as feet. The binding of the Seafarer's feet may therefore be symbolic of his inability to act. The images of bondage are reminiscent of Satan's complaints in *Genesis B*, the metaphor of cold chains being suggestive of punishment or at least imprisonment.[23] There is, however, no

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[21] *CH* II, p. 15

[22] *CH* II, p. 86.

[23] *Weol him on innan / hyge ymb heortan, hat was him utan / wraðlic wite* (*Genesis B* 353-5), the inner turmoil and suffering remind us of the suffering of the seafarer (*SF*, 10-12) and later Satan complains that his *fet synt gebundene*, (379, [his] feet are bound), again in a similar torment to that of the seafarer.

indication that the seafarer has done anything wrong. It is rather as if he were being attacked by the forces of nature and of his own body.

Þæt se mon ne wat,
þe him on foldan fægrost limpeð,
hu ic, earmcearig, iscealdne sæ
winter wunade, wræccan lastum,
winemægum bidroren,
bihongen hrimgicelum; hægl scurum fleag.
Þær ic ne gehyrde butan hlimman sæ,
iscaldne wæg. Hwilum ylfete song
dyde ic me to gomene, ganetes hleoþor
ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
mæw singende fore medodrince.
Stormas þær stanclifu beotan, þær him stearn oncwæð
isigfeðera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal,
urigfeðera. Nænig hleomæga
feasceaftig ferð frefran meahte.
Forðon[24] him gelyfeð lyt, se þe ah lifes wyn,
gebiden in burgum, bealosiþa hwon,
wlonc ond wingal, hu ic, werig oft,
in brimlade bidan sceolde.

[24] *Forþon* in the first part of the poem introduces a change in tense use each time it appears, and therefore seems to function as a signal that we are reaching a significant moment.

Nap nihtscua,  norþan sniwde,

hrim hrusan bond,  hægl feol on eorþan,

corna caldast.  (12b-33a)

The man does not know that,

he for whom on land it befalls most beautifully,

how I, wretched, dwelt in an ice-cold sea

in winter, on the paths of exile / torment,

deprived of dear kinsmen,

hung with icicles; hail flew in storms.

There I heard nothing but the sea roaring,

[the] ice-cold wave. At times the swan's song

I treated as entertainment for myself, the gannet's voice

and curlew's sound for the laughter of men,

the seagull singing for mead-drinking.[25]

Storms beat the rocky cliffs there, where the tern answered them

icy-feathered; most often the eagle screamed,

wet-feathered. No protecting kinsmen

could comfort my desolate heart.

For he little believes, the one who has all life's pleasure

[25] It is interesting to note that the call of the whooper swan, with its slow lilting and rhythmical sound, does indeed resemble the rhythm of alliterative poetry being declaimed; the curlew's call does not sound much like laugther, but the call of the whimbrel, a small member of the curlew family, does - as does the gannet's. The more familiar sound of herring gulls certainly has the loud and roisterous tone of a drunken gathering.

experienced in cities with few bitter experiences,
proud and elated with wine, how I, often weary,
had to remain in the sea-path.
The shadow of night grew dark, it snowed from the north,
frost bound the earth, hail fell on the ground,
the coldest of grains.

The focus now shifts as the seafarer compares his experience to that of a town dweller, for whom everything befalls most beautifully. The narrator continues to refer uniquely to emotions and states and not to actions. We have the verbs *wunian* (to dwell or inhabit), *bidreosan* (to be deprived of), *bihon* (hung with), *gehyran* (to hear) and *don* (to treat as). These words refer to the seafarer and his experiences. He dwells in an ice-cold winter sea, hung with icicles and he is *earmcearig*, (wretched and miserable). The coldness is emphasised by the term *isceald*, and he is hung about with icicles, an imagery suggestive of stasis; however this is not the stasis of the steadfast Christian or determined warrior, it is the stasis of constraint. Megan Cavell remarks of the binding imagery in the poem that it 'makes explicit the trapped state of humanity'.[26] The speaker now emphasises his loneliness, the fact that he is without kindred spirits. He is deprived of kinsmen and to compensate for this loss, he conjures up images of the hall filled with laughter, mead and song. He invests the surrounding sea-birds with the

[26] Megan Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies: The Poetics of Human Experience in Old English Literature* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 108.

concomitant sounds of the hall. It is worth noting that he is not turning his back on this life, but is missing it and compensating for its absence as best he can. The only act he seems able to perform, however, is one of imagination – an act of the mind.

In contrast to the stasis of the narrator, the verbs describing the actions of the birds and weather are strident and animated. Once again the violent actions of the elements of nature contrast with the distinct lack of action in the speaker. Verbs for the elements and creatures are: *hlimman* (to roar), *fleogan* (to fly), *singan* (to sing), *beatan* (to beat or pound), *oncweþan* (to answer) and *bigiellan* (to yell). The birds are making a raucous noise: yelling, screaming, singing, thus echoing the raucous laughter and song of the mead-hall. The storms beat against the rocky cliffs. Both cliffs and seabirds are able to communicate as the verb *oncweþan* suggests. This underlines the inability of the seafarer to communicate with his *fellows*; he has no *hleomægas* to comfort him. The emotional hardship of the separation of the seafarer from others of his kind finds its expression in the image of exile, *wræccan lastas* (15).

The narrator compares himself to men on land whose comfort prevents them from empathising with him or understanding what he is going through. Yet the speaker deprives them too of action as if unable to consider mankind in physical terms. For them everything 'befalls them most beautifully'; the verb *limpan* (to befall) implies that all good things fall into the laps of these men, with little or no effort on their part. They 'experience' pleasure and have obviously been merrymaking, being *wlonc ond wingal* (proud and elated with wine). We imagine their

lives being similar to the one the seafarer substitutes the sounds of seabirds for.

The narrator seems incapable of ascribing direct action to humans; the verbs ascribed to the town-dweller are *gebidan* (to experience) and *gelyfan* (to believe), mental responses to physical stimuli. The seafarer, caught in tumultuous weather, can do nothing but wait (*bidan*). Meanwhile nature is in a frenzy of physical activity, all of which serves to increase the seafarer's discomfort. The verbs are: *nipan* (to darken), *sniwan* (to snow), *bindan* (to bind), *feallan* (to fall), as the night darkens, the north sends snow, frost binds the earth and cold hail falls. All of these inanimate things have agency, whilst the seafarer remains as bound as the earth, impassive and unable to act.

Forþon cnyssað nu
heortan geþohtas þæt ic hean streamas,
sealtyþa gelac, sylf cunnige.
Monað modes lust mæla gehwylce
ferð to feran þæt ic feor heonan
elþeodigra eard gesece. (33b-8)

For now thoughts batter[27] my heart so that I the deep currents,
[the] sea-waves' tumult, should experience myself.

[27] DOE gives 'to beat, strike, knock' as the principal meaning of *cnyssan*, with a figurative sense of 'urge insistently, importune' for this particular example. I prefer to retain the image and allow the reader to infer the figurative meaning as it is significant that this is a verb of violent action, and one that echoes *cnossian* in line 8. 'Batter' retains the sense and the similarity of meaning to *cnossian*, and is a *clin d'oeil* to John Donne's 'Batter my heart, three-person'd God'.

Desire of the mind urges the spirit to set forth
constantly so that I far from here
should seek out the land of foreigners.

*Forþon* introduces a significant moment in the poem as does the change from past to present tense. Although the seafarer continues to focus on his mental actions, these have now become vigorous and at times violent in an echo of the acts performed by the forces of nature. The verb *cnyssan* can be taken as either transitive or intransitive, so that either 'thoughts batter the heart' (with *heortan* as accusative object) or 'the heart's thoughts batter…' (with *heortan* as genitive singular).[28] Given the similarity to the idea in lines 10-11– *þa ceare seofedun / hat ymb heortan* – the former seems likely with the 'heart' as a fixed point being beaten by thoughts as it had been surrounded by worries; the thoughts and worries are given a violent agency as they crash and swirl around the heart. The mental acts in this passage are different; where the cares, anxiety and hunger which beset the heart before were irrational and emotive, these are rational thoughts, urging the heart to make its own journey. Here the verbs relating to the seafarer are *cunnian* (35) and *gesecan* (38), to experience and to seek out. The second is the closest that the speaker will come to suggesting physical action, but it is a subjunctive clause and refers to possible future action. The verbs expressing strong action are now associated with the speaker's inner being, his thoughts and his spirit. *Cnossian* is a violent

[28] Klinck, p.132.

action; as thoughts crash against the heart they imitate the crashing of the boat in line 8. The idea of 'desire' is also given agency to urge the mind and spirit or life-force to travel far away from its present location to 'seek out the land of strangers'.[29] Here the speaker seems to make a parallel between the *ferð* and the self, signified by *ic*; the contemplated action of travel only really seems to be intended for the spirit.

Forþon nis þæs modwlonc  mon ofer eorþan,
ne his gifena þæs god,  ne in geoguþe to þæs hwæt,
ne in his dædum to þæs deor,  ne him his drythen to þæs hold
þæt he a his sæfore  sorge næbbe
to hwon hine drythen  gedon wille.
Ne biþ him to hearpan hyge,  ne to hringþege,
ne to wife wyn,  ne to worulde hyht,
ne ymbe owiht elles  nefne ymb yða gewealc.
Ac a hafað longunge  se þe on lagu fundað. (39-47)

For there is no man on earth so proud of spirit,
nor in his gifts so generous, nor in his youth so bold,
nor in his deeds so brave, nor his lord so favourable to him
that hedoes not ever have anxiety

[29] Gordon considers that this may refer to the 'heavenly home', *The Seafarer*, ed. Ida Gordon (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p.38, l.38 n., Richard Marsden, *The Cambridge Old English Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 225n, refers to Hebrews 11.13-16 and St Augustine, *The City of God*, XV. 1 as further evidence for this possibility.

about his sea-journey about what the Lord will bring him to.
His mind is not on the harp, or the receiving of rings,
nor on pleasure in woman, nor on expectation of the world
nor on anything else except the surging of the waves.
But he ever has longing, the one who sets out on the sea.

This passage is entirely focussed on thought processes as the seafarer implicitly compares himself to any other man, no matter how proud of spirit, and how their thoughts are focussed. The men about to embark on a voyage can only think about the frightening action of the waves, and each thought about listening to music, women, rewards and ambitions is denied; it is to be understood that these are the preoccupations such men would otherwise have had. The speaker begins by enumerating the qualities that define a good and happy man as being one who is generous, bold in youth, performing deeds for his lord and having a lord who is gracious to him. The value of these acts is reflected in part two where man is exhorted to perform *deorum dædum deofle togeanes* (brave deeds against the devil). There are references to physical action here, for example brave deeds are alluded to, but there is no description of their performance. The verbs used are *beon / wesan* and *habban*, to be and to have – stative verbs. The only action described, albeit through a nominalised verb, is that of the terrible surging of the waves. The action of setting out, with the verb *fundian*, is anticipated however.

In contrast the next few lines are heavy with action verbs, but once again the agents are not human, but are the forces of nature.

Bearwas blostmum nimað,  byrig fægriað,
wongas wlitigað,  woruld onetteð;
ealle þa gemoniað  modes fusne,
sefan, to siþe,  þam þe swa þenceð
on flodwegas  feor gewitan.[30]
Swylce geac monað  geomran reorde,
singeð sumeres weard,  sorge beodeð
bitter in breosthord.  Þæt se beorn ne wat,
esteadig[31] secg,  hwæt þa sume dreogað,
þe þa wræclastas  widost lecgað. (48-57)

Groves take on blossoms, cities grow fair
meadows grow beautiful, the world hastens;
all of those prompt the one eager of mind,
the spirit, to travel, he who so intends
to travel far on the seas.
Likewise the cuckoo urges with mournful voice,
summer's watchman sings, announces sorrow
bitter in the heart. That the man does not know,
the man blessed with bounty, what some suffer,

[30]I have followed Krapp and Dobbie in emendng the unusual singular *-að* ending to the infinitive.

[31] MS *efteadig*. Gordon amends to *sefteadig*, comfort-blessed.

who most widely follow the paths of exile.

The description of spring is a riot of activity. Whilst the elements of nature are still violently active, they now seem to be liberating the speaker – or at least the mind / spirit of the speaker – rather than binding him. The verbs of action are *niman* (to take or seize), *fægrian* (to make lovely), *wlitigian* (to adorn), *onettan* (to hurry onward), *gemonian* (to urge), *singan* (to sing) and *beodan* (to announce).

The sense of *blostmum nimað* is to flower or blossom. However, the verb *niman* collocates with *blostma* in only one other instance, that is in Bald's Leechbook (II) where the imperative, 'take elder's blossom', *nim ellenes blostman*, is part of a remedy and the action is to be performed by the healer not the elder tree. The more common verb would be *blowan*, to blossom, which also has the advantage of alliterating.[32] Instead the poet chooses to describe the groves as 'taking' on blossom, thus giving them agency and emphasising the physicality of the act. The cities grow fair and the meadows grow beautiful. Again the verb *wlitigian* usually means 'to make beautiful'; Bosworth-Toller gives to 'grow beautiful' as a rendition of the sense in this specific passage. Even the world itself *onetteð*, hastens or hurries onward. The poet has consistently chosen verbs that are suggestive of an act of will to give agency to the natural elements, including the globe itself. The relentless movement of nature is akin to the description in Boethius of *eall ðios*

[32] For example, *Menologium* (91), *blostmum blowað, swylce blis astihð*.

*unstille gesceaft and þeos hwearfiende*,[33] striving to return to God. The speaker, currently an exile from God's grace, is swept up by this desire and movement.

The physical acts of nature prompt a mental response in the one 'eager of mind and spirit'; they urge the one 'thinking' of setting far out on the ocean's paths to depart. We see quite clearly here that the speaker defines himself entirely in terms of thought and spirit. The narrator uses an increasing number of words relating to the soul, heart, mind and thought process with *mod*, *sefa*, *þencan* and *breosthord*. In parallel to the urging of the plant-life, we have a bird, the cuckoo, described as summer's watchman or guardian, also urging a departure. The sadness of the cuckoo's song announces sorrow in the *breosthord*. It is curious that the *mod* and *sefa* are eager whilst the *breosthord* is sorrowful. This either signifies a paradoxical sense of mixed emotions at leaving, eagerness for what lies ahead and sorrow at what is left behind, or a separation between *mod* and *sefa* on one hand and *breosthord* on the other. In the subsequent passage, a difference seems to be made between the *modsefa* and *hyge* on the one hand and the *hreþer* on the other, where the mind and spirit are urging the *hreþer* to join them. It seems likely that *breosthord*, treasure of the breast, and *hreþer*, breast, may indicate the same thing, most probably the heart, in which case we may see a division between aspects of the speaker's inner self. The sorrow is quite likely to be the sorrow or

[33] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 39, p. 363.

anxiety felt before a voyage described in line 42, which was itself paradoxical in relation to the longing to depart of line 47.[34]

Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð  ofer hreþerlocan,
min modsefa  mid mereflode
ofer hwæles eþel  hweorfeð wide,
eorþan sceatas;  cymeð eft to me
gifre ond grædig,  gielleð anfloga,
hweteð on wælweg [35]  hreþer unwearnum
ofer holma gelagu.  Forþon me hatran sind
dryhtnes dreamas  þonne þis deade lif,
læne on londe.  (58-66a)

For now my spirit[36] roams beyond the breast,[37]
my mind with the ocean

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[34] Peter Orton in 'The Form and Structure of *The Seafarer*', *Studia Neophilologica,* 63 (1991), 37-55, attributes the contradictory sense of longing to the idea that the seafarer on his on return to land feels 'an equally intolerable isolation at home, where his experiences are unshared' (p. 42). This would certainly explain his compulsion to take another voyage, but that is not quite the same thing as longing.

[35] Most editors, including Klinck, amend MS *wælweg* (road of the dead) to *hwælweg* (whale's road)*;* however there are strong arguments for maintaining the manuscript original as we shall see. Smithers (1957) argued for its retention giving numerous examples of death described a journey in Anglo-Saxon literature, pp. 137-58.

[36] It is unclear whether *hyge* implies mind, soul or both. I have translated *hyge* here as spirit because it is flying free from the body, suggesting anticipation of the future separation of soul and body. There is however much critical debate on this point, with critics such as Vivian Salmon finding echoes of Old Norse *hugr*, believed in a shamanistic context to be able to travel out of the body, (Vivian Salmon, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*')..

[37] Literally: enclosure of the heart. This is not an unusual compound, but does serve to draw attention to the location of the *hyge* and the sense that it has been confined.

over the whale's home [over] the corners of the earth
roams wide; it comes again to me
voracious and greedy, the lone flier yells,
incites the heart onto the road of the dead without resistance
over the seas' expanses. For to me are warmer
the joys of the Lord than this dead life,
transitory on land.

The speaker's unwillingness or inability to describe himself performing physical acts has built a sense of division between his inner spiritual self and his physical self; this division comes to a head in this passage, arguably one of the most famous in the Old English corpus. The heart, soul and thought words continue to dominate with *hyge*, *hreþerlocan*, *modsefa*, *hreþer* and arguably, *anfloga*.[38] These are now described performing physical acts. They are given an agency denied to the speaker's body and are released spectacularly from the binding confines described in the poem's opening. The verbs signifying the physical actions performed are *hweorfan* (58, 60), *cuman* (61) and *giellan* (62). These actions build to give a sense of liberation and joy, accentuated by the adjectives *gifre ond grædig* and the adverb *unwearnum*.

[38] Gordon, Marsden and Orton, following Sieper, take *anfloga* to be the cuckoo of line 53. Klinck argues that *giellan* conveys a harsh strident sound incompatible with the soft sound of the cuckoo. E. Sieper, *Die altenglische Elegie* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1915); Gordon, *Seafarer*, p. 41; Marsden, *Cambridge Old English Reader,* p. 227; Peter Orton, '*The Seafarer* 58-64a', *Neophilologus,* 66 (1982), 450-9.

The overwhelming sense of this description is that the speaker's liberated inner self becomes bird-like, closer in aspect to a carrion bird, such as the eagle or raven, because of the harshness of its cry, *giellan,* and the adjectives *gifre ond grædig*, which are suggestive of birds of prey. There is little similarity to the sea-birds already mentioned; neither the swan, curlew or cuckoo fit this description. Quite possibly the herring gulls might, but the eagle mentioned in line 24 makes the same cry, indicated by the related verb *bigiellan* and is therefore a more likely candidate. If we accept the manuscript *wælweg*, then the collocation with the idea of birds akin to the raven or eagle adds to the sense that this relates to death. The 'soul-bird' incites the heart *unwearnum*, without restraints, to fly over the sea's expanses – possibly a reference to the previous restraint provided by the shell of the body. The collocation of *gifre ond grædig* occurs only seven times in the corpus: to refer to Hell in *Genesis* (792) and *Christ and Satan* (191);[39] worms devouring a corpse in *Soul and Body II* (66); the destructive fire consuming the earth at Judgement Day in *The Phoenix* (503); the bloodthirsty proclivities of Grendel's mother in *Beowulf* (1497) and as a gloss for *consumptor .i. deuorator* (consumer that is to say destroyer) in

[39] Line 32 of *Christ and Satan* also has *gredige and gifre*, also with reference to Hell.

the *Hartley Latin-OE Glosses*.[40] All of these, without exception, relate to death and destruction.[41]

The ecstatic description of the flight of the *hyge* concludes with *forþon me hatran sind / dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif, læne on londe* (for to me are warmer the joys of the Lord than this dead life, transitory on land). In the context of a soul desiring and anticipating the final journey, the manuscript *wælweg* is perfectly fitting and the poet's deliberate choice of terms relating to death points to the fact that this is indeed a description or anticipation of the *nedfere* as described in Bede's *Death Song*.

It is quite clear that the poet has used a deliberate pattern in relation to the presentation of mental and physical acts, ascribing all physical action uniquely to the elements of nature and the speaker's mind and spirit. The consistency of this pattern gives us a narrator who thinks of himself only in terms of his spiritual self. The body, bound and fixed, is other. Thus, it seems to me, that the poet is directing us to understand the speaker as soul and not as man. The reason he is not described as performing any physical actions is precisely because he does not and cannot. The description of a sea-voyage in a winter landscape is

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[40] In medieval Latin paleography *.i.* abbreviates *id est*. See Adriano Cappelli, *The Elements of Abbreviation in Medieval Latin Paleography*, tr. David Heimann and Richard Kay (Kansas: University of Kansas Libraries, 1982), p. 22.

[41] A possible explanation for the image of the carrion bird may be found in Ælfric's *Natale Sancti Andreæ Apostoli*, where he quotes Isaiah's vision, *hwæt sind þas þe her fleogeð swa swa wolcnum, and swa swa culfran to heora eh-ðyrlum?* (what are these that fly here as clouds and as doves to their window?); Ælfric defines the doves as the apostles who looked and desired nothing. Those who look with desire, *se ðe þurh reaflace gewilnað ða ðing þe he mid his eagan wiðutan sceawað, se is glida and na culfre* (the one who through spoliation desires the thing that he with his eyes sees outside, he is a kite, not a dove). Here, of course, the poet has turned the idea on its head, because what the bird of prey has seen is the heavenly kingdom, and it is this that it desires. Ælfric, *CH* I, p. 511-2.

therefore a metaphor for the journey of life from the soul's point of view, bound within the body and helpless to prevent the body from committing errors that will endanger both body and soul.The anticipated journey that is longed for is the ultimate journey, or *nedfere* to use Bede's term. A reconsideration of the poem from this point of view makes sense of many of the cruces of the poem as I will attempt to demonstrate.

### 4.3 The Speaker as Spirit in lines 1-66a

There are many clues in the poem to this reading, although the most telling is the distribution of mental and physical acts, as we have seen. Beyond the use of pronouns, *ic*, *me* and *min*, the speaker only refers to himself as spirit or mind; at lines 26 and 37 he refers to himself as *ferð*, or spirit, and in lines 50-1 as *mod* and *sefa*, usually taken as synecdoche for the whole man. Klinck points out that the phrase *modes fusne sefan* literally means 'a heart eager of mind', because *fusne* is an adjective in agreement with *sefan*, but because this is perceived as 'odd', *fusne* 'should be understood as an adjectival noun;[42] however, if the speaker is referring to himself as a spirit, then the syntax is not odd at all. The *sefa* (mind or spirit) has a mind / will (*mod*) of its own which is eager.[43] Furthermore, the words *mon*, *beorn* and *secg* are always applied to another and never the self. If we compare this to *The*

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[42] Klinck p. 136.

[43] This is not unlike the phrase *stieran mod sceal strongum mode* (105, a mind must steer a headstrong mind), which is almost universally emended to *stieran mon sceal strongum mode* (a man must steer a headstrong mind), although the manuscript *mod* is not without sense.

*Wanderer*, a poem that is often considered in tandem with *The Seafarer* because of the many similarities, including the mournful tone of the first person narrator and the theme of exile, we will see a marked difference here. Firstly the *eardstapa* refers to himself performing physical actions: when describing himself sailing (4) he tells us that he had to *hreran mid handum* (move with [his] hands), presumably a reference to the act of rowing; he uses the verb *wadan* to describe his travelling (5 and 24), he remembers covering his lord with earth (23), he imagines himself hugging and kissing his lord, *clippan* and *cyssan* (42), and furthermore refers to himself as a man, a *wineleas guma*, friendless man (45). Because of the similarities of these two first person accounts, which I hardly need to detail here, we should consider the significance of the differences. They serve to underline the deliberate choices of the *Seafarer*-poet to omit descriptions of physical action when describing the narrator and to avoid referring to him as a man.

Further clues can be found. For instance the reference to *geswincdagas* in line 2 is a homiletic commonplace to refer to our transitory time on earth. Ælfric, in his 'Memory of Saints' describes life in these terms:

> Nu hæfð God eac gescyrt swyþe ure dagas swylce he swa cwæde, ne sceole ge swincan to lange, ac beoð eow anræde to þam ecan life, þærðær ge butan geswince gesælige lybbað.[44]
>
> Now has God also greatly shortened our days as He so said, you shall not labour too long, but be you resolute about the eternal life where you will live happily without toil.

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[44] W. W. Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints,* Volume I (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1966), p. 352.

Similarly in the *Vercelli Homilies* we have, *Ðis syndon swares and geswinces dagas* [45] (these are days of heavy labour and toil). The poet picks up this idea more openly in the second, overtly homiletic part of the poem when he talks of a world that weaker folk *brucað þurh bisgo*, use through toil, line 88. The word *siþas* may be translated as both journeys or experiences and this duality of meaning is fitting. The journey referred to here is the metaphorical journey of life or the sum of a person's experiences. Smithers gives an example from Ælfric who described the sea and especially the Sea of Galilee as a metaphor for the world and life on earth, *seo sæ, þe se Hælend oferferde getacnað þas andweardan woruld* (the sea that the Saviour travelled over represents this present world).[46] This is a favourite image for Ælfric and is more clearly expressed in *Feria IV in Hebdomade Pascae* where he explains the symbolism of sea and land fully in an exegesis of the description of Christ standing on the shore after His resurrection and watching Peter fishing out at sea:

> seo sæ getacnað þas andwerdan woruld, and þæt strand getacnode ða ecan staðolfæstnysse þæs towerdan lifes. Hi swuncon on ðære sæ, for ðan ðe hi wæron ða gyt on geswincfullum yðum þises deadlican lifes.[47]

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[45] Donald Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1992), p. 225.

[46] Smithers, 1957, p.150 referring to Ælfric, *Dominica in Media Quadragesima*, *CH* I, p.276.

[47] *CH* II, p. 165, included under *Alius Sermo De Die Paschae*.

> the sea represents this present world, and the shore represents the eternal steadfastness of the life to come. They toiled on the sea because they were still on the toilsome waves of this mortal life.

There are several echoes to *The Seafarer* in this passage, most importantly the Boethian symbolism of the moving sea as symbolic of mortal life and the unmoving land as symbol of eternal life. The reference to the waves as *geswincfull* is another example of the symbolic significance of this term. From the soul's point of view this journey is an uncomfortable one. It is bound within the body as the images of binding frost imply.

The poet uses a number of images suggesting the container and that which is contained. The speaker is *in ceole* (in the keel of a ship), synecdoche for the whole vessel. Another image of container and contained is the *cearseld* of line 5 (abodes of care), again linking to the body and chest as the phrase parallels *bitre breostceare* in line 4. The static shell of the body is represented by the feet bound in ice whilst in contrast the inner self is hot and mobile as the cares sigh around the heart and hunger tears at the mind. We have noted the unusual collocation of hunger with *mod*, as opposed to the stomach area, and the explanation perhaps lies in the nature of the hunger being referred to. Were this a hunger for food it is unlikely to be tearing at the mind of the speaker; however, if we consider *Soul and Body II*: *ond þu me þy*

*heardan hungre gebunde* / *ond gehæftnadest helle witum* (28-9, and you have bound me with harsh starvation and held me captive with hellish torments) we will see that a soul's hunger is not the same; it is hunger for God's path.[48] Whilst *The Seafarer* avoids the aggressive tone from the soul to the body which we find in *Soul and Body II*, the emotional suffering of the soul is keenly expressed. The image of the soul obliged to dwell within a mortal body in *Soul and Body II* also finds an echo in *The Seafarer*:

> þenden ic þe in worulde wunian sceolde
> þæt þu wære þurh flæsc ond þurh firenlustas
> stronge gestyred ond gestaþelad þurh mec. (40-5)
>
> While I had to dwell within you in the world
> so that you could be firmly steered and stabilised by me
> through [temptations of the] flesh and sinful lusts.

The importance of controlling the mind's movement which we have seen in the sermons is here; the reference to the night-watch in *The Seafarer* is a similar idea, as the soul feels the heavy constraint of

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[48] *Soul and Body II* is a dialogue poem between the a soul and the body, where the soul berates the body in what Bradley describes as 'a hysterical revulsion against the bodily frame', Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 358. It is contained in the Exeter Book, and a somewhat longer version is also contained in the Vercelli Book, suggesting the popularity of the theme. For full details of the differences between the two versions, see Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, p. lii. The *Soul and Body* poems are often given as examples of a vernacular tradition that differs from the patristic idea of the unitary soul, largely because the soul appears to have had no control over the body and has been dominated by it. See also Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, pp.30-3.

guiding the body through the dangers of temptation; again this idea is revisited in part two, line 109, *stieran mon sceal strongum mode ond þæt on staþelum healdan* (man must steer a powerful mind and hold it on firm foundations).

The container / contained images further reinforce the idea of the metaphorical treatment of the soul in the body. The anxieties and cares are contained in the chest, but also in 'abodes of care'. The speaker is uncomfortably contained in a boat and dwells in the ice-cold sea; the body of the speaker is both bound and binding. The soul in the body is thus likened to a man in a boat; the dangers facing the boat – waves and cliffs, are the dangers facing the soul that the body (or boat) is tending towards. The oppressive night-watch becomes the soul, perhaps watching through the eyes of the body,[49] and the choice of verb, *bigietan*, underlines the soul's inability to act.[50] The speaker describes the boat, telling us that it *be clifum cnossað.* Klinck points out that the verb *cnossian* only appears here, but is clearly related to *cnyssan* to strike or beat upon and this suggests violent movement and impact; the construction *oft… þonne* implying repeated impact. The preposition, *be*, tells us that the boat is near, but not on the cliffs, so the impact is not with the cliffs. Many translators find this problematic and tweak the phrase in such a way as to offer a logical literal sense, as for

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[49] Ælfric, *ure ehþyrlu sind ure eagan, þurh ða besceawað ure sawul swa hwæt swa heo wiðutan gewilnað* (our windows are our eyes, through which our soul sees that which it desires outside), *Natale Sancti Andreei Apostoli, CH* I, p. 512.

[50] That so many critics have felt the seafaring account to be literal is a testament to the power of the imagery, especially the description of the sailor's emotions and the sound of the seabirds and the feel of the weather. The effect of the paradoxical longing to sail despite the discomforts is essential to the power of the poem's message. The vehicle must be convincing and apt for the tenor to be understood.

example Gordon: ‘dashes by the cliffs’, Mackie: ‘beating along the cliffs’; ‘beating’ is particularly misleading as in modern English it implies a nautical term for sailing into the wind and tacking. However, the Old English construction clearly implies violent impact, not the speed of ‘dashes by’ or the tacking implied in ‘beating along’. Without the sense of impact, we lose the effect when the construction is later echoed by the heart-thoughts of lines 33-4. Strong weather produces violent waves at the bottom of cliffs, a fact that is drawn on in lines 50-3 of *Maxims I* quoted above, and so presumably it is this that is causing the violent motion and repeated impact of the boat.[51] ‘Slams near the cliffs’ conveys the image of the boat pounding into the waves at the bottom of the cliffs. The metaphorical sense is that the boat, representative of the soul’s body, is in violent movement near the dangers of temptation and the soul is struggling to steer it aright. This pits the stabilising force of the steersman (here the soul) against the uncontrolled and violent movement of the wind and waves (temptation), thus drawing a similar parallel to the passage from *Maxims I*, *swa biþ sæ smilte*, / *þonne hy wind ne weceð* (54-55, so is the sea calm when the wind does not wake it),part of which the *Seafarer*-poet later employs in line 109: *stieran mon sceal strongum mode*.

The man incapable of understanding the speaker’s suffering in the passages 12b-13 and 27-29 represents the man – or the bodily part of man – who is ignorant of the suffering of his soul and is aware only of the pleasures of life on earth. He is located in *burgum*, representative of

[51] See above 1.2.4.

attachment to man-made pleasures and therefore ignorant of *Dryhtnes dreamas*. The seafaring soul, however, does not berate him as the soul in *Soul and Body II* does:

> Eardode ic þe in innan...
> Wære þu þe wiste wlonc ond wines sæd;
> þrymful þunedest ond ic ofþyrsted wæs
> godes lichoman gæstes drinces...
>
> I dwelt within you…
> You were extravagant with food and glutted with wine;
> full of your glory you flaunted yourself and I was thirsty for the body of God and spiritual drink...[52]

But similar references are made for example in the *wlonc ond wingal* passage (27-9) where the speaker refers to the man who *gebiden in burgum … wlonc ond wingal* (experienced in cities[53]...proud and elated with wine). The location of the ignorant man in the city can be seen as reference to Augustine's earthly city described in *De Civitate Dei* in opposition to the heavenly one that the ending of the poem exhorts us

[52] Translation from Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p.360.

[53] The poet's use of the plural, *burgum*, despite the singular *se mon*, serves to highlight the commonality of the danger.

to think of;[54] whilst ignorant man abides in this metaphorical city of earthly pleasure, the suffering soul metaphorically inhabits the wretched paths of exile, cut off from the heavenly city, whilst bound in such a man's body.

Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* uses the image of travel to indicate the right and wrong approach to the pleasures of earthly life:

> Quomodo ergo, si essemus peregrini, qui beate vivere nisi in patria non possemus, eaque peregrinatione utique miseri et miseriam finire cupientes, in patriam redire vellemus, opus esset vel terrestribus vel marinis vehiculis quibus utendum esset ut ad patriam, qua fruendum erat, pervenire valeremus; quod si amoenitates itineris et ipsa gestatio vehiculorum nos delectaret, conversi ad fruendum his quibus uti debuimus, nollemus cito viam finire et perversa suavitate implicati alienaremur a patria, cuius suavitas faceret beatos: sic in huius mortalitatis vita peregrinantes a Domino, si redire in patriam volumus, ubi beati esse possimus, utendum est hoc mundo, non fruendum, ut *invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta* conspiciantur, hoc est, ut de corporalibus temporalibusque rebus aeterna et spiritalia capiamus.

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[54] See Smithers, 1957. Peter Orton objects to the negative interpretation of *wlonc ond wingal* in this passage, arguing that it is a contrast between the 'happiness and prosperity of the landlubber's life and the misery and poverty of his own, not between the wickedness or folly of the former and the spiritual benefits to be derived from seafaring', Orton, 1991, p. 40. Orton bases his point on the usage of the same phrase in *The Ruin* (34), where he points out that there is no sense that the reversal of fortune suffered by the previous inhabitants of the ruin in any way resulted from spiritual shortcomings (p. 39).

> Suppose we were travellers who could live happily only in our homeland, and because our absence made us unhappy we wished to put an end to our misery and return to our homeland: we would need transport by land or sea which we could use to travel to our homeland, the object of our enjoyment. But if we were fascinated by the delights of the journey and the actual travelling, we would be perversely enjoying things that we should be using; and we would be reluctant to finish our journey quickly, being ensnared in the wrong kind of pleasure and estranged from the homeland whose pleasures could make us happy. So in this mortal life we are like travellers away from our Lord: if we wish to return to the homeland where we can be happy we must use this world, not enjoy it, in order to discern 'the invisible attributes of God, which are understood through what has been made' or, in other words, to ascertain what is eternal and spiritual from corporeal and temporal things.[55]

This passage affords an insight into the poet's choice of metaphorical vehicle as well as making sense of the strange paradox of the narrator's description of the beauties of the earth before rejecting them as 'dead' in favour of the delights of the heavenly home.

A further indication that this first part of the poem has the soul for speaker is in the poet's use of tense. Little attention has been paid to the significance of tense use in the poem, but it is undoubtedly

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[55] St Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I. 4, ed. and tr. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) Latin pp. 14-6 and translation pp. 15-7.

important. The poet uses *forþon* as a flag to introduce each change in the time period referred to.[56] The poem begins by recounting the experiences of the speaker in the past up to the present, as the present perfect construction *gebiden hæbbe* (4) indicates. He is thus considering the sum of his life's experiences until the present moment, and they are condensed into an image of passive bondage, isolation and suffering. At line 33, the poet shifts to the present, to the 'now' of the speaker as the 'heart's thoughts' crash into violent activity. The 'now' of the speaker is clearly a moment of crisis and the poet deliberately echoes the actions of the boat and waves in the action of the thoughts on the heart. The reason for the tumultuous inner activity is that the speaker – *ic* – must take to sea, *ic hean streamas* / *sealtyþa gelac, sylf cunnige* (34-5, that I, the deep currents, the tumult of the salt waves, must experience for myself). The poet flits between the past, the present of habit and the present that is taking place now. Of course the present of now is the most dramatic and our attention is focussed on the actions of the soul at this moment as the narrator exclaims in

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[56] These do not always correspond to different tenses in OE, which is perhaps why the poet felt the need to flag the changes; however in PDE the difference can be made with the use of simple and continuous forms. The first use of *forþon* at 27 marks a shift from past experience, where the speaker pauses from talking about his past experiences mainly employing the preterite (*þrowade* (3), *bigeat* (6), *wæron* (9)… ) to a present of generalisation which in modern English would be represented by the present simple; here the speaker talks of men in general who live happily in towns. The tense is now present (*gelyfeð* (27), *ah* (27)… ); he returns to the past (*sceolde* (30), *sniwde* (31)… ) until the second *forþon* at 33 marks a shift to a present of action happening at the time of speaking,represented by the continuous in PDE, (*cnossað* (33), *monað* (36)… ). The third *forþon* at line 39 shows a return to a present of habit (*nis* (39), *næbbe* (42)…) as he discusses how men generally feel in this situation. The fourth *forþon at* line 58 signals a change from habit to present action again (*hweorfeð* (58 and 60), *cymeð* (61) as the speaker describes what is happening to him right now. Finally at line 64 it concludes the opening section with a present of all time *me hatran sind*,. There is a performative aspect in the immediacy of the present tense usage as if the speaker were undergoing these events in real time, which is highly effective.

ecstasy *nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,* and the suffering and bondage of the previous life's experiences are left behind.

One of the more puzzling cruces of the poem now seems perfectly clear. The *ic* of line 34 anxious and eager to be on a journey is the soul; thus the phrase *þæt ic hean streamas,* / *sealtyþa gelac, sylf cunnige*, is not in any way contradictory when considered against the voyage referred to earlier.[57] This is not the metaphorical journey of life, although metaphorical journey it may be. The previous journey was the man's, with the soul as unwilling passenger or even prisoner, this journey is for the soul alone to undertake and whilst longed for, it is nevertheless terrifying. References to such journeys are common: Byrthnoð in *Maldon* prays for the safe crossing of his soul; Bede refers to this journey as the *nedfær* in his *Deathsong*; the angel in the opening lines of *Guthlac A* tells the soul, *Nu þu most feran þider þu fundadest / longe ond gelome* (6-7, now you must travel to the place you strove for, continually yearning);[58] Cynewulf in *Juliana* speaks of his own soul's final journey, *Min sceal of lice* / *sawul on siðfæt, nat ic sylfa hwider,* / *eardes uncyðgu* (699-701, my soul [must go] from my body on a journey, I know not where, to unknown lands) and so on. The anxiety felt as to what *hine Dryhten gedon wille*, is a sentiment that also finds an echo in Bede's *Death Song*:

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[57] This is not out of keeping with Greenfield's interpretation of *sylf* as 'for … myself', Greenfield, 1980, p. 205, but Greenfield sees the change as springing from the realisation of the speaker that life on Earth is mortal, which is less satisfying.

[58] The soul's continual yearning for this journey finds its echo in line 47of *SF*, *ac a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað.*

For þam nedfere næni wyrþeþ
þances snotera, þonne him þearf sy
to gehicgenne ær his heonengange
hwæt his gaste godes oþþe yfeles
æfter deaþe heonon demed weorþe.[59]

Before the unavoidable journey no one becomes
wiser in thought that he does not need
to consider before his going hence
what his soul of good or of evil
after death will come to be judged.

*Riddle 43* presents a more peaceable partnership of Body and Soul than *Soul and Body II*; here the soul will find *cnosles unrim* (8, countless kinsmen) when it arrives in heaven. It is these kinsmen that the soul has felt deprived of in his stay in the body when he was *winemægum bidroren* (16, deprived of kinsmen). The poet describes the joys of the heavenly kingdom in the second part of *The Seafarer* as if it were a mead-hall, referring to *dream mid dugeþum* (80, joy among the heavenly troops). This forces a comparison between the joys of the heavenly mead-hall and the earthly one of *se mon* who became *wlonc ond wingal*. The mead-hall, so sorely missed by the seafarer that he attempted to substitute the squawking of seabirds for it, is presumably

[59] Bede's *Death Song*, West Saxon Version (Dobbie uses MS. Digby 211).

the heavenly one that the soul wishes to return to, St Augustine's *patria* or heavenly homeland. As the speaker substitutes the sounds of seabirds for the sounds of the hall, a storm grows, and in an echo of the boats crashing against the cliffs (8), the storms now beat against cliffs (23). The poet then shifts from seabirds with the *stearn* answering the storm, to the eagle screaming, which whilst present over the sea in the form of a sea eagle, is more commonly associated in Old English poetry with warfare and death; the eagle in *Judith* (210) is also described as *urigfeðera* in the beasts of battle topos, where the wetness on the feathers may reasonably be expected to represent blood. This reference in *The Seafarer,* followed by the reference to *hleomagas*, is suggestive of death and danger if not of battle itself.

It now seems clear that the *elþeodigra eard* of line 38, another source of much debate, must be taken to represent the 'heavenly home' (similarly to Cynewulf's *eardes uncyðgu, Juliana* 701). There are numerous antecedents for this interpretation as G. V. Smithers has so amply illustrated.[60] Ælfric's description in *Dominica in Quinquagessima* uses a remarkably similar lexis to *The Seafarer*:

> Nis þeos woruld na ure eþel, ac is ure wræcsið; for ði ne sceole we na besettan urne hiht on ðisum swicelum life, ac sceolon efstan mid godum geearnungum to urum eðele þær we to gesceapene wæron. Þæt is to heofonanrice.[61]

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[60] G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*' *Medium Ævum,* 26 (1957), 137-153 and continued: *Medium Ævum*, 28 (1959), 1-22.

[61] *CH* I, p. 264.

> This world is not our home, but our exile; for this reason we must not set our hope on this deceitful life, but must hasten with good merits to our home that we were made for. That is to the kingdom of heaven.

The seafarer-soul at this point, using a present of habit, aligns himself to men in his position who face a sea-journey, again a metaphor for the final journey. There is no man, no matter how successful in life, who *a his sæfore sorge næbbe* (does not always have sorrow about his sea-journey); his mind is only on the terror of the journey ahead and not on any of the pleasures that occupied his mind in his life-time. The great fear being to *hwon hine Dryhten gedon wille* (to what the Lord will put him to). It is the same preoccupation that Bede alludes to in his verse. The paradox that follows that he always has longing *se þe on lagu fundað* (the one who sets out on the sea), reminds us that the soul, coming from heaven, always longs to return, the longing referred to in the opening of *Guthlac*, as we have seen.[62] *Riddle 43* ascribes the longing to both the soul and the body, claiming that both are eager for the journey, but that both will be harmed by the separation from *anre magan...moddor ond sweostor* (their one kinswoman, mother and sister). This we understand as a reference to 'mother earth'. The eagerness to depart – *ellorfus* – in tandem with the harm caused by the departure described in the riddle finds its echo in the cuckoo's

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[62] *Nu þu most feran þider þu fundadest / longe ond gelome* (6-7, now you must travel to the place you strove for, continually yearning).

prompting of the soul to depart and simultaneous presage of sorrow in lines 53-4.

The soul feeling prompted by spring to depart may reflect the Anglo-Saxon association of spring and summer with the announcement of death. In the Blickling Homily *Dominica V in Quadragesima*, the homilist reminds us of Christ's words,

> þæt Crist sylfa cwæþ þurh his sylfes muþ, 'þonne ge geseoþ growende ealle eorþan wæstmas a þa swetan stences gestincað þara wuduwyrta, þa sona eft adrugiaþ and forþ gewitaþ for þæs sumores hæton.' Swa þonne gelice bið þære menniscan gecynde þæs lichoman, þonne se geogoþhad ærest bloweþ and fægerost bið he þonne raþe se wlite eft gewiteþ and to ylde gecyrreþ…
>
> that Christ himself said with His own mouth, 'When you see growing all earth's produce and the sweet smell perfumes the wild plants then soon after they dry up and you will understand that it is because of the summer's heat.' So then this is like the nature of man's body, when youth first blooms and is at its fairest, it quickly then in appearance becomes old….[63]

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[63] '*Dominica V in Quadragesima'* in *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century. From the Marquis of Lothian's Unique MS. AD.971,* ed., Rev . R. Morris (London: Trübner for EETS, 1880), p. 59.

This is presumably a reference to Luke 21. 29-33, the parable of the budding fig tree,[64] where Christ gives the budding of the tree as a sign that the world is ending. The conflation of this with old age as seen in *Blickling* is apparent in part two of the poem where the nobility of the world is described as withering and dying and the image of the pale-faced, grey-haired man seems to represent the world (89-93).

The passage beginning at line 58 describes the separation of a part of the inner self (soul, spirit or mind), from the confines of the body in anticipation of the final separation. A part of the soul is eager for this, *modes fusne* / *sefan to siþe* and a part is reluctant, hearing sorrow announced in the song of the cuckoo. *Riddle 43* also explores the paradoxical position of the anticipation of death as promising on the one hand *wiste ond blisse* (7, nourishment and bliss) at the end of the journey (6, *siðfæt*), and sorrow at the separation from the earth that is both mother and sister.

A part of the soul breaks free and is described in terms of a bird. We have seen that the soul-bird encourages the heart to join it, and is associated with death through its call which is described as *gifre and grædig* (62), and the association with *wælweg* (63).[65] Clemoes believed

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[64] *et dixit illis similitudinem: 'Videte ficulneam et omnes arbores: cum producunt iam ex se fructum, scitis quoniam prope est aestas. Ita et vos: cum videritis haec fieri ,scitote quoniam prope est regnum Dei. Amen dico vobis quia non praeteribit generatio haec donec omnia fiant. Caelum et terra transibunt, verba autem mea non transient.*'(Latin Vulgate), **(**And he spoke to them a similitude: 'See the fig tree, and all the trees: When they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also: when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you: this generation shall not pass away till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.) (Douay Rheims Version).

[65] See 4.2 above.

it probable that the *Seafarer* poet had taken the idea 'of the mind escaping from the body and flying in thought' from Alcuin;[66] however, in support of this hecites several examples of the soul of the dying being transformed into birds in hagiographic accounts, for example the soul of Paulinus in the *Life of St Gregory*.[67] Bede's account of the conversion of Edwin includes the famous story of the flight of the sparrow. One of Edwin's advisors considers the knowledge of the life of man without Christianity as being like 'the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting-hall...on a winter's day...there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he 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 which he came.'[68] The imagery of the darkness and cold of winter to represent both the unknown and the feeling of life in the absence of God, coupled with the sparrow's isolation, finds its echo in the imagery that the *Seafarer*-poet has used to represent the soul's isolation from the heavenly kingdom on the journey of life. The brightness and warmth of the mead-hall are used both to represent life on earth (in *The Seafarer* a distraction from the superior eternal life in heaven) and the joys and warmth of heaven. So too the image of a bird to represent the

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[66] Clemoes, '*Mens Absentia Cogitans*', p. 70. Clemoes rejects Smithers' interpretation of this passage refrying to the soul leaving the body, largely because 'death enters very little anywhere into Alcuin's account of the soul's relationship with God', (73). See Smithers (1957), pp. 137-40.

[67] Clemoes, '*Mens Absentia Cogitans*', p.69.

[68] Bede, *Ecclestiastical History of the English People*, translated from the Latin by Leo Sherley-Price and R. E. Latham (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 129-30.

flight of the soul is found in *The Seafarer*. In *Christ*, when Job describes Christ's desire to ascend to heaven, he likens Christ's soul in a *gied* or riddle to a bird, *hine fugel nemde* (636, he called Him a bird). While many critics (Clemoes, Salmon, Diekstra) accept the *anfloga* of line 62 as synonymous with the soul of the narrator, some disagree (Gordon, Marsden, Smithers).[69] However, the *hyge* of the narrator is described with the verb *hweorfan* as travelling over the whale's home having travelled beyond the confines of the breast, it is therefore bird-like. Whether or not it is the *anfloga*, it is still flying.

The inner mind / soul part of the speaker seems to be divided. The *hyge* and *modsefa* fly free urging the heart, *hreþer*, to join them and it is the heart, *breosthord*, that felt the announcement of sorrow in the cuckoo's song. Although Alcuin disagrees with Augustine on the nature and importance of certain elements of the soul, they both agree that mind and soul are one and that they comprise intellect, passion and desire.There is some debate as to whether the *hyge* is the soul leaving the body at the point of death or whether it is the mind leaving the body to travel through the faculty of imagination. Clemoes argues that Alcuin is the source for the poet's inspiration at this point and Godden defines Alcuin's view, 'for Alcuin, then, there is a unitary inner self identified both with the conscious rational mind and the immortal life-spirit and God-like

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[69] Peter Clemoes, '*Mens Absentia Cogitans'*, p. 68; Vivian Salmon, '*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*', p. 2; F. N. M. Diekstra, '*The Seafarer* 58-66a: The Flight of the Exiled Soul to its Fatherland', *Neophilologus* 55 (1971), 433-46, p.433; *The Seafarer*, ed. Ida Gordon (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p. 42; Richard Marsden, *The Cambridge Old English Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 227; G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* (continued)', p. 16.

in its power, including (indeed especially) the creative and poetic powers of imagination'.[70] For Alcuin the soul does not leave the body except at death; however for Alfred, following Anglo-Saxon folk belief, the soul was able to leave the body and travel independently.[71] Without entering the classical versus vernacular debate so amply explored by Clemoes and Godden *et al*., we may consider the two possibilities of interpretation offered.[72] Either the soul is literally leaving the body at the point of death or it is anticipating that moment. In either case the image is powerful and emotive. The narrator's tone moving from elation to disgust with *forþon me hatran sind / dryhtenes dreamas þonne þis deade lif,* / *læne on londe* (64-6, for warmer to me are the joys of the Lord than this dead life, transitory on land) indicates that it is the soul's desire to depart.

### 4.4 Distribution of mental acts and physical acts in The Seafarer lines 66b-125

Ic gelyfe no
þæt him eorðwelan ece stondeð.
Simle þreora sum þinga gehwylce,
ær his tidege to tweon weorþeð:
adl oþþe yldo oþþe ecghete
fægum fromweardum feorh oðþringeð.
Forþon þæt [bið] eorla gehwam æftercweþendra

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[70] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p.276.

[71] Ibid.

[72] See 4.1 above.

lof lifgendra,  lastworda betst
þæt he gewyrce  ær he on weg scyle,
fremum on foldan  wið feonda niþ,
deorum dædum  deofle togeanes,
þæt hine ælda bearn  æfter hergen,
ond his lof siþþan  lifge mid englum,
awa to ealdre,  ecan lifes blæd,
dream mid dugeþum. (66b-80a)

I do not believe that earthly riches remain eternally for him / it. Always before his / its final hour, one of three things invariably becomes matter for doubt: sickness or old age or sword-hate will wrest life from the one fated to die. Therefore for each man the praise of the living, those who speak after, [is] the best of word-tracks [reputation] that he bring about before he must [go] on his way by good actions on earth against the malice of fiends, bold deeds against the devil, that the children of men praise him after, and his glory may then live with the angels, always and forever, the splendour of eternal life, joy among the heavenly troops.[73]

The pronouns *him* and *his* are problematic as there seem to be no antecedents. Syntactically they should refer to the last thing mentioned, and so would represent *þis deade lif*. A further problem is posed by the first person pronoun, *ic*. The voice of the speaker seems to have

[73] The syntax in this second part of the poem is such that I have chosen to render the translation in prose here and not attempt to follow the sense line by line.

changed. We are no longer in the nautical metaphor and the speaker is no longer recounting personal experience; moreover it is the first use of *ic* since the opening line to introduce a main clause. There are only two possibilities, either that the seafarer-soul is still speaking, or the 'dramatic voice' of the first part is put aside for the 'homiletic voice' of the second part. The latter seems to me more likely, in which case the third person pronouns refer to the mortal life of the man whose soul provided the dramatic voice of the first 66 lines.

The speaker has not entirely abandoned the figures used in the first part of the poem. Here we have reference to the two 'journeys' of the first part: the term *lastworda*, which only appears here, is a compound with *last*, that is track or path, used in *wræclastas* (57) and *wræcan lastum* (15) both referring to the journey through life as paths of exile, a homiletic commonplace. The second journey, that is the final one to heaven, is referred to in the phrase *ær he on weg scyle*.

The speaker now refers to men in physical terms. He recommends the performance of 'brave deeds' and 'good actions', and whilst these may in fact refer to spiritual actions, they are nevertheless presented as physical. Christine Fell sees a balance between the two types of action, 'the two lines which speak of actions on earth carefully balance human activity against human foe with spiritual battle against the infernal.'[74] The *Blickling Homily* on the end of the world presents a similar balance between physical and spiritual actions with regard to just such good

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[74] Christine Fell, 'Perceptions of transience' in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.176.

deeds, *forþon þe nan wyrhta ne mæg god weorc wyrcean for Gode buton lufon and geleafan* (for no workman may perform good works for God but with love and belief) which is as much as to say that the spiritual actions of loving and believing are as important as the physical actions in performing the good deeds.[75]

Whether the deeds are physical or spiritual, they are nonetheless presented in physical terms, and the idea of balance is an important one. However, man is still described with a degree of passivity. His death is described in terms of his life being wrested from him with *feorh oþringan* (71), the agents being sickness, old age or violence.

The poet has used a framework that is to a degree heroic, here with reference to the *duguð* (80, 86), echoing the references to the mead hall in the first part of the poem: *medodrinc* (22, mead), *hleomægas* (25, protecting kinsmen), *gifa* (40, gifts)*, his dædum to þæs deor* (43, his deeds so brave)*, his dryhten* (43, his lord)*, hringþege* (44, receiving of rings).[76] This framework allows the poet to set earthly pleasure and security against heavenly pleasure and security, whilst retaining a common ground of familiarity. Where in the first part the speaker makes a reference to the men of the hall in what seems to be a noble,

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[75] 'Homily X: *Þis middangeardes ende neah is*' in Morris ed., *Blickling Homilies*, p.106.

[76] It is to be noticed that the narrators seem to use different terms. Where in the first part the references are to *hleomægas* (25) and *winemægas* (16), in the second part the term *duguþ* is used (80 and 86); where the term *wyn* is used to denote pleasure in part one (16, 27, 45), *dream* is used in the second part (65, 80, 86); line 86 refers to earthly joy, so may not be a distinction between heavenly and earthly pleasure. These semantic differences suggest that the speaker has changed.

honourable and active world (39-46), in this second part all of that is now considered dead and gone.[77]

Dagas sind gewitene,
ealle onmedlan  eorþan rices;
næron nu cyningas  ne caseras
ne goldgiefan  swylce iu wæron,
þonne hi mæst mid him  mærþa gefremedon
ond on dryhtlicestum  dome lifdon.
Gedroren is þeos duguð eal;  dreamas sind gewitene.
Wuniað þa wacran  ond þas woruld healdaþ,
brucað þurh bisgo.  Blæd is gehnæged,
eorþan indryhto  ealdað ond searað,
swa nu monna gehwylc  geond middangeard. (80b-90)

Days are departed, all the glory of the earthly kingdom; there are now no kings or emperors or gold-givers such as there were of old, when they performed the most glorious of deeds amongst themselves and lived in noblest reputation. All that company is perished; joys are departed. The weak-willed / irresolute remain

[77] The passage in lines 39-46 does of course suggest that the security and honour therein are of little comfort and therefore to a degree illusory, when faced with the prospect of the final journey and the Lord's judgement. Here again we find the image of the journey making a metaphorical parallel between a living man's emotions and anxieties facing a dangerous sea-voyage and a soul's anxiety facing death and judgement.

and rule this world, use[78] [it] in toil. Splendour is cast down, the nobility of earth ages and withers, as now each man [does] throughout the world.

The eschatological implications are clear: these are the end days.[79] The belief that the world was indeed ending appears prevalent in the homilies and sermons of the church;[80] the fierce Viking attacks must have seemed a portent of doom. The great men of yore performed glorious deeds which are balanced against their living in most noble *dom* (reputation or renown). This refers to the way they are perceived by others and as such parallels the *lof* and *lastword* (73) due to the men who do good deeds. These actions, however, are things of the past. The deeds are replaced by toil, with an interesting nuance on the spiritual benefits of the actions performed, where once action had a positive effect and earned renown, it now has no benefit, only fatigue and pain. The verbs of performance for the men of today are *healdan,* to rule, hold or inhabit and *brucan*, to use, enjoy or occupy. Both words

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[78] *Brucan* is an ambiguous term which can denote the following: use, enjoy, pass, spend, eat, bear, discharge or possess. In most examples where it is collocated with *eorþan*, the sense is 'to enjoy'; for example *Fates of The Apostles* (98), *[Feoh] þær on ende standeþ, eorlas þæs on eorðan brucaþ* (wealth is coming to an end, that men enjoyed on earth).

[79] See: G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* (continued)', *Medium Ævum* 28 (1959), 1-22, p.10.

[80] For example Ælfric in the preface to his collection of homiles writes: *menn behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan þe is geendung þyssere worulde* (men most need good instruction in this time which is the end of the world), Ælfric, *CH* I, p. 174. For a detailed and balanced account of the millennial fears of the Anglo-Saxons, see Edwin Duncan, 'Fears of the Apocalypse: The Anglo-Saxons and the Coming of the First Millenium', *Religion and Literature*, 31.1 (1999), 15-23.

have a sense of dwelling, echoing the *wunian* of line 15, and a similar sense of passivity.

Gordon explains in a footnote to line 87 that the Old English *wac* differs from its Old Norse cognate *veikr* (from which Modern English 'weak' comes) and does not indicate a lack of physical strength, but rather a sense of being pliant as opposed to firm.[81] It was applicable to moral, not physical strength, in the comparative form denoting inferiority or degeneracy, according to Gordon. This nuance reveals a stronger pattern of balance where the good deeds of the former are balanced against their nobility and opposed to the latter where irksome toil is balanced against weakness of character.[82]

The physical world has gone or at least the worthier part of it. The men who used to perform great deeds of renown among themselves are now dead and gone. The halls of the heavenly kingdom replace the glorious halls of old on the earthly kingdom that have now passed away. The verb *gefremman* denotes action, but action that is no more as the men performing these acts have perished (*dreosan*); it is balanced against *brucan* which can imply action when in the sense of using, but in the other sense of enjoying or possessing indicates more a mental response to something physical. *Bisgu*, of course, indicates action. The more active verbs of perishing and departing are replaced by stative ones, *wunian*, to remain and *healdan*, to rule or inhabit. The glorious

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[81] Gordon, *The Seafarer*, p. 44. BT gives: weak, feeble, wanting mental or moral strength, wanting courage.

[82] Whilst dating of the poem remains speculative, the manuscript has been dated to the mid to late 10th century; it is tempting to wonder if the reference to irresolute leaders is not a jibe at Æþelred II.

heroes of old are replaced by morally weaker men and the unusual collocation of *brucan* with *bisgu* implies enjoyment of something that is not enjoyable, thus suggesting failure at best and at worst, depravity. The contrast provides a reflection on different types of action, noble and ignoble; although again the precise nature of these actions remains vague, *bisgu* indicating both physical labour and emotional anxiety.

The agent of *hnægan* is lost in a passive construction as the narrator tells us that splendour or glory is brought low, but the implication is that it is old age that is responsible. This reflects the agency of the elements of nature in the first part of the poem, as man submits to the inevitability of the ageing process.

> Yldo him on fareð,  onsyn blacað,
> gomelfeax gnornað,  wat his iuwine,
> æþelinga bearn,  eorþan forgiefene.
> Ne mæg him þonne se flæschoma,  þonne him þæt feorg losað,
> ne swete forswelgan,  ne sar gefelan,
> ne hond onhreran,  ne mid hyge þencan.
> Þeah þe græf wille  golde stregan
> broþor his geborenum,  byrgan be deadum,
> maþmum mislicum  þæt hine mid wille,
> ne mæg þære sawle  þe biþ synna ful
> gold to geoce  for godes egsan,
> þonne he hit ær hydeð  þenden he her leofað.
> Micel biþ se meotudes egsa  for þon hi seo molde oncyrreð;

se gestaþelade  stiþe grundas,

eorþan sceatas  ond uprodor. (91-105)

Old age overtakes him, his face pales, the hoary-locked man mourns, knows his friends of old, children of princes, are committed to the earth. His flesh-covering cannot, when life escapes it, taste sweetness, nor feel pain, nor move its hand, nor think with its mind. Though brother may wish to strew the grave with gold for his born brother, bury it close to the dead man with diverse treasures that he may want with him,[83] gold cannot be of help to the soul that is full of sin faced with the awful power of God [even] when he hides it before while he lives here. Great is the Ordainer's awful power before which the earth turns itself away; He established firm foundations, the corners of the world and the heavens on high.

In much the same way that the first 66 lines of the poem presented man as inactive, here too we see a man submitting to old age, unable to perform bodily or mental functions and unable to enlist the help of gold or relatives. He is totally powerless and contrasts in this to the total power of the creator. The things that a body cannot do are balanced against the things a soul cannot do; so a body cannot move, taste, feel or think and a soul cannot use gold. Furthermore, the body cannot help the soul by using gold.

[83] This passage is much disputed; it is not clear if the treasure is added by the brother or if it is buried by the dead man beforehand. For a full explanation see Gordon, p.45 n. and Klinck, p. 142.

*Mold* may refer to the earth itself or to the rotting remains of the body. If the latter, then the poet has created a parallel between *seo sawel* and *seo molde*, the soul and the rotting remains of the body, but this time, the now literally inanimate bodily remains are given agency as the *molde* (dust / mould) turns away from God in terror. God's power to build that which is firm and eternal is contrasted to the weak and transitory nature of the body. Even the surviving brother is not described as performing the deed of strewing gold, but as wishing to do it.

Although the reference to the strewing of graves is often considered to be a criticism of heathen practices, this seems unlikely here; it is more perhaps a case of explaining that you cannot buy your way out of trouble. The reminder that your body cannot help your soul at death and nor can your gold is central to *Blickling Homily X*, which also develops the idea that the world is ending: *ne þearf þæs na man wenan þæt his lichama mote oþþe mæge þa synbyrþenna on eorþscrafe gebetan; ah he þær on moldan gemolanaþ and þær wyrde bideþ*[84] (nor need any man think that his body might or can amend the burden of his sin in the grave; but there he will rot in the earth and there await fate). The homilist goes on to tell the story of the friend of a rich man who has died. The friend goes abroad and mourns for a long time, eventually returning to his friend's grave where the bones speak, warning the friend to avoid meeting the same terrible fate by living a pure life of prayer. The bones inform him *nu þu miht her geseon moldan dæl and wyrmes lafe, þær þu ær gesawe godweb mid golde gefagod* (now you

[84] Morris ed., *Blickling Homilies* , p. 109.

may see a portion of earth and worms' leftovers, where before you saw precious cloth spangled with gold).[85] Again we have the reminder of the earth that man returns to and a reference to gold. The man's riches have been of no use to his soul, which is now in torment. Physical gold is of no use, but the friend's prayers succeed in saving not only his own soul, but that of his friend as well.

To return to *The Seafarer*, old age is the agent of the verb *faran* as man once again submits passively to the inevitable attacks of nature. The verbs allotted to man are *gnornian* and *witan* as the old know their friends to be committed to the earth and mourn for them. Both are verbs of thought and emotion. Man's physicality is presented entirely in terms of what he can no longer do once he is dead, in a passage that is reminiscent of the *Soul and Body* poems, but without the vindictive sting of the soul when addressing the body. The agent is specifically the man's outer shell, the *flæschoma*, once it has lost the *feorh* or life spirit. The

is a reminder of the container-contained imagery so prevalent in the poem's opening. What is it covering? Clearly the answer is the soul, comprising life-force (*feorg*) and perhaps mind too. At this point the poet allows himself to list a series of human actions, ones that can no longer be performed: tasting sweetness, feeling pain, moving his hand or thinking with his mind. The verbs *forswelgan* (to swallow), *gefelan* (to feel) and *onhreran* (to move) are grouped with *þencan* (to think). The poet has moved from the universal, with his *ubi sunt*-style passage on

[85] Morris ed., *Blickling Homilies*, p.118.

the passing of great men, to the personal with a similar *ubi sunt*-style passage for the passing of individual human faculties. He has furthermore shown an imbalance between the physical and the mental faculties, with three physical acts: tasting, feeling and moving, against one mental one: thinking. However, where the *hyge* clearly belonged to the immortal part of a man in the first part of the poem, eager to fly home to God, here the suggestion is that it is part of the body, and this is problematic. If this is the case, then the word is not being used in the same way and does not denote the same thing, thus the original integrity of the poem *to tweon weorþeð*. If we interpret the sense that a body can no longer think because the *hyge* has left, then there is a consistency, albeit not entirely satisfying.

The narrator draws attention to both the inability of the body without the soul and that of the soul without the body. Gold, whilst very useful to a living man, can be no help to a soul full of sin.[86] God's dread is such that gold is of no influence. We find the theme in *Soul and Body II*, *Ne magon þe nu heonan adon hyrste þa readan, / ne gold ne sylfor ne þinra goda nan, / ac her sculon abidan ban bireafod, / besliten seonwum* (54-7, red-stained jewels cannot take you away from here, nor gold, nor silver nor any of your goods, but your bones must stay bereft and split from their sinews…). The impossibility of physical action is underlined in the inability of the wealth and possessions to act.

[86] The notion that the soul is full of sin shows that the *Seafarer*-poet's view is quite different to that of the composer of *Soul and Body I and II* (where the innocent soul suffers due to the sins of the flesh).

Dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ;  cymeð him se deað unþinged.

Eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ;  cymeð him seo ar of heofonum.

Meotod him þæt mod gestaþelað,  forþon he in his meahte gelyfeð.

Stieran mon sceal strongum mode,  ond þæt on staþelum healdan,

ond gewis werum,  wisum clæne. (106-10)

Foolish is the one who does not fear his lord; death comes to him unexpected.

Blessed is he who lives humbly, the grace of heaven comes to him. The creator makes his mind firm for he believes in His might.

A man must steer a headstrong mind[87] and hold it on firm foundations, and [be] reliable towards men[88] and pure in ways.

The ending to the poem focusses on the correct mental and spiritual attitude needed to obtain a place in heaven.  Fear of the Lord is key as

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[87] This is most often translated as having the sense 'a man must steer a wilful heart' (Bradley). Given the dative form it may be translated 'with strong mind shall a man govern' as proposed by Thorpe for the similar line in *Maxims I* (35); Krapp and Dobbie note that this was originally the accepted translation for the similar line in *Maxims I*, but that Klaeber and Mackie argued for 'one shall (must) restrain a headstrong mind'. Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, p.305. As *stieran* takes the genitive or dative, Klaeber and Mackie's version is most plausible, although both may be possible.

[88] *Werum* may be translated as 'to men' or as 'in pledges'. See Klinck p. 143 for a fuller explanation. It is the notion of reliability that is important and the essential meaning is the same.

is living in humility. To those who do not fear the Lord, death comes unexpected. This perhaps alludes to *se mon,* referred to in the first part of the poem, who enjoys earthly pleasures and who is therefore not prepared for the life to come. Lines 108-9 focus on the mind. The Lord makes firm the *mod* of the humble man. The root, *staþol,* is found three times in *The Seafarer*: at line 104 where it refers to the Ordainer's making firm foundations in earth and heaven, 108 the firmness of mind given by God to the faithful, and 109 the duty of a man to keep his own mind firmly in place. The phrase *stieran mon sceal strongum mode, ond þæt on staþelum healdan* (105, a man must steer a headstrong mind and hold it on firm foundations) nods towards the earlier seafaring motif with the verb *stieran* (to steer) and echoes the almost identical line 50 of *Maxims I*, *styran sceal mon strongum mode*.[89] x[90] Through contrast, the poet underlines the importance of spiritual acts – here in the repeated references to firmness of mind – as physical acts are, like the covering of flesh which performs them, transitory. Stability and stasis is associated with God and eternal life, whilst movement is associated with this mortal life on earth. The humble man, for whom God provides mental stability, is presumably closer to God; the man who has to

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[89] A similar metaphor can also be found in Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*: *ac gif se stiora his stiorroðor gehilt, ðonne cymð he orsorglice to lande, hwilum ðeah ongean wind and ongean ða yða, hwilum mid ægðrum. Swa deð ðæt mod, þonne hit wacorlice stiereð ðære sawle* (but if the helmsman holds his tiller, then he comes without anxiety to land, though the wind oppose and the waves oppose, sometimes both. So does the mind when it vigilantly steers the soul). Interestingly here it is the *mod* that steers the soul. *GPC*, p. 433.

[90] Wülker, Kluge and Schücking retain MS *mod*. (See Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, p. 298, n. 109. If *mod* is indeed deliberate, then the poet may be playing with the expectation of lexical congruity in a habitual collocation, a practice identified by Quirk in *Essays on the English Language Medieval and Modern*, p.2.

control the *mod* himself is presumably one who is not yet humble and who has not learned to control his passions. The correct spiritual acts are a true investment for a heavenly future unlike buried gold. The poet continues to stress the importance of inner, non-physical qualities with the importance given to mental steadfastness.

> Scyle monna gehwylc  mid gemete healdan
> wiþ leofne ond wið laþne  bealo,[91]
> þeah þe he hine wille fyres  fulne
> oþþe on bæle  forbærnedne
> his geworhtne wine.  Wyrd biþ swiþre,
> meotud meahtigra  þonne ænges monnes gehygd.
> Uton we hycgan  hwær we ham agen,
> ond þonne geþencan  hu we þider cumen,
> ond we þonne eac tilien  þæt we to moten
> in þa ecan  eadignesse,
> þær is lif gelong  in lufan dryhtnes,
> hyht in heofonum.  Þæs sy þam halgan þonc,
> þæt he usic geweorþade,  wuldres ealdor,
> ece dryhten,  in ealle tid.
> Amen. (111-125)

> Each man ought to hold with moderation malice against friend and against enemy, though he may wish him full of fire or burned on a

[91] Klinck indicates omission at the end of 112 and 113 where the sense is obviously corrupt.

pyre the friend that he has made. Fate is stronger, the Creator mightier than any man's thoughts.

Let us consider where we have a home, and then think how we may come there, and we then likewise strive that we may [get] thither in the eternal blessedness, where life is dependent on the Lord's love, hope in heaven. For that be thanks to the Holy One, that he honoured us, Prince of wonders, eternal Lord, in all time. Amen.

This passage is believed to be incomplete, with many editors adding *lufian* at line 112 to give: 'moderation in love towards friend and malice against enemy'. However since the lines that follow refer to burning in either case, conjecture on whether the wished for funeral pyre is for friends and the fires of hell for enemies seems stretched.[92] The overall sense, confused as it may be, seems to be moderation in emotional states. The poet seems to be considering the power of a man's negative passions and as such this follows on from the idea of holding the mind firmly, and not letting it get out of control.

As the poem draws to a close the poet refers back to the first part of the poem, *uton we hycgan hwær we ham agen* / *ond þonne geþencan hu we þider cumen* (17-8, let us consider where we may have a home and then think how we may come there). This echoes the desire of the seafarer to seek out *elþeodigra eard* and the urging of the *modsefa* to

[92] See Klinck p.144, Gordon, p. 47 or Krapp and Dobbie, p. 298.

depart on the journey there. The verbs *hicgan* and *þincan* again sum up the importance of mental not physical action in achieving this goal.

### 4.5 Riddles in the Dark

*ac hwæðre þær wæs oðer þincg digle on ðam wundrum, æfter gastlicum andgyte*[93]

The examination of the poet's manipulation of mental and physical acts offers a new reading whereby it is understood that the speaker, at least of lines 1-66, is a soul and not a complete man, with the image of the boat and the sea being a metaphor for the soul's containment in the body and the sea being a metaphor for two journeys, the transitory one of life on earth and the ultimate one to heaven.

The poet's use of mental and physical action to add meaning that is not immediately obvious is an indication that the poem perhaps has riddling elements. Metaphor and riddle are not only to be found in the secular domain. Ælfric, in his exposition of the stories of the gospels, tells his flock that they contain *digol ðing* (hidden things).

The opening line of *The Seafarer* with its *ic mæg* formula has a riddling tone,[94] the ambiguous term *soðgied* hinting at hidden

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[93] But yet there was hidden another thing in those miracles, of spiritual understanding. From *Ælfric*, *Dominica in Quinquagesima*, *CH* I, p. 259.

[94] Many of the riddles are in the first person e.g. Riddle 40, *ic mæg fromlicor fleogan þonne pernex / oþþe earn oþþe hafoc* (I can fly more speedily than a perdrix, or an eagle, or a hawk)

meaning.[95] Whilst *The Seafarer* is perhaps not a riddle *per se*, the true meaning is concealed and needs to be worked out; the clues are an unspoken invitation: *saga hwæt ic hatte.*

Marie Nelson argues that *The Dream of the Rood* is presented in a riddle framework based on oppositions. She takes the framework from the riddles in the Exeter Book; it is therefore not unreasonable to apply this framework to *The Seafarer*. One of the basic oppositions of the riddle is what she calls 'formerly and now' where 'the self-describing riddle subject tells of an early life of isolation, an existence in a place where few, if any, men (which is to say 'no one') saw him'.[96] This situation is clearly evident in the opening passages of *The Seafarer* where the speaker remembers being alone on a winter sea. Other oppositions typical of the riddle form are: 'outside-inside, active-passive, and silent-speaking'.[97] All of these are present in the poem. The speaker describes his exterior self as frozen and bound, his interior as

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[95] The noun, *gied,* indicating a song or riddle, is an interesting one. It is frequently associated with a sense of mystery, spirituality – at times even untruth. In *Christ II,* (712) we have reference to *giedda gearsnottor gæstgerynum*, which can be translated as 'very wise poems about spiritual mysteries'. There is a sense of these spiritual truths being hidden or difficult to perceive. *Guthlac*, (1234-5), worries about *gieddum mænden bi me lifgendum* (tales told about me in my lifetime), the implication being that these tales will not be true, or at least will be misleading. *Vainglory*, in a passage which echoes several passages of *The Seafarer*, not least this opening line, refers to the *wlonc wigsmiþas* (proud warmongers) sitting in the *winburgum* (wine-town), and they too *soðgied wrecað,* tell *soðgied;* the poet further qualifies this with *wordum wrixlað ,* they exchange or alter words. There is a sense that here too the true meaning of the words is hidden and that *soðgied* is almost an oxymoron. Other uses of *gied* link the term with the soul travelling to heaven and two equate the soul with birds. In *Christ II* (633-8), Job recites a *gied* where he describes Christ as a bird whose flight between heaven and earth was hidden from the Jews. This passage is startlingly similar to the description of the *anfloga* in *The Seafarer.* Again, the word is linked to hidden truths.

[96] Marie Nelson, *Structures of Opposition in Old English Poems* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1989), p. 128.

[97] Nelson, *Structures of Opposition*, p.131.

hot and oppressed, even attacked by anxieties; we have seen the contrast between the active nature of the thoughts, feelings and elements opposed to the static and passive nature of the apparently physical self and it could be argued that the opening indication of an ability to speak and tell a story is equally typical.

In the final strophe of *Deor*, the *scop* announces *ic bi me sylfum secgan wille*, and proceeds to tell us who he is and what has happened to him. It is remarkably similar to the opening of *The Seafarer*, and yet the difference, *magan* for *willan*, is significant. *Willan* indicates intention to act whilst *magan* indicates ability to act. The construction *magan - secgan* is not uncommon in Anglo-Saxon verse.[98] It seems to operate in one of two ways: either revealing a hidden truth or drawing on authority to speak about a certain topic. Hrothgar, for instance, draws on his long experience and track record of speaking the truth to be able to pronounce Beowulf's superiority (1700-3). In *Christ*, the accounting of God's gifts to men reveals that some men are enabled to say stories or say the course of the stars through God's gifts. In *Andreas* the apostle is revealing a hidden truth, that it was God himself in the boat with them, *ic eow secgan mæg soð orgete* (851, I can tell you a manifest truth). In *Christ* (317) an angel uses the formula to reveal the truth about the golden gates Isaiah is seeing in a vision and the narrator of *Seasons for Fasting* (208) reveals the hidden truth that there are wicked priests. We find the construction in *Soul and Body II* in a negative phrase where the body has lost the ability to speak precisely because

[98] There are 27 instances of this construction in the poetic corpus.

its spirit has left it: *ne mæg him ondsware ænige secgan* (99, nor can it say any answer to him). In *Riddle 42*, the riddler can reveal the hidden truth by speaking through rune staves, *ic on flotte mæg* / *þurh runstafas rincum secgan* (5-6, I can tell men through rune-staves on the floor) and in *Riddle 55* the speaker finds it easy to say the name of the hidden tree, *ic þæs beamas mæg* / *eaþe for eorlum æþelu secgan* (7-8, I can easily say for high-born men the nobility [noble nature] of this tree) because he knows the secret; and of course we find the formula in the challenge, so in *Riddle 1*, *hwylc is hæleþa horsc ond þæs hygecræftig* / *þæt þæt mæge asecgan, hwa mec on sið wræcce* (1-2, who is quick among heroes and crafty [enough] of mind that he can say who lifts me up on my way). A similar use is found in *Christ and Satan* (348ff.) *Nis nænig swa snotor ne swa cræftig,* / *ne þæs swa gleaw, nymþe god seolfa,* / *þæt asecgan mæge swegles leoman...* (348-50, there is no one so wise, or so cunning or so astute, except God Himself that he can say of the brightness of light...).The speaker of the *Wife's Lament* also uses the formula in line 2 and proceeds to recount a highly enigmatic tale where the full truth is not clearly revealed. In the cases where the formula is used to refer to the speaker's authority, it is accompanied by a definition of that authority, one not given to all men. This is not the case here. It would seem that the opening use of the formula, in conjunction with the ambiguous *soðgied*, is suggestive then of hidden truth, an enigma that the wise man may pierce.

Nelson highlights the importance of transformation in the riddles; the object describes what it once was and what it has become. This

transformation is treated in a more sophisticated way in *The Dream of the Rood*, embedding an implication that the listener or reader will be transformed by the message. There is transformation in *The Seafarer* – in the first part where the spirit is transformed from being bound within the container of the body to breaking free and becoming bird-like, and in the second part of the poem where the speaker considers the transformation of the body on the departure of the soul.

Embedded within the poem is another possible clue to the idea of transformation in the echoing of the phrase *corna caldast* (33) from the *Rune Poem* to describe hail.

> hægl byþ hwitust corna;  hwyrft hit of heofenes lyfte,
> wealcaþ hit windes scuras,  weorþeþ hit to wætere syððan.  (25-6)

> hail is the whitest of grains; it flies down from the height of heaven,
> showers of wind toss it, afterwards it becomes water.

This may be coincidental use of a stock phrase, but the similarity of phrasing makes it a possibility that the use of the phrase is in some way related. Whilst for *The Seafarer* hail is symbolic of both cold and pain, in the rune poem it is symbolic of transformation.The significance of this is apparent: the one who seeks the path to heaven will be transformed. In the first instance he will be transformed by his understanding of the transience of life. This looks forward to the physical transformation of the body as it decays and the spiritual one as the soul rises to heaven.

This idea may be further underlined by reference to the *Norwegian Rune Poem*, where the wording is almost exactly the same as in *The Seafarer*,

(hagall) er kaldastr korna;
Kristr skóp hæimenn forna

Hail is the coldest of grains;
Christ created the primaeval world.[99]

The homiletic nature of the whole implies a similar desire for transformation in the audience. A significant difference is that in *The Seafarer* the transformation is happening 'before our eyes', a feature that would be doubly effective and dramatic if the poem, as is quite likely, were performed.

One of the principal clues to the enigmatic nature of the poem, as we have seen, is the poet's deliberate allocation of physical acts to the elements of nature and not to the speaker and the detailed description of the speaker's mental acts in physical terms. Once perceived, we understand that the speaker has no physical sense and is therefore spirit, the ship being a metaphor for the body and the waves a metaphor

[99] Text and translation from Maureen Halsall, *The Old English Rune Poem: a Critical Edition* ( Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p.182. Dobbie ascribes the dating of the Norwegian poem to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Discussing the correlation between the English and Scandinavian rune poems, Dobbie feels it most likely that the similarities 'rest upon the independent use of traditional popular material', Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems ASPR VI* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1942), pp. xlvii-ix.

for the dangers of temptation which threaten the well-being of both body and soul. 'Metaphors', as Aristotle wrote, 'imply riddles'.[100]

The *Seafarer*-poet, much like the writers of the riddles, draws his vehicles from the familiar and natural world. On the one hand the sea, seagulls and curlews, ice, snow and hail; on the other woods and blossom and the cuckoo. The boat is tossed by waves and threatened by rocks and the birds sing or yell, in imitation of lost friends, in warning of sorrow and in invitation.

The poet's use of imagery is highly visual, with shapes echoing other shapes, and these play on the container metaphor: reference to the keel and the breast, draw our attention to the similarity between the keel and the man's body; both have ribs[101] and both 'contain' anxiety. We picture the speaker at the centre of a series of Russian dolls. We have the breast as a container of troubles (4), the keel as container of the speaker (5) and dwellings of sorrow as containers of the ship (5). The exterior of the speaker's metaphorical body is bound with cold, whilst the interior is tortured with heat (9-11), the speaker (and presumably the body / boat) dwells in the environment of a winter sea (15). We have the inner self in the body, the body in the ship, the ship in both dwellings of sorrow and the ocean.

Harbus writes 'one of the most interesting aspects of the storage metaphor is the corollary notions that the mind has both an inside and

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[100] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 2.

[101] *Riddle 32* of *The Exeter Book* describes the ship as having *fela ribba* (8, many ribs).

an outside, and that therefore things can move in and out of that place'.[102] If we unpick the metaphor of the seafaring imagery, we understand that the speaker is the soul / mind which seems to have an internal and external aspect;[103] the seafarer-soul makes only one reference to a body when it describes its feet as bound by frost – the feet, representative of a token body, describe the soul's external aspect; the boat is the physical body that the soul is trapped within, and the ice-cold winter sea is life on earth, where the body takes the soul into danger and the soul feels the desolation of being separated from the company it previously knew.

The fact that the seafarer's body is bound takes on a heightened significance. The imagery of the binding of the body is found in Ælfric's Palm Sunday sermon *In Dominica Palmarum*, where he writes *anra gehwilc manna is gewriðen mid rapum his synna* (every man is bound with the ropes of his sins), which is a citation from Proverbs 5:22. If this is a deliberate reference in *The Seafarer*, then it may indicate that the body referred to in the poem is not a physical one, but a metaphor for a spiritual one.[104] The speaker describes his feet as *forste gebunden* (9, bound by frost),[105] and this binding is echoed in *hrim hrusan bond* (32,

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[102] Harbus, *Cognitive Approaches*, p. 36.

[103] It remains to be proven whether the soul in *The Seafarer* is a vernacular one where mind is separate from the soul and part of the body, or a classical one where the mind is part of the soul (see above 4.1). The seafarer-soul refers to its mind, which may be equivalent to the soul's sense of self apparent in the *Soul and Body* poems, or may be a reflection of the classical idea of soul and mind being part of a whole.

[104] The image of binding the soul or body as representative of the effects of sin or God's anger is common in sermons.

[105] This echoes the complaint of Satan in *Genesis B* (379) *fet synt gebundene* ([my] feet are bound). Satan is *described* in physical terms, although being an angel he will not have had a physical body.

frost bound the earth). If this is a reference to Proverbs, then earth itself is bound with sin.

*The Seafarer* has much in common with the *Exeter Book* riddles. In the *Soul and Body Riddle* (43) the soul cannot succumb to *yldo ne adle* (4), the riddle tells us, unlike the body. This is echoed in *The Seafarer* where the poet tells us the body will succumb to *adl oþþe yldo oþþe ecghete* (70). The riddle describes body and soul as noble guest and potentially faithful servant; their time together on earth is a *siðfæt* (6), or journey. In *The Seafarer*, the seafarer-soul feels alone, abandoned and ignored by his bodily partner, but the journey metaphor is common to both. The riddle indicates that both may enjoy feasting and the company of kindred if the body-servant remains faithful; they will know *cearo* (8) if it does not. In *The Seafarer*, the soul does know *cearo* due to the body's ignorance and he mourns the absence of his kinsmen, presumably other heavenly souls; however the speaker refers to *dream mid dugeþum* (80), which is the reward for the soul of a life rightly lived. The reluctance of part of the seafarer-soul's self to leave the earth, implied in the response to the cuckoo's song (54), may be similar to the idea expressed in the riddle whereby both body and soul are sad to leave their mother and sister, the earth: *him þæt bam sceðeð* / *þonne hy from bearme begen hweorfað* / *anre magan ellorfuse,* / *moddor ond sweostor* (11-14, that harms them both when they fly swiftly from the bosom of their one relative, mother and sister). It may, on the other hand, be the fear of what *godes oþþe yfeles* / *æfter deaþe heonon*

*demed weorþe* (4-5, of good or of evil, henceforth after death [may be] adjudged).[106]

[106] West Saxon version of *Bede's Death Song* (4-5), Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York: Columbia, 1942), p.108.

## 5: Thought as Action in *Juliana*

*Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast.*[1]

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### 5.1 *Juliana*

Cynewulf's *Juliana*, found in *The Exeter Book* between *The Phoenix* and *The Wanderer*, is a retelling of the *passio* of a fourth century Nicomedian saint.[3] Rosemary Woolf dates the poem to the early ninth

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[1] Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* V. 1. 71.

[2] St Juliana and the devil from *The Pictorial Bible of the Abbey de St Bertin*, St Omer, *c.* 1190-1200; Koninlijk Bibliotheek, MS KB 76 F 5.

[3] It is now believed that Juliana was a Cumaean martyr whose cult spread beyond Naples and that the legend surrounding her martyrdom in Nicomedia is entirely fictitious. See Biggs et al., *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, pp. 276-7.

century, based on the runic spelling of Cynewulf's name.[4] It is believed that Cynewulf's primary source for *Juliana* is a version similar to that in the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum* because of the close parallels between the two texts.[5] The poem tells the story of Juliana's resistance to the advances of the Nicomedian senator, Heliseus, and her subsequent martyrdom. The central focus of the narrative, however, is on Juliana's capture of a devil sent to trick her and the confessions that she subsequently forces from him.

The poem is framed by violent physical action: the description of the *dædum gedwolene* (13, perverse deeds) perpetrated under the Diocletian persecution, and the descriptions of Juliana's torture and martyrdom: before her incarceration her tormentors hang her by the hair and beat her and after subject her to flames, thrust her into a vessel filled with molten lead and finally behead her. Juliana herself accords little importance to physical acts, even those designed to torment her. However, Cynewulf's manipulation of the mental and the physical goes beyond a simple demonstration of the superior importance of the spiritual by associating Juliana with spiritual acts and her oppressors with physical ones. He transforms the mental acts and describes them in physical terms so that the internal world takes on a physicality of its own. We have seen how the trope of the mind described in physical terms was to be found in the Alfredian translations of Boethius and Gregory, in the sermons of Ælfric and in *The Benedictine Rule*, and it is

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[4] Woolf, *Juliana*, p. 7.

[5] Biggs et al., *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, p. 278.

this trope which is central to the way Cynewulf has presented the opposition of Juliana and the devil.[6]

This opposition becomes a battle that is represented in a variety of ways, but the most important seems to be an opposition between stillness and movement, where stillness is equated with God and movement with the devil as he aims to lure the souls of Christians to move away from God.[7] The struggle between movement and stasis, as we have seen, is presented in *The Old English Boethius* as being part of the natural order of things, the natural desire of all things being to return to the stillness that is God: *nis nan gesceaft gesceapen ðara þe ne wilnige þæt hit þider cuman mæge þonan þe hit ær com, þæt is to ræste and to orsorgnesse. Seo ræst is mid Gode and þæt is God* (there is no creature made that does not desire to be able to return to where it came before, that is to rest and to security. That rest is with God and it is God).[8]

Juliana's battle with the devil where she overcomes him, seizing him in her grasp and forcing him to admit to his wiles, is dramatic and vivid as the plethora of medieval manuscript images and sculptures testify;

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[6] See 1.2.2-1.2.4.

[7] The *Juliana* devil's counterpart in the *Acta Sanctorum* is a demon named Belial. If we consider Joseph Wittig's persuasive account of Juliana as a figure for both Christ and his church we may also consider Juliana's antagonist as a figure for Satan; see Joseph Wittig, 'Figural Narrative in Cynewulf's *Juliana*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1974), 37-55 , reproduced in *The Cynewulf Reader*, ed., Robert Bjork (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 147-169.

[8] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 39, p. 363, and translation *OEB* II, p. 83.

this is a highly physical exchange.[9] However, close analysis will show that the battle is at once physical and mental, taking place on one level in the prison cell, but on another level in Juliana's mind and soul. The mental and the physical in this poem, therefore, are separated by somewhat blurred boundaries.

The devil's confessions, extorted from him by Juliana, become a key to decode the events in the poem as a whole. He reveals his tactics which are to manipulate the thoughts of his victims, introduce evil ideas, rekindle suppressed memories and desires in order to seduce his victims into renouncing God and committing evil physical acts. This is Byrhtnoð in reverse, the ealdorman's influence on the minds of his followers being intended to encourage appropriate physical action. The devil uses these manipulations to effect a movement of the mind or spirit; they are mental acts described in physical terms.

In *Boethius* chapter 7, Wisdom links physical movement to mental movement: *ic wat þæt nan gewuna ne mæg nanum mæn beon onwended þæt þæt mod ne sie be sumum dæle onstyred; forþam þu eart eac nu of þinre stillnesse ahworfen* (but I know that no custom can be changed in anyone in such a way that the mind does not become to some extent disturbed; for that reason you are now removed from your [stillness]).[10] Wisdom is explaining that any physical upheaval (the

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[9] For example the delightful image of Juliana tying up the devil in Codex Bodmer 127 044v 1170-1200; a stone sculpture of Juliana apparently pulling the devil's hair is to be found in the 12th century church of Santa Maria de Siones in Valle de Mena, Spain; An illuminated letter I with an image of Juliana holding the devil on a chain in 15th century Viennese Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. 326: Legenda Aurea fol.58v, to name but a few.

[10] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 7, p. 252, and translation *OEB* II, p. 10. I have replaced Godden and Irvine's 'calmness' with 'stillness'.

change in custom being a change in Mod's physical condition) will lead to mental upheaval, and a movement of the mind of any kind is a change from stillness to motion. Mod's recent tribulations have provoked what we may assume to be an emotional response of distress, but in the context that we have seen above, this implies that Mod has been turned away from God. Whilst there is no sense in Boethius that this is the work of the devil, the implication is nevertheless that mental movement takes us away from God.[11]

Cynewulf seems to be using a very similar analogy in the idea of movement and steadfastness. For example Juliana beseeches God not to let her *of lofe hweorfan* / *þinre eadgife* (275-6, turn from praise of Your grace), and for the saint this seems to symbolise a complete turning away from God. This movement to or away from God is, as we shall see, repeatedly referred to with the *hweorfan, bugan* and *-cyrran* verbs.

The devil makes it quite clear that he is only interested in souls, not bodies, which are just so much food for worms,[12] but the body is a means to an end: when the mind gives in to the body's physical desires, the soul is in danger, more so when it goes on to commit evil physical acts. The devil demonstrates that control of the mind and its thoughts is key to control of the soul and so he attempts to teach Christians to think

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[11] It is a constant theme in Alfred's *Boethius* that God is equated with stillness and stability – in Chapter 35 *he is ana staþolfæst wealdend and steora and steorroðer forþam he reht and ræt eallum gesceaftum, swa swa god steora anum scipe* (he alone is the stable ruler and steersman and rudder, for he controls and governs all creatures, as a good steersman controls a ship); from *OEB* I, p. 332, and tr. *OEB* II, p. 63. This quotation shows that not only is God representative of stability, but also that His guidance provides stability for His creation.

[12] *wyrme to hroþor* (416), 'joy for the worm'.

wrongly and then to act wrongly. The good Christian will not allow his mind to be moved by the devil's teaching or his temptations. The body and its physicality become a tool for the devil to access the mind and soul through physical desires or threats of physical pain.

The examples given by the devil show men who have been mentally influenced by him consequently committing acts of violence against Christians. Here the devil, as a sort of anti-teacher, encourages wrong thinking and these perverted mental acts lead to wrong physical acts. It may thus be surmised that the acts of Maximian, Heliseus and Affricanus in the first part of the poem are committed at the instigation of the devil in the same way as those of Nero, Pilate or Simon Magus. In the final section we see the proof of this as the devil openly incites Heliseus to torment Juliana, even giving him precise ideas as to the forms of torture to use: *se feond...* / *se hine gelæred þæt he læmen fæt* / *biwyrcan het* (573-5, the fiend taught him to order an earthen vessel to be made). The devil does not, perhaps cannot, perform these physical acts himself.

This understanding of the satanic approach is not particular to Cynewulf. The devil's inability to cause harm directly is perhaps news to consumers of modern horror fiction, but would have been familiar to Anglo-Saxon and later audiences. Indeed Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is an exploration of just this idea. In his exegesis on the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Ælfric explains: *Hi moton ure afandian, ac hi ne moton us nydan to nanum yfle, buton we hit sylfe agenes willan doon, þurh þa yfelan tyhtincge þæs deofles. We ne beoð na fulfremede buton*

*we beon afandode: þurh þa fandunge we sceolon geðeon, gif we æfre wiðsacað deofle, and eallum his larum*,[13] (they [devils] can tempt us, but they cannot force us to any evil unless we do it ourselves of our own will, through the evil incitement of the devil. We are not perfect until we be tempted: through temptation shall we flourish, if we ever reject the devil, and all his teachings).[14] Ælfric defines Christian perfection as necessitating the successful resisting of temptation.

Ælfric's exposition on Christ's healing of the blind man encapsulates the nature of thought and action in *Juliana*: *Hit gelimpð gelomlice þonne se man wile yfeles geswican and his synna gebetan, and mid eallum mode to God gecyrran, ðonne cumað þa ealdan leahtras þe he ær geworhte, and hi gedrefað his mood, and willað gestillan his stemne, þæt he to God ne clypige* (it often happens when the man wants to desist from evils and amend his sins, and with all his mind turn to God, then the old vices that he committed before come, and they trouble his mind, and want to still his voice, so that he does not call to God).[15] There is a constant battle between fixity of thought – holding God and his precepts firmly in one's heart or mind – and attempts to dislodge, divert or turn such thoughts through temptation or other manipulations of thought.[16] This opposition is represented by the verbs *staþelian* (to make firm) and *oncyrran* (to turn away). The potential for mobility of

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[13] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Dominica Prima in Quadragesima*, p. 268.

[14] *Ælfric, CH* I, *Dominica Prima in Quadragesima*, p. 268.

[15] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima*, p. 260-1. For more on this sermon see 4.7 above.

[16] Ælfric thinks of the sinner who wishes to turn his mind back to God, whilst the devil thinks of the righteous man whose mind he wants to turn away.

these thoughts blurs the lines between physical and mental acts, as the mental acts are here described in physical terms. There are physical acts in the poem, all of them relating to the torture and execution of Christians, but even these, it may be surmised, are part of the devil's plan, and brought about at his instigation.

Cynewulf's deployment of emotion in *Juliana* is also part of this interplay between motion and stasis. Analysis will show that Cynewulf equates emotion with movement, and wisdom with stasis, thus creating a further opposition between emotion and wisdom.[17]

In order to demonstrate Cynewulf's particular use of thought and action in *Juliana*, that is to say the presentation of thought *as* action with the opposition of movement and stasis, it will be useful to analyse the passages where the devil expounds his methods of mental manipulation as well as the occurrence of the following terms used to express these mental manipulations:

- The verb *gelæran* (to teach) and the nouns *lar* and *lareow* (teaching and teacher).
- The -*cyrran* verbs, *acyrran* (to turn away), *oncyrran* (to change or turn) and *oðcyrran* (to change or be perverted).
- The verbs *ahwyrfan*, *hweorfan* and *bugan* (in *Juliana* used as synonyms for to turn away).
- Terms for thought that is fixed and unmovable, steadfastness – *fæste, staþelian, staþol, staþolfæst, soðfæst.*

[17] See above 1.1.3 and 1.2.3.

- Terms for other mental acts – *þincan, geþonc, foreþonc, hycgan, deman* / *dom.*
- Intention – *willa, willan.*
- Use and function of emotion in the text with special attention to the relation of emotion to the movement / stasis paradigm.

## 5.2 Diabolical Manipulation of Mind and Thought

### 5.2.1 Lines 289-315 – Control of the mind leads to control of the body

The devil, having failed to trick Juliana into worshipping false idols, is compelled by her to confess his misdeeds. There follows a detailed confession of the methods used to trick six men with varying degrees of power into performing acts of barbarity against the most famous and important of Christians, including Christ himself. A fragment is missing, but the devil begins the part we have by telling us somewhat vaguely: *ic gecræfte þæt se cempa ongon* / *waldend wundian* (290-1, I contrived for the warrior to begin to wound the Lord). The verb *onginnan* signifies the start of significant action and we see in this passage, where the verb is used twice, that it shows how the onset of these evil acts is

prompted directly by the effect the devil has had on the minds and thoughts of the perpetrators.[18]

The next crime is Herod commanding the beheading of John the Baptist: *ða gen ic Herode* / *in hyge bisweop, þæt he Ioannes bibead* / *heafde biheawan*, (293-5, then again I incited Herod in his spirit, that he should command John's head to be cut off). The command to decapitate John the Baptist comes from a mental act of intention formed as a result of the devil's inciting. It is significant that he specifies *in hyge*, in the heart / mind / spirit. There is a sense that the devil has penetrated the mental space of his victim in order to take control and influence him to his own perdition.[19] In a later confession he uses the metaphor of siege warfare to convey precisely this idea of entering into a mental space.

The devil goes on to list the calumny of Simon Magus against the apostles, *eac ic gelærde* / *Simon searoþoncum þæt he sacan ongon* / *wiþ þa gecorenan Cristes þegnas*, (397-300, Also I taught Simon through cunning thoughts so that he began to contend with Christ's chosen thegns). The verb *gelæran* (to teach) is expressive of mental

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[18] The audience may now suspect that Heliseus' sudden desire for Juliana was prompted by this devil: *ða his mod ongon* / *fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc)* (26-7, then his mind began to love a woman, (desire tormented him)). The verb *lufian* indicates a positive love, and indeed there is some evidence in the version in the *Acta Sanctorum* that Heliseus holds real affection for Juliana, however the parenthetical detail that desire tormented – literally broke – him, suggests that what love there was had been swiftly overshadowed by something stronger and darker, which has all the hallmarks of devilish intervention and mental manipulation.

[19] Whilst the exemplary Christian – here John the Baptist – is to some extent a victim of the evil acts of Herod, it is Herod who is the real victim. The loss of soul is significant, where the loss of body is not. Perhaps when the devil cannot influence the mind of the holy it becomes expedient to attempt to remove their positive influence, or these may simply be acts of revenge against the enemy.

control. Taken from its usual positive context of imparting wisdom, here it represents mental corruption. The noun *searuþanc* denotes cunning. The verb *onginnan* indicates the onset of a new series of actions from the victim that will lead him to his perdition.

Nero is seduced or deceived: *þær ic Neron bisweac* / *þæt he acwellan het Cristes þegnas*, (302-4, when I seduced Nero so that he ordered Christ's thegns to be killed). Once again the devil perverts the thoughts of the victim to produce an evil act.

Pilate orders the crucifixion of Christ through *minum larum* (306, my teachings), claims the devil; yet again an evil mental act implanted by the devil leads inevitably to an evil physical act. The devil finishes with the martyrdom of St Andrew: *swylce ic Egias eac gelærde* / *þæt he unsnytrum Andreas het* / *ahon haligne on heanne beam* (307-9, similarly I also taught Egeas so that he unwisely commanded holy Andrew to be hanged from a high tree).

In each of these instances, the devil claims to have affected the mind of the perpetrator of violence so that he will then commit or command that act of violence. One of the ways in which Cynewulf's version differs from its Latin source is in descriptions of the devil explicitly manipulating thoughts and this may therefore be original to the Anglo-Saxon poet. The devil Belial in the Latin merely contents himself with repeating *ego sum qui feci*… (I am the one who made…) before the list of sinners from Adam and Eve to Herod.[20] Belial's methods are not made clear, only that he caused the events described. It may be deduced that he

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[20] Ioannes Bollandus, *Acta Sanctorum*, *Februaris* II (Antwerp: 1658, facsimile reproduction Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation, 1966), p.874.

effected this through temptation and perversion of the mind, but it is not made explicit whereas Cynewulf foregrounds this and gives it a heightened significance.

### 5.2.2 Lines 321-417 – Mental movement and stasis

All of the terms used by the devil to explain his actions relate to control of the mind and at times to the mind as a movable object (a mental act described in physical terms) – if it can be moved, it can be won; if it remains steadfast, it cannot – for example Satan[21] sends the devil and his fellows *þæt we soðfæstra / þurh misgedwield mod oncyrren, / ahwyrfen from halor* (325-7, that we through evil deceit avert the minds of the steadfast, turn [them] away from salvation). The verbs *oncyrran* and *ahwyrfan* both refer to the mind and the idea of moving it away from a fixed place associated with God, the *-fæst* compound being indicative of fixity and stasis.

The battle between the devil and Juliana revolves around this intention. They are in a very similar position, mirror images of one another. The devil reveals to Juliana *gif soðfæstra / þurh myrrelsan mod ne oðcyrreð / haligre hyge, we þa heardestan / ond þa wyrrestan witu geþoliað / þurh sarslege* (337-41, if the mind of the righteous, saintly spirit does not move through [our] interference, we suffer the hardest and the worst torment through a painful blow). These are the stakes:

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[21] Cynewulf does not name the devils in *Juliana*, perhaps in order to maintain the focus on the power of the individual to resist. However, it is safe to assume that the references to the devil's father indicate the chief of the fallen angels.

torment for the devil if he fails to move Juliana's mind and torment for her if she stands firm. Of course Juliana cannot avoid torment of one form or another, as she fears the eternal torments of hell for her soul if she avoids the transitory torments proposed for her body.

The devil explains how he proceeds to tempt his victims, *Ic him geswete synna lustas, / mæne modlufan, þæt he minum hraþe, / leahtrum gelenge, larum hyreð* (369-71, I sweeten the desires of sin for him, wicked affection, so that he quickly, attached to my vices, hears my teaching). And again the devil describes his methods as teaching. He boasts that the resulting actions (or absence thereof) are firstly an inability to pray; like the Ancient Mariner *he burnende from gebede swiceð* (373, burning he ceases from prayer),[22] and then he is ripe *synne fremman* (380, to commit sins). The nature of the sins is hinted at, but given very little real attention. The devil focusses on the mental activity to a much greater extent than the physical activity.

Cynewulf devotes a long passage in the devil's confession on his specific techniques to win over good Christians: *þus ic soðfæstum / þurh mislic bleo mod oncyrre* (362-3, in this way, through various forms, I turn away the mind of the steadfast).

> Gif ic ænigne ellenrofne
> gemete modigne Metodes cempan

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[22] I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.
From *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

wið flanþræce,  nele feor þonan

bugan from beaduwe,  ac he bord ongean

hefeð, hygesnottor,  haligne scyld,

gæstlic guðreaf,  nele gode swican,

ac he beald in gebede  bidsteal gifeð

fæste on feðan,  Ic sceal feor þonan

heanmod hweorfan,  hroþra bidæled,

in gleda gripe,  gehðu mænan,

þæt ic ne meahte  mægnes cræfte

guðe wiðgongan,  ac ic geomor sceal

secan oþerne  ellenleasran,

under cumbolhagan,  cempan sænran,

þe ic onbryrdan mæge  beorman mine

agælan æt guþe.  Þeah he godes hwæt

onginne gæstlice,  ic beo gearo sona,

þæt ic ingehygd  eal geondwlite,

hu gefæstnad sy  ferð innanweard,

wiþersteall geworht.  Ic þæs wealles geat

ontyne þurh teonan;  bið se torr þyrel,

ingong geopenad,  þonne ic ærest him

þurh eargfare  in onsende

in breostsefan  bitre geþoncas

þurh mislice  modes willan,

þæt him sylfum  selle þynceð

leahtras to fremman  ofer lof Godes,

lices lustas.  Ic beo lareow georn

þæt he monþeawum  minum lifge

acyrred cuðlice  from Cristes æ,

mod gemyrred  me to gewealde

in synna seað.  Ic þære sawle ma

geornor gyme  ymb þæs gæstes forwyrd

þonne þæs lichoman,  se þe on legre sceal

weorðan in worulde  wyrme to hroþor,

bifolen in foldan.  (382-417a)

If I meet any brave, noble-minded warrior of God

with a storm of arrows, who is unwilling far from there

to turn from the battle, but he, wise-spirited

raises a shield against [me], a holy defence,

spirtual armour, he does not intend to be a traitor to God,

but bold in prayer he makes a stand

firm in the troop, I must far from there

turn away humiliated, deprived of joy,

in the grip of burning fires, lament my misery,

that I cannot by the power of skill

prevail in battle, but I sorrowing must

seek another less courageous,

under the war-hedge, a less active warrior,

that I may incite with the leaven of my evil

to hinder at battle. Though he undertakes

something of good spiritually, I am immediately ready,
that I see through all his innermost thoughts,
how secured is his internal spirit,
defences made. I open through iniquity
the gate of the wall; the tower is pierced,
entry opened, when I first send in to him bitter
thoughts through a flight of arrows
bitter thoughts in his breast through various desires of the mind,
that it seems better to himself
to practise vices over praise of God,
desires of the body. I am an eager teacher
that he should live by my customs
manifestly turned away from Christ's law,
mind led astray for me to rule
in a pit of sins. I care more eagerly
for the soul about the destruction of the spirit
than the body, which must in a grave
become in the world joy for [the] worm,
committed to the ground.

In this passage, the mental battle between the strong and weak Christian and the devil is described in physical terms. Although this passage is clearly influenced by Ephesians 6: 11-17, Cynewulf's description fits perfectly with the heroic descriptions of battle found in other Anglo-Saxon poetry. Paul exhorts the good Christian *induite vos*

*arma Dei ut possitis stare adversus insidias diaboli* (put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil), and the verb *stare* indicates the importance of steadfastness and stasis which Cynewulf uses as a central image. The devil meets the warrior with a storm of arrows, but the warrior will not budge. We see the martial and heroic importance of the refusal to give ground in *The Battle of Maldon* where variants on the phrasing 'he did not intend to flee a foot's space' are used repeatedly. There is again a sense of fixity of place which is consistent with the repeated use of verbs and adjectives associated with being fixed in place or being moved from a fixed place (see below). In contrast the sinner previously alluded to is unable to remain for any time in *gebedstowe* (376, in the place of prayer). The courageous warrior's battleground from which he will not move is at once his own heart and his place of prayer. He is described in heroic terms as *ellenrof* (383, courageous), and *modig* (383, brave). The main difference between this warrior and the *cempan sænran* (395, more sluggish warrior), is that this one is *hygesnottor* (386, wise); he has anticipated the attack and is armed for it. It is the *sapientia et fortitudo* model that Kaske identified in *Beowulf* and it links wisdom to stasis.[23] This man's shield is *halig* and his armour is *gæstlic*, so holiness and spirituality are assisting him, but his chief tactic is his resolution: *nele god swican* (386, he does not intend to be a traitor to God); *nele feor þonan bugan* (384-5, he does not intend to turn from there); he reminds us of Eadward *se Langa* in *The Battle of Maldon*, *he*

[23] Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo'*, 423-56.

*nolde fleogan fotmæl landes, ofer bæc bugan* (274-6, he did not intend to flee a foot's breadth of land, [or] turn backwards). The warrior's resolution to stay put is insisted upon, *he, beald in gebede bidsteal gifeð* / *fæste on feðan* (387-8, he, bold in prayer, makes a stand firmly in the troop). His bravery is linked to prayer, not something which usually is considered to require courage; his determination to pray is presented in heroic terms as being akin to fighting. The noun *bidsteal* literally means a staying in place, from *bidan* to wait or remain and *steal*, a place. In the face of the Christian warrior's resolution to stay fixed in place, it is the devil who is forced to *feor þonan* / *heanmod hweorfan* (389-90) in an echo of line 384.[24]

The devil now turns his attention to an inferior warrior. Where the brave warrior seemed to use the companionship of other Christians to give and receive strength, implied in *fæste on feðan* (389), here the weaker warrior may be hiding behind them *under cumbolhagan* (395,

[24] The image of the *Miles Christi* is of course present in the sermons too, for example Ælfric writes *Cristene men sceolan campian wið deofla mid strangum geleafan, swa swa gelærede cempan* (Christian people must fight against the devil with strong belief, like learned warriors). It is interesting that Ælfric uses the term learned, linking both the idea of the Christian as armed with books rather than swords, but also the idea that they are following God's teaching and not the devil's. Walter W. Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1881), p. 374.

under the war-hedge).[25] This, at least, is where the devil looks for him.[26] The battle imagery focusses on the idea of penetration, here by arrows which will then impregnate the victim with the devil's yeast, a metaphor for his evil ideas that will grow inside;[27] the passage is laced with words referring to interiority, barriers and penetration, *ingehygd* (309), *innanweard* (400), *wiðsteall* (401), *geat* (401), *ontynan* (402), *þyrel* (402), *ingong geopenad* (403), *in onsendan* (404), *in breostsefa* (405); the walls of the gate will be forced open, the tower will be pierced, an entrance opened – and it is through this opening that the arrows will be sent, so that they go straight to the soul. The devil has the power to see within the man's soul. He does not seem to have been able to do this with the brave warrior, perhaps because of the holy shield and spiritual armour which present blocks preventing the devil from penetrating in any way. What he sees is the man's intention to do good. However here the verb of intention, *willan*, is replaced by *onginnan*, to set about or begin. This man does not have firm intentions; he is weak and will

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[25] A similar term for the shield-wall, *wihaga*, is found in *Maldon* (100) and also *bordhaga* in *Elene* (848).

[26]The preposition *under* suggests a typically cowardly attack, suitable for a devil. It is interesting to note that where the steadfast warrior is described, the battle seems to be a pitched battle with hand to hand combat, whilst with the less courageous warrior it seems to be siege warfare. The steadfast man protects himself with a holy shield and armour through which the devil's arrows cannot pierce; the less courageous warrior is attacked under the war-hedge – presumably the shield wall - the gap beneath the bottom of the shield and the feet leaving men vulnerable to attack in both the literal and metaphorical sense. After this the devil speaks of attacking a tower. In considering why the Battle of Maldon was fought outside the *byrig*, Ryan Lavelle explains how fighting outside the walls of a city was considered to be braver and he cites the example from the *Old English Orosius* of the defence of Rome against Hannibal where not daring to defend oneself outside the *byrig* was considered cowardly. Ryan Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), p. 251.

[27] See Galatians 5:9, *modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpit* (a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump).

vacillate, and the devil can see this. What the devil looks for within the man is to see how firmly fixed his spirit is. Again we have the motif of the soul which can be moved as opposed to the soul which cannot. The idea of the importance of the steadfastness of the soul imitates the importance of the steadfastness of the soldier in battle. The devil looks to see *hu gefæstnad sy ferð innanweard* (400) by looking through *ingehygd* (309), the repetition of the prefix 'in- / innan-' reminds us of where this action is taking place. The imagery of defences, walls, towers and gates further echoes the idea of the body as bricks and mortar defending the precious life within. If the Christian has not prepared himself against such an attack, then his defences will be inadequate and the devil can enter through *teona* (402, iniquity or malice, but which can also represent a more general sense of harm).

Having gained ingress, the devil proceeds to alter the mental acts of the man. He sends in *bitre geþoncas* (405, bitter thoughts) to the man's *breostsefa* (405, the spirit within his breast), using *eargfaru* (404, a flight of arrows).[28] These thoughts did not proceed from the man but were planted by the devil, but they combine with the man's latent desires, *þurh mislice modes willan* (406, through various desires of the mind) and *lices lustas* (409, desires of the body). Here we have the noun, *willa*, indicative of intention, absent in its verbal form in relation to the man's determination to do good. We may surmise that the man's desire to sin which he had been suppressing had been greater than his will to

[28] The compound *earhfaru* from arrow + flight appears six times in the corpus; *eargfaru* only appears here. *Earg* is an adjective meaning weak, timid, cowardly; it is perhaps serendipitous that this divergent spelling adds overtones of weakness and pusillanimity.

remain steadfast to God. Where before he had contemplated good actions, now it seems better *leahtras to fremman ofer lof godes* (408, to practice vices over the praise of God). The desires are of the mind and body, presumably stemming from the physical desires and appetites of the body. This man, then, has failed to free himself from physical desires and his mind becomes perverted by the devil working in tandem with his body.

The devil concludes his description of victory over a weaker Christian by again referring to the mental act of changing allegiance as an act of physical movement: he is *acyrred cuðlice from Cristes æ* (411, turned manifestly from Christ's law). The sense of movement or attempted movement is amplified as his *mod* is *gemyrred* (412, blocked or led astray).

The devil stresses where his interest lies – that is in damaging the soul, not the body. Leslie Lockett mistakenly attributes this speech (413-7) to Juliana: 'Juliana...tells her demonic tormentor that she privileges her soul's welfare over her body's, since her body will become food for worms';[29] the point is similar, but more significant. Lockett reads this from Juliana's point of view as an expression of 'the negligibility of bodily gratification'.[30] From the devil's point of view, although he cares more about the soul – his ultimate prize – and he is not interested in obtaining the body, neither the body nor bodily gratification is negligible; it is useful to him as a means to his end.The

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[29] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies,* p. 25.

[30] Ibid.

body's weakness allows him access to the treasure within. Juliana is of course conscious of the ultimate importance of the soul, and we see, if we look back at her resistance to Heliseus and Affricanus, that she too cares little for her body. No amount of torment applied to her body will persuade her to move her mind or soul away from God:

> næfre þu þæs swiðlic sar gegearwast
> þurh hæstne nið heardra wita
> þæt þu mec onwende worda þissa. (55-7)

> you will never prepare such severe torment,
> harsh punishment through violent enmity,
> that you will turn me from these words.

> næfre ic me ondræde domas þine,
> ne me weorce sind witebrogan,
> hildewoman, þe þu hæstlice,
> manfremmende, to me beotast,
> ne þu næfre gedest þurh gedwolan þinne
> þæt þu me acyrre from Cristes lofe. (134-9)

> I will never fear your judgements,
> nor are the dreadful torments distressful to me,
> hostile violence that violently doing evil you command for me,
> nor will you ever achieve through your heresy

that you will turn me away from praise of Christ.

næfre þu gelærest þæt ic leasingum,
dumbum and deafum deofolgieldum,
gæste geniðlum gaful onhate,
þam wyrrestum wites þegnum,
ac ic weorðie wuldres Ealdor
middangeardes and mægenþrymmes,
and him anum to eal biþence,
þæt he mundbora min geweorþe,
helpend and hælend wið hellesceaþum. (149-57)

you will never teach me to vow tribute to deceitful
deaf and dumb idols, to enemies of souls,
worst servants of torment,
but I worship the Lord of glory
of Earth and majesty, and confide all to him alone,
that he become my protector,
helper and saviour against the fiends of Hell.

næfre þu geþreatast þinum beotum,
ne wita þæs fela wraðra gegearwast,
þæt ic þeodscype þinne lufie,

buton þu forlæte þa leasinga,
weohweorðinga, and wuldres God
ongyte gleawlice, gæsta Scyppend. (176-81)

you will never bring about your commands
by threatening, nor [because] you prepare many cruel torments,
so that I [to make me] love your rule,
unless you abandon the deceits [and] the sacrifices,
and clearly recognise the God of glory, Shaper of souls.

ne ondræde ic me domas þine,
awyrged womsceaða, ne þinra wita bealo…
...Ic to Dryhtne min
mod staþelige. (210-22)

I do not fear your judgements,
accursed foul fiend, nor your terrible torments…
I fix my mind to my Lord.

In each of these examples Juliana demonstrates that she cares little for physical torment. She is conscious of the danger in allowing her mind to be swayed by her body's needs and sets her focus on spiritual steadfastness. She too has little concern for the body and its wellbeing;

whether being praised for her physical beauty or threatened with physical torment, Juliana is indifferent. She knows that her outer shell will just be *wyrme to hroþor.*

### 5.3 Occurrence of key terms relating to mental manipulation

The devil uses a variety of terms to describe his manipulation of the minds of his victims, the most common relating to the idea of teaching: *gelæran*, *lar* and *lareow*. He also uses verbs relating to movement and stasis which centre on the idea of a mind or soul being resolute and steadfast or turned away, so the -*cyrran* verbs: *oncyrran*, *acyrran*, *oðcyrran*; similarly *bugan*, *ahwyrfan* and *hweorfan* relate to movement and turning away, whilst the adjective *fæst* and adverb *fæste*, the verb *staþelian*, noun *staþol* and adjective *staþolfæst* refer to fixedness. Also present are verbs for temptation and incitation: *biswapan*, *biswican*, *onbryrdan* and *inbryrdan*, and the verb of intention, *willan*. Although the devil's manipulations are aimed at the mind or soul, perverting and causing it to move away from God, they nearly always have a damning physical act as their intended outcome, be it eating an apple or killing. In Juliana's case the intended outcome is for the saint to offer a sacrifice to false gods. The physical act is not then without importance, as if it is the physical act of sinning which finalises the damnation of the soul and from which there is less chance of turning back. This element of the relation of thought to action is the same as that in *Maldon*, except that in the devil's case it is wrong thinking which is encouraged in order

to encourage wrong action and this is apparent in the devil's references to learning and teaching, temptation and incitation. However, Cynewulf leaves the physical world entirely in order to demonstrate the battle for the soul presented in terms of an opposition of movement and stasis, creating an alternative physicality where spiritual bodies are described in corporeal terms and mental acts become physical acts.

In order to demonstrate the extent of Cynewulf's use of these paradigms, it will be useful to map his use of the key terms identified above.

5.3.1 *Gelæran*, 'to teach'; *lar*, 'teachings'; *lareow*, 'teacher':
The devil's usage:

> 297-8 *Ic* ***gelærde*** / *Simon searoþoncum* (I taught Simon [Magus] with cunning thoughts…)
>
> 306 *minum* ***larum*** (by my teachings)
>
> 307-9 *swylce ic Egias eac* ***gelærde*** / *þæt he unsnyttrum Andreas het* / *ahon haligne on heanne beam* (similarly I taught Egeas so that he unwisely commanded holy Andrew to be hanged on a high tree…)
>
> 371 [*minum*] ***larum*** *hyrað* (he listens to my teachings)

378-9 ...*ond he* ***larum*** *wile* / *þurh modes myne minum hyran* (and he wants to hear / obey my teachings because of desires of the mind)

409 *Ic beo* ***lareow*** *georn* (I will be an eager teacher)

483-4 Sume ic **larum** geteah / to geflite fremede (I incite some through my teachings, have brought [them] to strife)

573-5 *Næs se feond to læt,* / *se hine [Heliseus]* ***gelærde*** *þæt he læmen fæt* / *biwyrcan het wundorcræfte…* (Nor was the fiend too slow, who taught him [Heliseus] so that he commanded an earthen vessel to be made with wondrous skill…)

Juliana's resistance:

149-51 *Næfre þu* ***gelærest*** *þæt ic leasingum …/ gaful onhate* (You will never teach me to promise tribute to false gods)

281 *þe mec* ***læreð*** *from þe* / *on stearcne weg* (who teaches me to [go] from you onto the rough path)

Juliana turns the tables:

638-9 *ongan heo þa* ***læran*** *ond to lofe trymman folc* (then she began to teach the people and encourage [them] to praise)

647 *Forþon ic, leof weorud,* ***læran*** *wille*… (so, beloved people, I will teach…)

The devil uses both the noun *lar* and the verb *læran;* Juliana only employs the verb. In both there is a sense of taking control. *Lar* here collocates with either *hyran* (371 and 378-9) or *geteon* (483-4). *Hyran* has a range of senses; DoE gives: 'to hear, to hear tell of' and 'to listen, to give ear to', 'to obey, submit to someone', 'to belong to', 'to learn by hearing, to be told / informed'. Translators often choose 'obey' to render *hyran* and frequently avoid translating *lar* as teaching. Bjork for instance translates (371) [*minum*] *lar hyreð* as 'obeys my teachings'[31] whilst Bradley gives 'obeys my promptings'.[32] The range of meanings does seem significant yet is difficult to render through translation. It implies the process of the devil's teachings reaching the victim through his senses (hearing) and taking effect in such a way that he will obey, follow and serve.[33] Importantly, the decision to act on what has been heard is a conscious one, thus not just hearing, but listening. The introduction to the *Benedictine Rule* begins with *hyran* in the imperative:

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[31] Robert E. Bjork, ed. and tr. *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf* (Cambridge MS and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p103.

[32] Bradley, p.311.

[33] The idea is contained in the 'leaven' metaphor. See above.

> Gehyr ðu min bearn geboda ðines lareowes and anhyld þinre heortan eare and myngunge þines arfæstan fæder lustlice underfoh and caflice gefyl, þæt ðu mid þinre hyrsumnesse geswince to Gode gecyrre, þe þu ær fram buge mid asolcennysse ðinre unhyrsumnesse.[34]
>
> Listen my child to your teacher's commands and incline your heart's ear and gladly receive the exhortation of your pious father and quickly comply so that with your obedience and labour you turn to God from whom you turned away before with the idleness of your disobedience.

Hearing is clearly given a deeper spiritual sense as it is not the physical ear, but a spiritual one, the heart's ear. The moment of hearing does seem to include a compliance on the part of the listener.[35] It is a process, one that the devil has described in some detail through his metaphor of the tower being pierced, but the verb includes both stages of the process, hearing and obeying. Satan in *Christ and Satan* bewails his exile and understands the reason for his loss: *wat ic nu* / *þæt bið ealles leas ecan dreamas* / *se ðe heofencyninge heran ne þenceð,* / *meotode cweman* (181-3, I now know that the one who does not think to listen to the King of Heaven, to please the Lord, will be completely

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[34] *BR,* p.1.

[35] A similar expression is to be found in *Guthlac A* (365-8) *hu sceal min cuman / gæst to geoce, nemne ic god sylle / hyrsumne hige* (how shall my soul come to safety unless I tender God an obedient mind). Here too the physical sensory perception of the ear is attributed to the mental faculty of the mind.

without the eternal joys). Satan uses *heran* to denote a conscious act of will, one that we must think to do.[36]

The *Benedictine Rule* also associates the idea of hearing / listening to / obeying the teacher with a movement towards or away from God with the verbs *bugan* and *gecyrran*; the young would-be monk must through obedience turn back to God from whom he had previously turned away. This conflation of physical acts and senses with mental or spiritual acts and senses so that mental acts are described in physical terms is common to both *Juliana* and the Benedictine Rule; we have seen it in *The Old English Boethius* and it is a commonplace in the sermons, so would seem to be a very familiar image in Anglo-Saxon Christian writings.

*Lar-* occurs one hundred and thirty-five times in verse, but of these only sixteen refer to the devil's teaching. Six of these are in *Genesis B*: *þæt he þine lare læste* (576, so that he [Adam] follows your [Eve's] teaching); *þæt he hire mod ongan* / *lætan æfter þam larum* (591-2, so that she began to let her mind [go] after those teachings); *siððan þu minum wordum getruwodest,* / *læstes mine lare* (613-4, since you believed my words, followed my teaching); *gif… læst mina lara* (618-9, if he follows my teachings); *þæt he ongan his wordum truwian,* / *læstan his lare* (649-50, that he began to believe his words, follow his teaching); *þæt heo þæs laðan bodan larum hyrde* (711, what she heard

[36] The verb *hyran* (*heran*) appears seven times in *Christ and Satan*, six times to refer to God and once to Satan when the other devils regret their choice: *þu us gelærdest ðurh lyge ðinne* / *þæt we helende heran ne sceoldan* (53-4, you taught us through your lie that we should not listen to the Saviour).

in the teachings of that loathsome messenger). [37] The devil's references to *lar* here are formulaic, beginning with his reference to God's teaching: *þæs þu gebod godes lare læstes* (571-2, you have followed God's command and teaching). The formula *læstan* + genitive (*godes*, *min, þin, his, hire*) + *lar* is consistent.

The verb *læran* appears in the same context in *Genesis B: nu he þe mid spellum het* / *listas læran* (516-7, now he commanded me with words to teach thee skills)[38] and *nalles ne hie freme lærde* (610, he did not at all teach her anything of benefit).

In verse, the terms *deofol* and *lar* are only used together in *Andreas*: *oft hira mod onwod* / *under dimscuan deofles larum* (140-1, often their mind made its way under darkness through the devil's teachings), *deofles larum hæleð hynfuse hyrdon to georne* (611, too eagerly the ready-to-depart (doomed?) warriors listened to the devil's teachings) and a similar collocation is to be found in *Guthlac B*: *ac his wif genom wyrmes larum blede forbodene* (846, but his wife took through the serpent's teaching the forbidden fruit). There is a reference in *Daniel* to heathen teaching: *noldon þeah þa hyssas hyran larum* / *in hige hæðnum* (217-8, the young warriors did not intend to hear (obey) the

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[37] Quotations from *Genesis B* are from A. N. Doane, ed. *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis* (Wisconsisn: University of Wisconsisn Press, 1991).

[38] Doane points out that either the object of *hatan* is elided or we must translate as 'he commanded thee to teach wisdom', *The Saxon Genesis*, glossary p. 378. Bosworth Toller quotes *Maxims I* (187), *lot sceal mid lyswe list mid gedefun*, translating this as 'cunning goes with evil, skill with things proper' as evidence that *list* is positive and refers to good things, whilst *lot* is reserved for evil things.

teaching of the heathens in [their] mind).[39] Also in *The Whale*, the sea creature's tactics for ensnaring fish are likened to the devil's wiles where the souls of sinners are trapped in Hell; those who had *ær georne his* / *in hira lif-dagum larum hyrdon* (74b-5, before eagerly listened to his teaching in their life), *his* referring to *se fæcna* (the deceiver). In *Juliana* the term appears five times and is used exclusively to refer to the devil's teaching. However references to the devil's *lar* appear roughly one hundred times in the homilies.[40]

The use of the verb *læran* to refer to the devil has a similar distribution, appearing in *Christ and Satan* as we have seen in relation to the fallen angels, but also to Adam and Eve: *gelærde unc se atola* (411, the foul one taught us two). The devils boast in *Andreas* that [*we ðe magon*…] *selre gelæran* (1352, we can teach you better), and similarly in *Guthlac A* the devils vaunt *ne mæg þec sellan ræd* / *mon gelæran þonne þeos mengu eall* (278, nor can anyone teach you better advice than all this multitude).

Wulfstan frequently describes the devil's methods in very similar terms to Cynewulf, for example in his *Sermones Lupi Episcopes* he mentions the devil's tempting of Adam and Eve; he *ongann þa*

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[39] George Philip Krapp ed., *The Junius Manuscript* (New York: Columbia University Press, London: Routledge Kegan Paul), 1931, p. 117.

[40] Beyond *Genesis B*, the use of *lar* to refer to the devil's influence in verse seems to be found almost exclusively in *Juliana*, *Andreas* and *Guthlac B*. It is tempting to wonder if this phrasing, more commonly found in the homilies, is peculiar to Cynewulf in verse. Although *Guthlac B* and *Andreas* are not firmly accepted in the Cynewulfian canon, Fulk makes a strong case for their inclusion on the grounds of linguistic peculiarities. See: R. D. Fulk, 'Cynewulf: Canon, Dialect and Date' in *The Cynewulf Reader* ed. Robert E. Bjork (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 3-21 (p.5). This peculiarity of associating *lar* with the devil in verse may add to the argument for their inclusion.

*beswican and gelæran þæt se man abræc Godes bebod* (began to deceive and teach [so] that the human broke God's command). He goes on to speak of one of their children, *heora bearna an gedyde syððan eac þurh deofles lare deoflice dæd; þæt wæs Cain* (one of their children then did also through the devil's teaching a devilish deed; that was Cain).[41] The effect of the devil's mental manipulation of Eve and Cain, of course, led to the two most damning of acts, affecting not only the perpetrators of the crimes, but all their descendants as the wretched Grendel in *Beowulf* reminds us. Wulfstan also uses *hyran* and *hlystan* frequently in association with the devil's *lar*.

In sermon XXIX attributed to Wulfstan by Napier, the homilist tells a story that is for the most part a fairly typical body and soul account where a soul upon leaving the body berates the body and bewails her fate at having been born and especially of having had this foulest and most wretched body as a dwelling. She addresses the body *eala þu earma lichama and wurma mete, a þu wunne æfter eorðlicum welum, and þu geglengdest þe mid eorðlicum hræglum and forgeate me...þonne þu smercodest and hloge, þonne weop ic biterlice* [42] (alas you wretched body and worms' meat, you always toiled for earthly riches and you adorned yourself with earthly raiment and forgot me...when you smirked and laughed, then I wept bitterly). This seems fairly typical of the soul / mind divide that we find in the *Body and Soul* poems where an innocent soul faces the torments of hell because of a

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[41] *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1957), p145.

[42] Napier ed., *Homilien*, p. 140.

sinful and wilful body. However, this homilist's version is altogether more complex. When the soul is hovering over the body, afraid to face the devils and one of them tells her that she has nothing to fear as the archangel Michael will come to take her, another devil interrupts with *nese, ic wat ealle hyre weorc, and ic wæs dæges and nihtes mid hyre and hi bewiste, and heo a ful georne hlyste minre lare and georne fyligde* (no, I know all her work, and I was days and nights with her and governed her, and she always most eagerly listened to my teaching and eagerly followed it). This is a fascinating twist. The devil clearly puts the blame on the soul through his use of the feminine pronoun. It is the soul who listened and obeyed and what is more did so eagerly and willingly. Despite this the soul continues to blame the body and continues to present herself as an innocent victim of the foul body's earthly desires. Indeed, in the light of the devil's account which she does not deny, her reference to herself weeping seems to take on the colour of a lie. The body is inarticulate, but does respond by sweating and broiling and changing colour. The demon interprets this and recounts how the body is suffering at the various sensory points as a result of its having given in to its senses, *stingað stranglic sar on his eagan, forðam, swa hwæt swa he unrihtes geseah, þæt was eall sylfwilles. Stingað hine scearplice on þonne muð, forði, swa hwæt swa hine lyste etan oððe drincan oððe unnyt sprecan, eall he hit aræfnode. Stingað hine mid sorhlicum sare on his heortan, forðam þe on hyre ne wunode afæstnys ne mildheortnys ne godes lufu* (it stings him strongly in his eyes because of all that he saw that was unrighteous, that was all of self-will. It stings him sharply in the

mouth, because of all he desired to eat or drink or say that was vain, he endured it all. It stings him with grievous pain in his heart because in it dwelled not steadfastness, nor kindheartedness nor praise of God). The relation here between the physical and the mental / spiritual is indeed blurred. The body is equally guilty and was obviously the source of temptation yet it was 'self-willed', either suggesting that the body had a will that was separate to the soul, or linking the blame to the soul; equally the greatest of the body's faults lies within its heart. Again, either the heart / mind is separate to the soul or it is again the fault of the soul more than the body. The homilist distinguishes the self as separate from the body when he explains the story, *uton nu, leofan men, gebeorgan us wið swilce eardungstow and wendon anrædlice to urum drihtne and forlætan ælc unriht and don to gode, lochwæt we magon* (unless now, beloved people, we protect ourselves against such a dwelling and turn single-mindedly to our Lord and abandon every evil and do good, whatever we may). By using the term *eardungstow*, the same one which the soul uses to refer to the body, the homilist is clearly placing self and will apart from the body and therefore must consider them to be in the mind and soul. If the body has a will, it is in the form of its sensory responses and desires,[43] but the act of listening to the devil's teaching must clearly be assigned to the mind and soul. Ælfric, in his exegesis on the *Pater Noster*, ascribes a sense of will to both body

[43] If there is a separate will that is linked to desire and response to desire and sensory stimulus, we may assume that emotion may be aligned more to the corporeal than the spiritual. The question of emotion in relation to physical and mental action is considered below.

and soul: *ure sawul is heofonlic and ure lichaman is eorðlic. Nu bidde we eac mid þisum wordum* [*fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo et in terra*] *þæt godes willa gewurðe ægðer ge on ure sawle ge on urum lichaman, þæt ægðer him gehyrsumie and he ægðer gehealde and gescylde, ge ure sawle ge urne lichaman, fram deofles costnungum,*[44] (our soul is heavenly and our body is earthly. Now we ask with these words [*fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo et in terra*] that God's will be done [become / come to pass] both in our soul and in our body, that both be obedient to Him and that He hold and protect both, both our soul and our body, from the devil's temptations). The devil in *Juliana* smugly declares *ond he larum wile* / *þurh modes myne minum hyran* (378-9, and he wants to hear /obey my teachings because of desires of the mind). The pronoun *he* suggests the self, presumably body and soul combined, but the will is assigned to the mind; it is the will of the weak Christian to listen to the devil's teachings and the reason for this is the desires of the mind, not the body. The sensory experiences and responses of the body must have provoked these mental desires, but it is the mind and the will of the self that is responsible.

5.3.2 Turning away as a mental act, *-cyrran verbs*, *ahwyrfan*, *hweorfan*, *bugan*:

Juliana

[44] *CH* I, p. 328-9.

- 138-9 *ne þu næfre gedest þurh gedwolan þinne* / *þæt þu mec* ***acyrre*** *from Cristes lofe* – you will never accomplish through your delusion that you will turn me away from the praise of Christ.

- 275-6 *þæt þu me ne læte of lofe* ***hweorfan*** / *þinre eadgife* – that You do not let me turn aside from your praise and your grace.
- 361 *ond to sæmran gebuge* – and incline to a worse one.

Affricanus

- 144-5 *onwend þec in gewitte, ond þa word* ***oncyrr*** / *þe þu unsnyttrum ær gespræce* – turn yourself in your mind and turn about those words that you unwisely uttered before.

Heliseus

- 225-7 *ða þam folctogan fracuðlic þuhte* / *þæt he ne meahte mod* ***oncyrran*** / *fæmnan foreþonc* – it seemed ignominious to the leader of the people that he could not turn the mind [or alter] the intention of the woman.

The devil

- 325-7 *he usic sendeð þæt we soðfæstra* / *þurh misgedwield mod* ***oncyrren****,* / ***ahwyrfen*** *from halor* – he sends us so that we change the minds of the righteous, turn them from salvation, through evil deceit.

- 337-8 *Gif soðfæstra* / *þurh myrrelsan mod ne* ***oðcyrreð*** ... – if of the righteous the mind is not turned through offence…

- 358-60 *þæt ic þe meahte* / *...**ahwyrfan** from halor* – so that I might turn you aside from salvation.

- 362-3 *Þus ic soðfæstum* / *þurh mislic bleo mod* ***oncyrre*** – In this way through various forms I turn the mind of the righteous.

- 380-1 ...*he siþþan sceal* / *godra gumcysta geasne* ***hweorfan*** – then deprived of good virtues he shall turn away.

- 389-90 ... *ic sceal feor þonan* / *heanmod* ***hweorfan*** – humiliated, I shall turn away far from there.

- 409-12 *Ic beo lareow georn* / *þæt he monþeawum minum lifge* / ***acyrred*** *cuðlice from Cristes æ*, / *mod gemyrred …* – I am an eager teacher so that he live by my customs, truly turned away from Christ's law, his mind obstructed…

- 439-40 *ic in manweorcum mod* ***oncyrre*** / *hyge from halor* – I with wicked deeds turn the mind, the spirit away from salvation.

*Godes cempa*

• 384-5 *nele feor þonan* / ***bugan*** *from beaduwe* – ([he] is unwilling far from there to turn from the battle.

The use of verbs of movement to describe the mental act of adhering to God's will or distancing the self from it is common in the homilies. Wulfstan in *Sermones Lupi Episcopi* addresses his fellow bishops: *leofan men, us is deope beboden þæt we georнlice mynegian and læran sculan þæt manna gehwylc to Gode buge and from synnum gecyrre* [45] (beloved people, it is profoundly commanded of us that we must eagerly remind and teach each man to incline towards God and the turn away from sin), demonstrating the role of the teacher in guiding the direction of the movement. He further exhorts the bishops *clypa hlude and ahefe up ðine stemne and gecyð minum folce þæt hit georne fram synnum gecyrre* (speak loudly and raise up your voice and make known to my flock [people] that it eagerly turn from sin).[46]

The homilies tend to use the -*cyrran* verbs and *bugan*, there are no collocations of *hweorfan* with *mod*, for example, in prose. Although the verb *hweorfan* appears just over fifty times in the homilies, in only one example does it pertain to a movement of the mind, Vercelli Homily XXII, *we ne sculon ure heortan eft to him hweorfan* (we should not turn our hearts back to them), and even here that is not a turning away from God or the devil, but from worldly desires.[47] However -*cyrran* appears

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[45] Bethurum, *Wulfstan*, p. 142.

[46] Ibid. p 142.

[47] Donald Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1992), p. 375.

with *mod* in the context of a movement of the mind towards or away from God nineteen times in the sermons and only eight times in verse. Six of these are to be found in *Juliana*. The remaining two are *Guthlac: ne lete him ealdfeond eft oncyrran* / *mod from his meotude* (365, he does not let the ancient enemy turn his mind again from his Lord) and *Andreas*: *woldon … / magorædendes mod oncyrran on þære deorcan niht* (1460-1, [they] wanted to … turn the mind of the advisor in the dark night). It would seem that, *Juliana* aside, this image of turning the mind away from or towards God is more common in the homilies than it is in verse.

In the examples from *Juliana*, that which is moved, or refusing to move, is either the self or the *mod*; the self implied in the use of pronouns *mec* (139), *me* (275), *þec* (144), *þe* (358), *he* (381, 411), and *mod* (226, 326, 337, 363). Juliana refers to a movement of her whole self with *mec* (139) and *me* (275), whilst Affricanus refers to a movement of her *gewit* which he refers to as a part of herself: *onwend þec in gewit, and þæt word oncyr* / *þe þu unsnyttrum ær gespræce* (144-5, turn yourself in your *gewit* and turn about those words that you unwisely uttered before). Affricanus is referring quite specifically to her reasoning / intellect and her words, as if he has not fully understood that it is her whole self that is involved; this is because he takes her behaviour for a young person's caprice.[48] Similarly Heliseus refers to a movement of her *mod*; he too fails to see Juliana in her entirety. The devil uses both personal pronouns and *mod* when talking of his attacks

[48] See 5.5 below.

on Christians. The devil seems to target the *mod*, recognising its mobility as the means to win a soul away from God. Turn the *mod*, the self will follow. Its mobility would seem to be due to its capacity to be influenced either by the non-rational senses and emotions, or by a controlling mind or self, hence *Maxims I*, 35: *styran mon sceal strongum mode*.

Cynewulf is keenly aware of the interplay between soul and body and between physical and mental action. It is central to any story of martyrdom. An important element in the control of *mod* here seems to be *lof*. When Juliana articulates her determination to not be moved (138-9), or her fear that God may allow her to be moved (275), she refers specifically to *lof*; we have been told this is *in ferðlocan fæste biwunden* (234, firmly wound in her breast). There is a central opposition in the description of her heart / soul between the steadfast place to which something can be firmly fixed and the potentially moveable element. The importance given to *lof* in Juliana's concern perhaps suggests that the word is not best rendered simply by 'praise'; it seems to imply something much more fundamental to her salvation than the modern word 'praise' can convey.

5.3.3 Thought that is fixed and unmovable, steadfastness – *fæste, staþelian, staþol, staþolfæst, soðfæst:*

- 41-2 *Heo þæs beornes lufan* / ***fæste*** *wiðhogde* – She firmly resisted that man's love.

- 106-7 *Hio to gode hæfde* / *freondrædenne* ***fæste gestaþelad*** – She had firmly fixed affection to God

- 221-2 *Ic to dryhtne min* / *mod* ***staþelige*** – I fix my mind to my Lord.

- 233-4 *Hyre wæs Cristes lof* / *in ferðlocan* ***fæste*** *biwunden* – In her, praise of Christ was firmly bound in her spirit-locker.

- 237-8 *Halig þær inne* / ***wærfæst*** *wunade* – The holy one within remained firmly true.

- 270 *Ongan þa* ***fæstlice*** *ferþ* ***staþelian*** – She began then firmly to anchor her spirit.

- 364-5 *þær ic hine finde ferð* ***staþelian*** / *to godes willan* … – where I find him to have fixed [his] heart to God's will

- 374-6 ...***staþolfæst*** *ne mæg* / *fore leahtra lufan lenge gewunian* / *in gebedstowe* – he cannot, for love of vices, remain long firm in the place of prayer.

- 389 ***fæste*** *on feðan* – firm in the troop.

- 400 *hu* ***gefæstnad*** *sy ferð innanweard*, – how firmly secured is the spirit inside.

- 436-7 *Swa ic in minne fæder,* / *hellwarena cyning, hyht* ***staþelie*** – as I make fast my hope in my father, king of the inhabitants of Hell.

- 648-9 *þæt ge eower hus* / ***gefæstnigen*** – that you make your house secure.

- 653-4 *to þam lifgendan* / *stane, stiðhygde,* ***staþol fæstniað*** – on the life-giving stone firm minded establish a foundation.

The faithful are referred to as ***soðfæst*** six times at lines: 325, 337, 348, 362, 426 and 438.

The mind and soul seems to take on the quality of a landscape where anything that is not firmly fixed in place is in danger of being swept away by rough winds or strong currents. God as the unmoving centre to which all good Christians must fix their minds and souls is clearly reminiscent of the Boethian idea of God as the unmoving axle at the centre of a turning world. That to which the Christian (or his mind) is fixed is at times spiritual and immaterial, such as God's *lof*, God's will, God, and at others it seems material, such as the place of prayer. This last may refer to a physical inability to remain in a church or in an

attitude of prayer, or it may be a spiritual reference. In *Larspell,* attributed by Napier to Wulfstan, the homilist recounts a sinful man who cannot stay in church: *se deofol hine lærde þonne eall þæt and lædde hine þonne ut of þære cyrican be ðam locce* [49] (the devil then taught him all that and then led him out of the church by the hair). The man's sins were a combination of mental and physical misdemeanours, but this particular situation suggests a physical inability to remain in the place of prayer and therefore Cynewulf's sinner's inability to remain in the place of prayer may have an equally physical dimension.

The above examples demonstrate the devil's attempts to attack the minds of the faithful and to move them from a fixed place of security where they are focussed on God's will to a place where they are separated from that and turned towards their own vices and desires. It seems to be more than just changing the ideas of the victims, but also a planting of false ideas and a prompting to action. Juliana and other strong Christians are able to offset this by keeping their *mod* or *ferð* firmly fixed in place and keeping praise of Christ firmly bound within the breast. Where *mod* was more common in collocation with the verbs of movement, here it appears only once (221-2), whilst *ferð* appears several times attached to praise of Christ (233-4), held firmly in place (270 and 400) and attached to God's will (364-5). This is presumably because of the alliteration with *fæst*; as such it is clear that *ferð* and *mod* are being used synonymously here.

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[49] Napier ed., *Homilien*, p.236.

The combat between God and the devil as a combat between movement and stasis is one that is central to the poem *The Whale*, where the *fastitocalon* lures the unwary into mistaking the mobile for the immobile as they fix their anchor ropes to its back, *ceolas stondað* / *bi staþe fæste* (17-8, the ships stand firmly in place). The creature lures the men into feeling safe, firmly attached and stable and then changes from complete stasis to sudden and fatal movement as it drags them down to the depths. This is likened to devils' methods, *swa bið scinna þeaw,* / *deofla wise, þæt he drohtende* / *þurh durne meaht duguðe beswicað,* / *ond on teosu tyhtaþ … wemað on willan* (31-5, such is the custom of evil spirits, the ways of devils, through hidden power, they deceive the company of the virtuous and provoke injury … they attract according to desires). The whale also employs deceit to trick the unwary to their doom, by sending forth *wynsum stenc* (54, a sweet perfume). This is compared to the devil's tricks, *þonne se fæcna in þam fæstenne* / *gebroht hafað, bealwes cræftig,* / *æt þam edwylme þa þe him on cleofiað* (71-3, when the deceitful one, skilled in mischief, has brought those who cleave to him to the fiery whirlpool). The *Whale* poet uses *wylm* twice, at 46 and 73 to describe Hell. It is significant that this word is suggestive of unpleasant movement, seething and swirling, implying that Hell is never still.

5.3.4 Expressions of Intention – *Willa* and *Willan,* and thought – *þincan, geþonc, foreþonc:*

The noun *willa* is used eight times and the the verb *willan* nine times. This battle is above all a battle of wills, but there are only really two possibilities in this narrative – to align one's will to God's or to the devil's. Heliseus' anger at his own failure *wiþstondan / wifes willan* (599-600, to withstand the woman's will) imitates Satan's anger at his minions' failure to damn Christian souls: *ne biþ us frea milde,* / *egesful ealdor, gif we yfles noht* / *gedon habbaþ* (328-30, nor will he be a gentle lord to us, the terrible father, if we have not done anything evil). Heliseus loses all humanity and becomes *swa wilde deor* (597, like a wild animal). His anger manifests itself physically *swylce he grennade ond gristibade,* / *wedded on gewitte* (596-7, he so bared his teeth and gnashed them, enraged in his mind), echoing the weeping and gnashing of teeth in Christ's description of Hell.[50]

The verb *willan* indicates the act of forming intention, but also to want or desire; the noun *willa* can indicate will, purpose, design, resolution, intention and desire (BT). It is Affricanus' desire that Juliana marry Heliseus (32-3), presumably for the wealth and position that such an alliance would bring, and the damned are deceived *þurh mislice modes willan* (406, through various desires of the mind). This aspect of will is closer to emotion and so almost opposes will in the sense of firm intention to remain steadfast.

For all the devil's wickedness, he cannot be blamed for a man's transgression. Free will is the deciding factor. Just as Adam and Eve listened to the devil's teachings of their own free will, so any of their

[50] Gospel of St Luke 13. 28.

offspring who fails to stay steadfast to God's will does so of their own free will. In the same way that a warrior must resolve firmly in his mind to stand firm and fight, and not to fear death, a man must stand firm in the face of temptation or physical torment if he is to be saved. Juliana is *anræd and unforht* (601, single minded and unafraid), she is also *eafoða gemyndig* (601, mindful of [her] strength(s)) and *Dryhtnes willan* (602, the Lord's will). Thus, although we may conclude that Heliseus has been influenced by the devil, we cannot sympathise to any great extent. Ultimately it is his will, even if it coincides with the will of the devil, just as Juliana's will is her own, even though it is aligned to God's.

*Willan* carries a future sense. It represents the present intention of a future act or state, or continued act or state. It combines the mental act of forming intention with the future intended act. This can follow quite closely; Juliana's expression of her will to teach the people of Nicomedia, *læran* ***wille*** (647, I want to teach), is immediately followed by her words of instruction: *forþon ic, leof weorud, læran wille, / æfremmende, þæt ge eower hus / gefæstnigan*… (647ff., for I intend to teach you, beloved people, according to the law, so that you make fast your house...).

Although *willa* and *willan* are used to refer to the wills of both God and the devil, and of both Juliana and her persecutors, all specific references to thoughts expressed by the general term (*ge*)*þonc* in *Juliana* are linked to the devil, even if indirectly through Affricanus or Heliseus.

The thoughts given are linked to a variety of mental acts which often indicate emotion: *heteþonca* (315, hate), *grimra geþonca* (367, agression), depression or jealousy implied in (405) *bitre geþoncas* and anger and resentment (485) *ealde æfþoncum*. The majority are cited by the devil as examples of the thoughts he plants to seduce or pervert the faithful. All of these thoughts are a prelude to wrong action, acts of violence for the most part. Once again Cynewulf omits to give us the details of the actions these dark thoughts and feelings instigate, thus giving greater importance to the thoughts that provoke them.

Not only do these thoughts precede action, but they may represent mental movement themselves as they indicate a change that has been effected in the mind.

### 5.4 Emotion in *Juliana*:

Even *Juliana*'s defenders find that no matter how 'clever' or 'learned' the poem may be, it will never be promoted to 'the ranks of the greatest Old English poetry'[51] and it was famously described by Woolf as having a 'uniformity verging on monotony', with a style 'unrelieved by any emotional or rhetorical emphasis'.[52] The main reason for this is probably Juliana's stoic acceptance of everything her enemies throw her way. She rarely shows evidence of anything which we could describe as emotion, and in this Cynewulf parts from his source, as we shall see.

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[51] Wittig, 'Figural Narrative', p.162.

[52] Woolf, p. 17.

Justifiable as an emotional response to her tormentors might be, there are good reasons why Cynewulf has erased these references, as a study of the internal logic of the poem will reveal. However, it seems to me that Cynewulf's detractors are unfair; for all Juliana's calm aloofness, there is a deal of both emotion and emotional talk from her persecutors and a strong sense of characterisation. The character of the devil is particularly rich in emotional complexity, and is darkly entertaining.

**Table showing instances of emotion in Juliana**

**i) Heliseus, Affricanus and the devil's victims:**

| | Heliseus | Affricanus | Devil's Victims |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Desire** | 26-7: *ða his mod ongon / fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc).* 38-9 *Þa wæs se weliga þæra wifgifta, georn on mode…* | | 366 *modes gæban;* 369 *synna lustas;* 373 *he byrnende;* 379 *modes myne;* 406 *þurh mislice modes willan*; 409 *lices lustas;* |
| **Anger** | 58 & 582 *yrre gebolgen;* 61 *hreoh ond hygeblind; 62 reord up astag;* 67 & 184 *frecne mod;* 185 *bealg hine swiþe;* 531 *gealgmod;* 595 ff. *hreoh ond hygegrim etc.;* 636-7 *hi stearcferþe þurh cumbolhete.* | 90 *anræd ond yreþweorg, yrre gebolgen;* 117 *and* 158 *þurh yrre;* 140-1 *ellenwod, yrre ond reþe, / frecne ond ferðgrim;* | |
| **Anxiety** | 47 *swencan* | | |

| | Heliseus | Affricanus | Devil's Victims |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Hate** | 56 *hæstne nið* | | 485 *ealde æftþoncan*; |
| **Pride** | | | |
| **Shame** | 71-2 *me þa fraceðu sind / on modsefan mæste weorce;* 672 *sceohmod* | | |
| **Fear** | 586 *hæleð wurdon acle* (Heliseus and his men) | | *swa ic brogan to / laðne gelæde* |
| **Love** | | | |
| **Woe** | | | 504 *yrmþu*; 525 *sorg*; |
| **Glee** | | | |
| **Despair** | | | 367 *grimra geþonca;* 405 *in breostsefan bitre geþoncas;* 406 |
| **Envy** | | | |
| **Scorn** | 189 *ahlog þa se hererince, hopswordum spræc* | | |
| **Joy** | | | |
| **Hope** | | | |
| **Love** | 103-4 *þæs weres frige, / ece eadlufan* | | |
| **Rejection of emotion** | | | |
| **Deprived of emotion** | | | |

**ii)The devil, Cynewulf and Juliana:**

| | Devil | Cynewulf | Juliana |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Desire** | 414 *geornor gyme;* | | |
| **Anger** | | | |
| **Anxiety** | 423 *nydbysig; þrage;* | | |
| **Hate** | 315 *heardra heteþonca;* | | |
| **Pride** | 424 *fore oferhygdum* | | |
| **Shame** | 445 *scame þrowian;* 445 *þu me fraceþu ne wyrce;* 633 *heo mec eft wille earmne gehynan* | 713 *þæt ic yfel-dæda ær gescomede* | |
| **Fear** | 320 f*orhtafongen*; 328 *forhte on ferð* | **706** *acle bidað* | **267-8** *ða wæs seo fæmne for þam færspelle / egsan geaclad* |
| **Love** | | | |
| **Woe** | 327 *hygegeomre*; 390 *hroþra bidæled;* 391 *gehðu mænan;* 393 i*c geomor;* 443 *sorg on siþe*; 450 *unsælig*; 537-8 *cwanian..wanian* | **703** *geomor;* **708-9** *beofað seomað sorgcearig;* **711** *wopig; micel mods sorg; 616 earm ond unlæd; 634 yflum yrmþum* | |
| **Glee** | 468ff. but especially 475-8 *ic sume gedyde / þæt him banlocan blode spiowedan, / þæt hi færinga feorh aleton / þurh ædra wylm* | | |

| | Devil | Cynewulf | Juliana |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Despair** | | | |
| **Envy** | 377-8 *þam þe ic lifes ofonn / leohtes geleafan* | | |
| **Scorn** | | | |
| **Joy** | | 730 *God is æþeling wyn* | 91 *glædmode;* 608 *ond þæs mægdnes mod miclum geblissad;* 670 *langan gefean;* 287 *ferð geblissad* |
| **Hope** | | | 642 *hyht geniwad* |
| **Love** | | | |
| **Rejection of emotion** | | | Desire: 33-4 f*reond-rædenne… forhogde* 129 *þæt þu forhycge hlaford urne;* Fear: 134 *næfre ic me ondræde domas þine;* 176-8 *næfre þu geþreatest þinum beotum, / ne wita þæs fela wraðra gegearwast, / þæt ic þeodscype þinne lufie*; 601, 209 *unforht*; 210 *ne ondræde ic me domas þine;* 258 *seo þe forht ne wæs;* General: 235 *unbrice*; 196 *wiþerhycgende*; |
| **Deprived of emotion** | joy: 390 *hroþra bidæled;* scorn: 526 *ic bihlyhhan ne þearf* | | |

There is a significant distribution of emotional responses in *Juliana* where Juliana's tormentors are subject to a deal of violent emotion whilst the saint herself shows very little. Emotions form a bridge between mental and physical acts, comprising interior mental or spiritual responses to physical stimuli and often being accompanied by involuntary physical reactions. We have seen that Cynewulf describes mental acts in physical terms, and these are no exception.

An analysis of the distribution of emotion shows that most emotions in this poem are associated with the devil. Those few emotions which are linked to Juliana are, for the most part, resistance to emotion rather than emotion *per se*, one significant exception being her brief moment of fear (267-8). Juliana is not, of course, the only named character in the narrative to align themselves with God; Cynewulf places himself in the conclusion of the poem and shows himself to be considerably more subject to emotional turmoil than the saint.

The emotions in *Juliana* can roughly be categorised as: desire, anger, anxiety, hate, shame, joy, fear, love, woe, glee, despair and hope.

We can see from the table that Juliana shows very little emotion. I have included joy and hope because they are emotions when triggered by a stimulus; however most of the joy and hope that Juliana feels relates to her faith in God and as such these are more states than emotions, being long-term conditions rather than brought on in response to stimuli. However there is one significant exception to be found where Juliana

feels intense fear as a result of the devil's trick, *ða wæs seo fæmne for þam færspelle* / *egsan geaclad* (267-8, then the woman was terrified with fear at the sudden message). We have seen how the devil affects the minds of Christians to manipulate them into spiritually moving away from God and here for a brief moment Juliana is subject to this manipulation. Does her spirit, even for a moment, move from its fixed place? Immediately following this sudden emotion, Juliana *ongan þa fæstlice ferð staþelian* (270, then began to make her spirit firmly steadfast). This suggests that there was, albeit infinitesimally briefly, a movement of her spirit, or that at least it had momentarily ceased to be firmly fixed. The verb *onginnan* suggests the commencement of an action; since we know that her spirit was already firmly fixed to God *hio to gode hæfde* / *freondrædenne fæste gestaþelad* (106-7, she had firmly fixed her affection on God); *Ic to dryhtne min* / *mod staþelige* (221-2, I have fixed my mind to my Lord), we can infer that Juliana's spirit moved, or was in danger of moving, away from God. This perhaps suggests that emotion, in the sense of sudden response to stimuli, implies spiritual movement and is opposed to spiritual steadfastness.[53]

One of the more significant differences between the version of the story in the *Acta Sanctorum* and here is in Juliana's emotional responses. Where Cynewulf's Juliana is firm, but always calm and polite, the *Acta Sanctorum* Juliana is otherwise more feisty. She showers Heliseus with insults and dire portents, emotional talk

[53] The Latin term *animi motus* demonstrates that classical thinkers saw emotion in terms of spiritual movement and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Cynewulf may have been influenced by this.

suggestive of animosity at best and hatred at worst. Juliana in the *Acta Sanctorum* prays that Heliseus be consumed by *vermibus magno* (giant worms) (p. 875) and tells him that he will suffer *eterna tormenta, ubi habebis æternis cruciatus, vermem edentem, nec deficientem, atque obscuritatem æternam* (eternal torment, where you will have endless torture, be eaten by worms without cease and eternal darkness).[54] She taunts Heliseus, *sed ego in nomine Domini mei Iesu Christi vincan mentem tuam inhumanan, and faciam erubescere patrem tuum satanam* (but I, in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, will vanquish your inhuman mind and shame your father, Satan). This is clearly emotional; it suggests a level of pride or boasting as well as a desire to insult or cause shame. To the devil she is insulting, referring to him consistently as *immunde spiritus* (filthy spirit), and even tying him up and beating him, *tunc Sancta Iuliana ligavit illi post tergum manus, et posuit eum in terram, et apprehendens unum de vinculis, de quibus ipsa fuerat ligata, cædebat ipsum dæmonem* (then St Juliana tied his hands behind his back and put him on the ground, and took one of the chains with which he was tied and beat the devil with it). The use of insults and physical violence is again suggestive of emotions of hatred and disdain. Cynewulf has been careful to remove these displays of quite strong emotional reactions and it becomes clear on looking at the table that the majority of emotions in the poem are associated with the perpetrators of evil.

[54] Acts Sanctorum p. 876.

Juliana's steadfastness does not come without effort. She is several times described by alternately the narrator or her persecutors in terms which suggest a certain resistance to emotion as the table shows. The prefixes *for-*, *un-* and *wiþ-*, as well as the negatives *ne* and *næfre* put her in opposition to emotions of desire or fear. The often quoted description (33-4) that Juliana *freondrædenne forhogde*, does not mean that she felt the emotion of hate or disgust, but that she rejected the emotion of desire. Modern editors translate *forhycgan* as 'to hold in contempt' or 'despise',[55] but whilst it is used in certain other contexts to indicate those emotions, it is made of the oppositional prefix *for-* and the verb *hycgan* which literally implies a rejection or refusal to *hycgan* rather than a discrete emotion. Affricanus repeats the word in his accusation of Juliana in 129. The use of negative structures *ne* and *næfre* show a refusal to feel fear which is an act of will rather than an emotion of sudden courage. Cynewulf as narrator refers to her as *unbrice* (235, unbroken) which implies a general resistance to all of the stimuli both physical and mental that she has been subjected to.

The table shows the most common emotion felt by Heliseus and Affricanus to be anger. It is interesting to note that there seems to be a gender-based element to the frustration of her male antagonists. It is clear from the way they address Juliana and try to persuade her to comply with their wishes that they expect certain emotional responses from her, related to a degree to her sex. For instance all three of them begin their discourse with flattery:

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[55] Bosworth Toller; Woolf, glossary, p.66.

- Affricanus: *ðu eart dohtor min seo dyreste* / *ond seo sweteste in sefan minum* (93-4, my daughter, you are the dearest and sweetest in my heart).
- Heliseus: *min se swetesta sunnan scima* / *Iuliana* (166, My Juliana, the sweetest splendour of the sun)
- Devil: *seo dyreste* / *ond se weorþeste wuldorcyninge,* / *Dryhtne ussum* (247, the dearest and most worthy to our Lord the King of Glory)

Similar terms are present in the *Acta Sanctorum*, but retained and developed by Cynewulf.[56] The assumption is clearly that these male figures expect an emotional response from Juliana to their flattery. They also expect the emotional response of fear to their threats of torture, and one of desire to the promise of Heliseus' wealth. They get no such response from Juliana and this seems to aggravate their anger more than any offence on her part. The only offence they put to her charge is blasphemy which does not explain the extreme and personal nature of their anger.

The onset of the violent emotions of anger and hate is frequently accompanied by physical responses. These emotions begin as mental processes and lead to physical ones, linking the mind to the body, the most extreme example being Heliseus' anger at his inability to *mægne wiþstondan* / *wifes willan* (599-600, to resist the power of the woman's will), *þa se dema wearð* / *hreoh ond hygegrim , ongon his hrægl*

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[56] Affricanus' words are quite similar: *filia mea dulcissima Iuliana, lux oculorum meorum* (my daughter sweetest Juliana, light of my eyes), but Heliseus is more restrained in the Latin: *dulcissima mea Iuliana* (my sweetest Juliana) and Belial is also less effusive: *Iuliana dilecta mea* (Juliana my beloved). *Acta Sanctorum*, pp. 874-5.

*teran,* / *swylce he grennade ond gristbitade,* / *wedde on gewitte swa wilde deor* (594-7, then the judge became savage and fierce-minded, he began to tear his robe, likewise he bared his teeth and gnashed them; raged in his mind like a wild beast). The extremity of the physical reaction here takes Heliseus from the mind to the body and then further away from the human condition to the condition of a wild beast. There is a similar, but more indirect comparison to wild beasts in the description of Affricanus' anger: *ða wæs ellenwod, yrre ond reþe,* / *frecne ond ferðgrim, fæder wið dehter* (140-1, then he became insanely furious, angry and wild, savage and fierce-minded, father against daughter). There are close similarities between the language and associations of the two descriptions implying loss of control and a turning to a bestial or savage state.

The interaction between mental actions (such as thoughts of frustration and the accompanying feeling of anger) and physical action (such as gnashing of teeth and tearing of clothes) is indicative of loss of mental and spiritual control and ultimately damnation. Other less extreme examples of physical response accompanying emotion are the violent bulging that both Heliseus and Affricanus suffer as a result of their anger (58, 90 and 582) *yrre gebolgen*. Of course all of these physical acts are indicative of movement.

Cynewulf draws attention to the sudden onset of many of these emotions by using the verb *onginnan*, (26-7) *ða his mod ongon* / *fæmnan lufian,* and the adverb *þa*. The onset of Heliseus' desire for Juliana appears to have no stimulus; in the context of the devil's

accounts of mental manipulation, the prompting of desire and the persecution of the holy, Heliseus' love could well be the result of the devil's mental manipulation, and the sudden and extreme extent of the following emotions for both Heliseus and Affricanus are most probably of the same source.

The devil teaches those people he wishes to use as tools against Christians to perform specific acts; 289-315 gives a list of such acts from the piercing of Christ's side to the crucifixion of Andreas. The devil's role as teacher is signified by the noun *lar* or the verb *gelæran*; an example where Heliseus is clearly responding to such teaching is: *næs se feond to læt,* / *se hine [Heliseus] gelærde þæt he læmen fæt* / *biwyrcen het wundorcræfte* (573-5, nor was the fiend too slow, he taught him [Heliseus] so that he commanded an earthen vessel to be made with wondrous skill). Another method is to infiltrate the minds of Christians and plant dark thoughts: [*ic*] *in onsende* / *in breostsefan bitre geþoncas* / *þurh mislice modes willan* (404-6, [I] send bitter thoughts in his breast through various desires of the mind). Although Heliseus and Affricanus are not Christians, it might be supposed that the devil is affecting their thoughts in a similar way in order to manipulate them into tormenting his target, Juliana.

It is the devil himself who feels emotion most frequently and who shows the widest emotional range comprising excitement, sorrow, fear, hate and shame.

- **Excitement** – The devil's father is *geornfulra þonne ic* (324, more eager than I), which suggests a heightened degree of eagerness to do harm in both father and son. We are given a display of this eagerness where the devil, who is supposedly confessing his sins, takes so much obvious delight in violence and destruction that this is clearly what Jorgensen refers to as 'emotional talk'.[57] This reaches its apogee at 475 ff. *eac ic sume gedyde* / *þæt him banlocan blode spiowedan,* / *þæt hi færinga feorh alton* / *þurh ædra wylm* (475-8, I did for one so that his blood spewed from his bone-enclosure, so that he suddenly let go his life through gushing veins). The description is long and the devil forgets himself to such a degree that he begins to boast (490ff.) *sume, þa ic funde* / *butan godes tacne, gymlease,* / *ungebletsade, þa ic bealdlice* / *þurh mislic cwealm minum hondum* / *searoþoncum slog* (490-4, when I found one without God's mark, heedless, unblessed, then I boldly through various violent deaths, cunningly slew [him / them] with my own hands). The devil's excitement is all too clear in this passage, as is his pride in his own resourcefulness.
- **Sorrow** – *We beoð hygegeomre* / *forhte on ferðþe* (327-8, we are sorrowing, afraid in spirit). The devil's is not a dignified sorrow, it is self-pity and cowardice combined: *ic sceal feor þonan* / *heanmod hweorfan, hroþra bidæled* / *in gleda gripe, gehðu mænan* (389-91, I must turn from there, ashamed, deprived of joy, in the a burning grip, lament [my] misery). Here the devil's sorrow is brought about by his

[57] Alice Jorgensen, 'Introduction', in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions*, ed. by Jorgensen *et al*. pp. 1-17 (p 7).

disappointment at being denied the joy of turning a Christian and fear of the consequences. Similarly having failed to turn Juliana, he feels *sorg on siþe* (443, sorrow on the journey) and he is *hreowcearig / siðfæt seofian sar cwanian / wyrd wanian* (536-8, sorrowful to lament [his] journey, bewail suffering, lament [his] fate).

- **Fear** – The devil is clearly afraid of his father the *egesful ealdor* (329, the terrible prince) who makes him *forhte on ferðþe* (328, fearful in spirit). He is also afraid of Juliana: *is þeos þrag ful strong* (464, this time of distress is extreme); he feels that he is *þream forþrycte* (520, overwhelmed with rebukes). He exclaims: *hwæt, þu mec þreades / þurh sarslege* (546-7, you punished me with painful blows). In the *Acta Sanctorum* Juliana does indeed do this, whipping him with the chains she has bound him with. Here there is no mention of Juliana using violence. Indeed at the end of the confession she allows him to go freely (unlike her Latin counterpart who throws the demon onto a midden – displaying unseemly levels of hatred and contempt). The devil however perceives her mental control over him as physical torment. Despite evidence to the contrary the devil continues to fear Juliana *heo mec eft wille earmne gehynan* (633, she will again humiliate wretched me). He projects his own emotional responses onto Juliana and imagines that she feels desire for revenge or contempt for him when she clearly feels nothing for him at all.
- **Hate** – The devil is envious of mankind and this feeds his hatred. He aims to take the life and soul of *þam þe ic lifes ofonn* (377, the one whose life I begrudge). A similar emotion is attributed to the devil in

*Guthlac A: se ðe him lifes ofonn* (85, who begrudges them [hermits] life). The devil feels particular hatred for Juliana whom he blames for his humiliation, so he incites Heliseus to further torment her and goads him *gyldað nu mid gyrne* (619, requite [her] now with affliction).

- **Shame** – the devil is *heanmod* (390, humiliated), he suffers *scame* (445, shame), feels *edwit* (542, disgrace) and he is *earm* (633, wretched).

The devil's emotions are, of course, all despicable: joy at violence, suffering and loss, self-pity and fear for his own well-being, shame at his defeat and hatred and spite towards those loved by God. In the context of *Juliana* emotion seems to belong to the devil and it represents mental / spiritual movement and upheaval.

The devil is associated with movement both figuratively and literally. A figurative example being when Juliana complains to God: *þe mec læreð from þe* / *on stearcne weg* (281-2, that he leads me away from you on the unyielding path); his association with movement is also literal and physical – the heavenly voice tells Juliana *forfoh þone fratigan and fæste geheald* (284, seize the wicked one and hold him fast). Unlike the capture of the demon in the *Acta Sanctorum* where Juliana is told *tu autem apprehende istum* (you must take him); here Juliana's method is not so much about binding the devil to keep him from escaping, as about holding him firmly to render him immobile, as if it is his mobility that is the greatest danger.

Cynewulf seems to be creating an opposition between wisdom and stasis on the one hand and emotion and movement on the other. The first indication of this is somewhat masked to the modern reader less familiar with the scriptures by an apparently incongruous association of ideas. When Juliana is expected by her father and suitor to be impressed by Heliseus' wealth, the narrator remarks that *hire wæs godes egsa* / *mara in gemyndum þonne eall þæt maþþumgestealdo* (35-6, fear of God was more in her mind than all the wealth). However to Cynewulf and his audience the reference to Isaiah 33. 6, *et erit fides in temporibus tuis divitiae salutis sapientia et scientia timor Domini ipse thesaurus eius* **(**and there shall be faith in thy times, riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is his treasure).[58] Not only does this tell us that for Juliana the only treasure that she needed was fear of God, but also it tells us that there is an association with wisdom and stability. If Isaiah links *timor domini* to treasure, Psalms and Proverbs link it to wisdom: Psalms 111.10, *initium sapientiae timor Domini* (fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom) and Proverbs I. 7, *timor Domini principium scientia* (fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge).

Cynewulf equates absence of wisdom with wrong action when the devil relates the martyrdom of Andreas: *swylce ic Egias eac gelærde* / *þæt he unsnyttrum Andreas het* / *ahon haligne on heanne beam* (307-9, similarly I taught Egeas so that he unwisely ordered Andreas, the holy

[58] The term *fides* also carries a sense of stability, and is often translated as 'the stability of thy times' (King James version, for example). This quotation was apparently a favourite with the Benedictine writers, Cassian and Pinufius.

one, to be hanged from the high tree). Here as a result of the devil's teaching Egeas becomes unwise; this is an inversion of the normal role of teaching. In a further example Affricanus pleads with Juliana to turn *onwend þec in gewitte, ond þa word oncyrr* / *þe þu unsnyttrum ær gespræce* / *þa þu goda ussa gield forhogodest* (144-6, turn yourself in your mind and turn about those words that you unwisely uttered before when you despised worship of our gods). Because Affricanus' beliefs are in opposition to God's will, everything here is opposite and the truth can only be read by reversing everything as if it were in a looking glass: Juliana should not turn her mind, which is as much as to say that her mind must remain fixed in its place, as the words she has spoken are wise; Affricanus uses the verb *forhycgan*, believing this is an emotional caprice on Juliana's part although the truth is more likely to be a refusal to comply that is devoid of emotional response.[59] Again wisdom is associated with stasis once we reverse Affricanus' wrong thinking, and folly / emotion with movement. The devil, in his account of *metodes cempa* (God's warrior) links his refusal *feor þonan* / *bugan from beaduwe* (384-5, far from there to turn from the battle), that is to say his refusal to move, with wisdom, *ac he bord ongean* / *hefeð hygesnottor, haligne scyld* (385-6, but he, wise-spirited, raises a shield against [me], a holy defence). Even the devil decides that due to Juliana being *þweorhtimbra* (550, steadfast),[60] she has become *on ferþe frod* (553,

[59] See discussion of *forhycgan* above.

[60] Bosworth Toller gives 'stubborn' and Woolf translates this as 'resolutely made'; the word is a compound combining the word 'thwart' – or 'structural cross-piece' and 'timber', so refers to a piece of wood that holds a structure firmly in place.

wise in mind). In these examples wisdom is associated with steadfastness and therefore stasis, and, as we saw above, emotion is linked to movement, an *animi motus*. It would therefore seem logical to assume that Cynewulf *is* making a difference between rational thought and emotion.

Boethius defines wisdom as *se hehsta cræft* (the highest virtue) he continues *and se hæfð on him feower oðre cræftas; þara is an wærscipe, oðer metgung, ðridde is ellen, feorðe rihtwisnes. Se wisdom gedeð his lufiendas wise and wære and gemetfæste and geþyldige and rihtwise, and ælces godes þeawes he gefyllð þonne þe hine lufað* (and it has within it four other virtues; one of those is prudence, the second temperance, the third fortitude, the fourth justice. Wisdom makes its lovers wise and prudent and temperate and patient and just, and fills those that love it with every good quality).[61] These qualities would seem to preclude emotion, as temperance, patience and justice belong to the rational mind and seem to oppose emotion, or at least excessive emotion.

A further instance of this opposition is provided in the homily attributed to Wulfstan by Napier, *Larspell*:

> þonne lærð us godes engel stilnesse and gemetlice spræce and smeaunge ymbe godes beboda...and þæt we habban gastlice þeawas and bebodu æt urum heortum and herigen urne scyppend ealra gesceafta; þonne lærð us se deofol unstilnesse and

[61] *OEB* I, B Text, Chapter 27, p.298, and translation *OEB* II, p. 40. Godden and Irvine note that this is an expansion by the translator, *OEB* II, p. 351.horror

ungemetlice hleahtras and unnytte spræce and unnytte geþancas and tælnesse and treowleanesse godes beboda.[62]

then God's angel teaches us stillness and moderate speech and meditating on God's commands...and that we have spiritual customs and commands at our heart and praise our creator of all creation; then the devil teaches us 'unstillness' [movement / commotion] and immoderate laughter and vain speech and vain thoughts and slander and faithlessness to commands.

The homilist uses prefixes to create antonyms, so *stilness / unstilness*, *gemetelic / unmetelic* which focusses on the ideal in both cases. Goodness and God are associated with stasis and moderation whilst the devil teaches movement, commotion and excess. This homilist seems to be using the same terminology and philosophy as Cynewulf – God's teaching opposes the devil's teaching, stasis opposes movement, and he equates emotion with movement. *Ungemetlic spræc* and *ungemetlic hleahtra* (immoderate speech and immoderate laughter) are both suggestive of emotion and excess. The *Benedictine Rule* also discouraged laughter, *ne hleahter ne sceal he lufian* (neither shall he love laughter).[63]

At the end of *Juliana*, after the good death of the saint and the terrible death of Heliseus and his men, Cynewulf turns his attention to

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[62] Napier, ed., *Homilien* p. 233.

[63] *BR*, p.18.

his own mortality and the fate of his own soul when he reaches the point of death:

Min sceal of lice

sawul on siþfæt,  nat ic sylfa hwider,

eardes uncyðgu;  of sceal ic þissum

secan oþerne  ærgewyrhtum,

gongan iudædum.  Geomor hweorfeð

[cen].[yr].and [nyd].  Cyning biþ reþe,

sigora Syllend,  þonne synnum fah,

[eh].[wyn]. and [ur]  acle bidað

hwæt him æfter dædum  deman wille

lifes to leane;  [lagu].[feoh] beofað

seomað sorgcearig.  (699-709).

From my body must

my soul go on a journey, myself I know not where,

to unknown lands; from this [land] I must

seek another ; with [my] former works,

go with [my] deeds of old. Sorrowing will depart

C.Y and N. The king will be stern,

the Giver of victories, when stained with sins

E. W and U terrified wait

for what will be judged by Him after the deeds

as a reward for their lives. L F tremble,

they lie heavily, sorrowful and anxious.

Cynewulf focusses on division: the division of the soul from the body, the self from 'this land' and the self, symbolised by the runes that spell his name, into three parts. The first section of this divided runic self shows movement (*hweorfan*), and woe, suggestive of error, the second terror and stasis, the correct attitude to have in relation to God and linked to Wisdom, and the third an intermediary state where this part of his self is uncomfortably fixed in place, implied by *seomian* (to hang suspended, to lour like clouds or to lie heavily), but not entirely still as implied by *beofian* (to tremble). The effect of the whole being to show symbolically Cynewulf's doubts about the state of his soul. He has shown Juliana as very slightly flawed and himself as more significantly flawed. Given the role of the poem to encourage ordinary men and women to move towards God and away from sin, this recognition of weakness renders salvation more accessible.[64]

The semantic analysis has shown that Cynewulf's poem owes much to Anglo-Saxon prose. The central idea of movement towards and away from God is common to the sermons, to Alfred's translation of *Boethius* and to the *Benedictine Rule*. This is equally true of the importance given to stasis, the linking of stasis to God and the related association of

[64] To demonstrate that most Anglo-Saxon poets 'adhere to the vernacular tradition', Lockett (*Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, p. 27) cites 699-701a, as evidence that 'the fullness of the individual's will and emotions...does not reside in the soul'; by stopping at line 701a, 'from my body must my soul go on a journey myself I know not where, to unknown lands' it is easy to give the impression that soul and self are not one. However lines 701b-3: 'from this land **I** must seek another', clearly show the self – ***ic*** – is named as being the one to make the journey and this clearly equates self with soul.

wisdom to stasis. Emotion here is linked to movement and is the domain of the devil, signifying as it does a replacement of rational thought with instinctive and therefore bestial thought.

Cynewulf presents thought in physical terms. This is not entirely figurative as the thrust of the poem is to convey the idea that it is the spiritual plane and spiritual acts that are of significance, and not physical ones, spectacular though they may be. In *Juliana* it is physicality that seems ethereal and unreal, and spirituality that is solid and grounded.

It is a pity that Juliana's character does not seem to appeal to modern tastes and sensibilities; to find her dull, as Mr Darcy might have said, is wilfully to misunderstand her. She is a young woman with no temporal power of any kind. She is politically subject to the state in the person of Heliseus and socially subject to her father. Her will is ignored; she has no choice and is given no voice unless it is to speak words of compliance. Juliana chooses to ignore all of this, refusing the earthly authority which menaces her with physical torment and taking a voice when none was offered to reject the state and to convert the people. Cynewulf has deliberately chosen to focus on the weakest of society's members to demonstrate to what extent it is possible for anyone to resist. Even if modern readers find her religious adherence unappealing, surely she is still an inspiring figure of resistance in the face of apparently insurmountable odds?

**5.5 A brief note on a possible source:**

Cynewulf uses more dialogue and gives these exchanges more realism than can be found in the *Acta Sanctorum*. The exchange between Affricanus and Juliana is at times reminiscent of Juliet's argument with her father in *Romeo and Juliet* III. 5 where Capulet, in an uncontrolled rage, threatens his daughter to make her obey. One of the details given both by Affricanus and Heliseus refers to Juliana abandoning the faith of her ancestors *þa we ær cuþon* (74-5) and following her own foolish ideas, *þu on geaþe hafast* / *þurh þin orlegu unbiþyrfe* / *ofer witena dom wisan gefongen. Wiðsæcest þu to swiþe selfre rædes*… (96-9, you in foolishness have through your hostility against the judgements of the wise taken an unprofitable path. You renounce too quickly by your own advice…). The *Acta Sanctorum* does not include such detail, but similar ideas are to be found in Eusebius's transcription of the *Edict of Toleration* in *Ἐκκλησιαστίκή ιστορια*, translated into Latin as *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a 10th century copy of which is to be found in the library of Worcester Cathedral, MS. Q28. The edict refers to the persecution that was instigated so 'that the Christians also, such as had abandoned the persuasion of their own ancestors, should return to sound mind; seeing that through some reasoning they had been possessed of such self-will and seized with such folly instead of following the institutions of the ancients, which perchance their own forefathers had formerly established, they made for themselves, and were observing, laws merely in accordance with their own disposition and as each one wished'.[65] The reference to folly, following paths, ancestors and making

[65] Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and tr. by J. E. L. Oulton (Cambridge MS: Harvard University Press, 1932), Vol. II, p.319.

laws to suit their own ideas, all find their echo in *Juliana*. It is therefore possible that in addition to a text similar to the one in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Cynewulf may have had access to the *Edict of Toleration*, perhaps through Eusebius' *Historia* and / or Lactantius' *De Mortibus*, or at least to a similar text, using this as inspiration for Affricanus' point of view and reaction to Juliana's headstrong refusal to comply.

## 6: Conclusion

> Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
> That would not let me sleep.[1]

In the introduction, several patterns of interaction between mental and physical acts were identified. These patterns appear frequently in Anglo-Saxon Christian literature such as the homilies of Ælfric, *The Benedictine Rule* and the Alfredian translations of Boethius and Gregory. Ælfric's exhortation to direct the mind to eagerness of good works shows the importance of the interrelationship between mental and physical acts.

> Ic bidde eow gebroðra, tihtað eower mod to gecnyrdnysse godra weorca, þæt ge mid geðylde godne wæstm to Godes handa gebringon, þæt ge mid him and his halgum þæt ece lif habban moton on ealra worulda woruld.[2]
>
> I ask you brothers, to direct your minds to eagerness for good works, that you with patience bring good fruit to God's hands, that you may have eternal life with Him and His holy ones in the world of all worlds.

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[1] *Hamlet* V. 2. 4-5.

[2] Malcolm Godden, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1979), *Dominica in Sexagesima*, p. 59.

Good actions are the product of right thinking. The combination of the right kind of thought and action produces good fruits and ultimately leads to salvation.[3]

We have seen that the mind is a controlling force; the self, or rational part of the mind, must control the wayward part of the mind and keep it firmly fixed in place – that is attached to God or turned towards God. This concept houses three distinct threads of thought. Firstly that the mind, figuratively at least, is capable of physical movement; secondly that it is made up of at least two parts, two wills that can be in opposition; and finally it associates mental stasis with God and mental turbulence with movement away from God. The widespread nature of the idea that the *mod* must be controlled suggests that it was understood as received wisdom and its presence in *Maxims I: styran sceal mon strongum mode* confirms this. [4] Correct action, good fruits, can only be produced by a mind that is directed in the right way, thus the interaction of thought and action is crucial. In addition to this, the figures deployed present this mental control in physical terms, so that thought develops a physicality of its own.

Influence on the mind comes not only from within. It is the role of the good shepherd to influence his flock: Wulfstan in *Sermones Lupi Episcopi* addresses his fellow bishops: *leofan men, us is deope*

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[3] See above 1.2.

[4] See also Gregory's *Pastoral Care*: *ac gif se stiora his stiorroðor gehilt, ðonne cymð he orsorglice to lande, hwilum ðeah ongean wind and ongean ða yða, hwilum mid ægðrum. Swa deð ðæt mod, þonne hit wacorlice stiereð ðære sawle* (but if the helmsman holds his tiller, then he comes without anxiety to land, though the wind oppose and the waves oppose, sometimes both. So does the mind when it vigilantly steers the soul), *GPC*, p. 433.

*beboden þæt we geornlice mynegian and læran sculan þæt manna gehwylc to Gode buge and from synnum gecyrre* [5] (beloved people, it is profoundly commanded of us that we must eagerly remind and teach each man to incline towards God and to turn away from sin), and inversely it is the role of devils to influence man's mind away from God, as the devil in *Juliana* makes clear.

The control of the mind is often presented in terms of an opposition of movement and stasis, where stasis is associated with God and the eternal life, *ða ecan staðolfæstnysse þæs towerdan lifes* (the eternal steadfastness of the life to come), whilst movement is associated with the *geswincfullum yðum þises deadlican lifes* (the toilsome waves of this mortal life) and with distraction from God.[6] The physical world, the only one which the body can inhabit, is defined by constant movement and toil, and a mind that imitates this, that is a mind in movement and turmoil, is a mind that is turned towards the mortal world.

Rationality and emotion are opposing forces which can take control of the mind. A mind governed by emotion is one that will allow the body to act on impulse as opposed to a mind that is governed by rational choice. The actions of a mind under the influence of excessive emotion will perform inappropriate action. An excess of fear will produce flight, as we saw in *Maldon*. Byrhtnoð's attempts to control the minds of his men and their own mental efforts required a series of controlling mental acts: focussing on what to do with their hands, remembering their duty

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[5] *Wulfstan*, *Sermones Lupi Episcopi ,* Bethurum, p. 142.

[6] *CH* II, p. 165.

to their lord, their family name and their own honour and steering the mind away from thoughts of death. Those men who failed to do this gave way to fear, an emotion that took control and overrode those rational thinking processes.[7] In *Juliana* the devil reveals that one of his main tactics is to encourage men to give in to their emotions and to abandon rational thought, and so excesses of anger or desire will inevitably lead to sinful acts. In *Juliana* we see that emotion, or at least excessive emotion, is associated with movement and opposed to wisdom. In *The Seafarer*, the narrative of the seafarer-soul shows us the effect of this from the mind / soul's perspective as it struggles to steer the ship of the body past the rocks of temptation and is buffeted and beaten by the tumultuous mental movement of the cares and anxieties which attack it. Cynewulf also uses an image of a mind under attack in the description of the soul as a tower besieged under a storm of arrows.

Whilst the application of a conscious pattern of interaction between mental and physical acts has been deployed quite differently across the three poems studied, the implications are similar, reflecting a preoccupation with the importance of will and mental control, the responsibility of the individual for his own conduct (physical acts)

[7] This may be an Anglo-Saxon perspective. A modern reader might feel that a decision to put one's own life above such considerations was entirely rational. However, to put one's mortal life first, from a Christian standpoint, is an error of judgement and to save one's own life at the cost of endangering the lives of one's comrades is an error of morality. An army, regardless of spiritual belief, can only function if this kind of mental control is upheld, which is why the image of the soldier, the *miles Christi*, fits so well into Christian allegory.

through successful control of the mind and resistance to dangerous emotions.

It is perhaps in *The Battle of Maldon* that the importance of the relation between mental and physical acts is most obvious. The poet's consistent use of a pattern showing the importance of balance between the two kinds of acts is followed relentlessly through the poem. Any imbalance signals error and this leads to disaster and loss. These patterns are identified and analysed in 2.4 above. The soldier must control his own mental acts in order to perform the correct physical acts required in battle, a difficult enough task in which he is assisted through the instruction of his leaders and the encouragement of his fellows. He must maintain a position of stasis in the face of danger and remember to maintain his intention in much the same way as a saint. Gone are the heroes of old who were born to be brave, these new heroes must achieve brave deeds through their own mental efforts.

We have seen how balance and excess are deployed in *Maldon* – the military ideal being a perfect balance between controlled mental action and appropriate physical action or the potential for action, with excess of any kind indicating danger. In the historical context of the law codes known as VI and VII Æþelred, where the physical and spiritual blur at the level of national policy, this pattern takes on a poignant resonance. The idea that the Viking raids were punishment for sin appeared not just as a theme from the pulpit, but became encoded in law. The sermons tell us of the importance of mental control in the battle against the devil who will use all his wiles to break down our

steadfastness and turn us away from God to our own perdition – but, insists Ælfric, devils cannot harm us. If we are lost it is through our own fault.

In this light *The Battle of Maldon* could almost be seen as a parable.The Vikings, deploying methods similar to those of devils, use their cunning to tempt Byrhtnoð, the phrasing of their demands reminiscent of the words of the tempter in *Christ and Satan* or the description of Christ in *Dream of the Rood*.[8] The English leader understands the importance of mental control and is able to resist. The force of his own mind is used to control the thought processes of his men – right thinking leads to right action and in this Byrhtnoð is not dissimilar to Wulfstan's bishops. Temptation fails (avoid bloodshed, ransom your people) and so the enemy must resort to another tactic, left deliberately vague. Byrhtnoð makes a mistake and he gives ground, not out of cowardice, but excessive bravado, and so the battle is lost. It is an illustration of the dangers facing even the strongest of Christians.

The similarity of Byrhtnoð's depiction with contemporary depictions of saints has been amply explored by Cavill, Cross, and Hillman.[9] The importance of mental control to produce right action shows a progression from the innately brave hero of *Brunanburh* or *Beowulf* to a more Christianised hero, one who has some of the characteristics of a saint. We have seen how the *Maldon*-poet deploys a number of

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[8] See 3.3 above and Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), p. 119; Cavill makes reference to Hillman, 'Defeat and Victory in *The Battle of Maldon*: The Christian Resonances Reconsidered', *English Studies in Canada,* 11 (1985), 385-95.

[9] Paul Cavill, 'Heroic Saint and Saintly Hero'; J. E. Cross, 'Oswald and Byrhtnoth'. See above 3.3. Hillman, 'Defeat and Victory in *The Battle of Maldon"*.

interconnected patterns to demonstrate the importance of balance and moderation. It is Byrhtnoð's failure to maintain moderation in his own mind that leads to disaster. Byrthnoð is not only using his mental strength to control his own actions, but to control the mental acts and consequent actions of his men. This pattern of balance / imbalance between mental and physical acts runs through the poem like a backbone and puts the perplexing mind-term, *ofermod*, into perspective. Ultimately, however we interpret the value of the term, it refers to a mental act that is excessive.

The *Seafarer*-poet has manipulated the interaction between mental and physical acts in a very different way from that of the *Maldon* poet. In a structure that can be seen to have riddling qualities, the poet has used the distribution of mental and physical acts to indicate the nature of the speaker as non-physical. Marie Nelson identified a series of typical oppositions found in riddles, such as 'formerly and now' where the 'self-describing riddle subject' refers to a past life of isolation, and 'outside-inside', 'active-passive' and 'silent-speaking', all of which can be argued to be present in *The Seafarer*.[10] Although the riddling nature of *The Seafarer* may not be immediately obvious to us, it is to be supposed that the poet was relying upon a common understanding of the form, perhaps provided by the framework outlined by Nelson and by the presence of the noun *gied*. There was perhaps also an alertness to the interplay of the mental and the physical.

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[10] Marie Nelson, *Structures of Opposition in Old English Poems* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1989), p. 128. See above 4.5.

A modern audience will not hear that Romeo's first interchange with Juliet forms a sonnet, but Shakespeare's contemporaries would have recognised the form on hearing it and understood that the form carried meaning and indicated true love. In a similar way it seems quite likely that a contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience would have associated imagery of the sea with spiritual exile. They would have recognised that patterns of balance between mental and physical acts, references to mental control and the importance of will and steadfastness all point to a Christian concern for the welfare of the soul.

The solution of the riddle, if riddle it be, is that the poem, or at least the first part of it, is narrated by a soul. The speaker-as-soul might suggest a divide between the immortal soul embodied in the speaker and a mortal capacity to think and act according to desire represented by the man who is ignorant of the / his soul's suffering. This would suggest a theological framework based on the vernacular model, defined by Godden as one where mind, thoughts and emotions are separate from the soul and part of the transient body; this is usually associated with the poetry.[11] Such a framework is apparent in the *Soul and Body* poems where a miserable soul berates the rotting corpse of its body for earning it a lifetime of torment. However, a very similar account in prose is found in *Vercelli Homily IV* where the soul speaking in the homily even rejoices when the living man is attacked, 'when I saw the attack against you with spears and with sword and with staff, then I

[11] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 271. See 4.1 above.

rejoiced at that, because I desired that I would be out of you'.[12] There is none of this rather unchristian vindictiveness (at least on the part of the soul) apparent in *The Seafarer* and the soul has a sense of self that is more 'human' than its counterpart in the *Soul and Body* poems.

Godden argued that *The Seafarer* belonged to the vernacular tradition because he sees a dislocation between the self and the mind in the sylf cunnige passage (33-8).[13] However,he question as to whether a text has classical influence or follows vernacular tradition cannot be resolved so simply. We have seen that within the seafarer-soul's own self, comprising *hyge*, *mod*, *ferð*, *sefa* and *heorte*, there is a divide, with the eagerness of the *hyge*, *ferð* and *modsefa* encouraging a reluctant and sorrowing heart to join them on the ultimate journey, but this is comparable to ideas expressed by Ælfric. Indeed there are a number of similarities between Ælfric's ideas relating mind and self and those of *The Seafarer*.

Ælfric not only employed metaphors to convey his message, but decoded the metaphors that he saw as being hidden in the scriptures. The terms Ælfric uses to explore the relationship between the spiritual and bodily life, and spiritual and bodily acts are quite similar to those employed by the seafarer-soul in the poem and so an analysis of Ælfric's employment of these terms may help us to come to an understanding of the division of the mind in *The Seafarer*.

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[12] 'Homily IV', tr., by Francis M. Clough in Lewis E. Nicholson, ed., *The Vercelli Book Homilies* (Maryland and London: University Press of America, 1991), p.43.

[13] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 293.

We have seen how Ælfric expounds the story of Christ's healing of the blind man in his homily for Shrove Tuesday, *Dominica in Quinquagesima*,.[14] He brings in to his exposition the idea of the transitoriness of life, the idea that all men are in exile in the world and that this world is a prison; he considers the nature of body and soul and, like the *Seafarer*-poet, presents the workings of the inner self as being assailed by thoughts and anxieties.

The man's blindness is seen as the blindness of those who lack true faith. However, Ælfric conceives man as being able to be aware of that blindness, *swa hwa swa oncnæwð þa blindnysse his modes* (whoever is aware of the blindness of his mind).[15] This is a presentation of a multifaceted mind where one part of the mind may be aware of something that another part is not. This seems remarkably similar to the situation at the climactic point in *The Seafarer* when the *modsefa* and *hyge* are crying out to the heart to join them, the heart presumably being still attached to its earthly life. Although the terms are inverted, with Ælfric's version showing an ignorant *mod* and understanding *heorte*, the idea of the mind's / soul's divisibility, even opposition, is the same. The reference to an *inweard heorte*, one that Ælfric uses quite frequently, is further suggestive of a deeper interior, as if the inner self were layered.

The mind in Ælfric's example is fooled by the joys of the world, and the homilist warns, *ðeos woruld þeah ðe heo myrige hwiltidum geðuht*

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[14] See 5.2 above.

[15] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p.260.

*sy, nis heo hwæðre þe gelicre þære ecan worulde, þe is sum cweartern leohtum dæge* [16] (this world, though it may sometimes seem merry, is nevertheless no more like the eternal world than is any prison to the light day). Again we find this idea in *The Seafarer*, both in the ignorant pleasure of the man in town and in the final rejection of the beauties of spring. This moment finds a further echo in Ælfric's definition of this life and death as *ure deadlice lif, and ateorunge ure deadlicnysse*[17] (our dead-like / mortal life and the decay of our mortality) reminiscent of lines 66-7, *þis deade lif / læne on londe*.

Ælfric interprets the crowd in the story, those who try to silence the cries of the blind man lest he importune Christ, as *ure unlustas and leahtras þe us hremað, and ure heortan ofsittað, þæt we ne magon us swa geornlice gebiddan, swa we behofedon*[18] (our evil desires and depravities that call to us and oppress our hearts, so that we cannot pray as eagerly as we should). This may explain the nature of the cares that sighed around the seafarer-soul's heart in lines 11-12. Certainly the description of a part of the inner self, the heart, under attack is remarkably similar. Ælfric continues the image of inner conflict, *hit gelimpð gelomlice þonne se man wyle yfeles geswican, and his synna gebetan, and mid eallum mode to gode gecyrran, ðonne cumað þa ealdran leahtras þe he ær geworhte, and hi gedrefað his mood and willað gestillan his stemne, þæt he to gode ne clypige*[19] (it often

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[16] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p.259.

[17] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 260.

[18] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 260.

[19] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 260-1.

happens that when the man intends to desist [from] evil and make good his sins, and with all his mind turn towards God, then come the old depravities that he performed in the past, and they disturb his mind and want to silence his voice, so that he does not call to God). We have here again a sense of a divided mind, one that the right-thinking man will attempt to unite, implied in *mid eallum mode*. Ælfric describes a mind or spirit under attack from the sins of the body, just as the seafarer-soul describes the oppressive attack of thoughts, anxieties and temptations (symbolised by waves) on his inner and outer self.

Ælfric was not alone in seeing the mind as divided where one part of the mind could be ignorant of the thinking of another part. The Alfredian translation of *Gregory's Pastoral Care* deals with the question in detail as Benjamin Saltzman summarised, 'the mind was understood (at least by Alfred and his helpers) to have the ability to forget itself, to split from itself, and to conceal itself from itself'.[20]

Interestingly, Ælfric also seems to allocate violent physical action to the inner self and its invisible enemies, as we have seen, whilst describing the body as static and inactive. The man who believes in Christ, *sit he wið þone weig* (is sitting by the way), the man who will not pray for eternal light *sit þonne blind be ðam wege unbiddende* (is sitting blind by the way not praying), and the man who believes and prays *sitt be ðam wege biddende* (is sitting by the way praying).[21] The explanation for this physical stasis is given when he tells us that the

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[20] Benjamin A. Saltzman, 'The Mind, Perception and the Reflexivity of Forgetting in Alfred's *Pastoral Care*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 42 (2013), 149-182, p. 182.

[21] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 260.

things which a man understands and comprehends, *ne undergytt he na þa ðincg þurh his lichaman, ac þurh his saule*[22] (he does not understands those things through his body, but through his soul). As Ælfric goes on to define the soul as the life of the body and God as the life of the soul, he contemplates the inactivity of the body without the soul, *gewite seo sawul ut, ne mæig se muð clypian, þeah ðe he ginige; ne eage geseon, þeah þe hit open si; ne nan limn ne deð nan ðing, gif se lichoma bið sawulleas*[23] (if the soul departs, the mouth cannot call out, though it gape, nor the eye see, though it be open, nor any limb do anything if the body is soulless). Beyond the obvious similarity to *Seafarer* lines 94-96, there is a clearer explanation for the description of the body as static and the inner self as violently active, in that it reflects the fact that all physical activity ultimately requires a soul, even if that activity is performed against the will of the soul and in ignorance of the soul's needs.

When Ælfric refers to heaven as our home that *we to gesceapene wæron* (we were created for) it is clear that the self is, in the first instance, the spiritual self that is created for heaven.[24]

The similarities between this homily and *The Seafarer* are evident and numerous. They share a common view of the nature of mind and soul, the relation of soul to body and the nature of life on earth. They even share the technique of ascribing physical activity more to the inner

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[22] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 262.

[23] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 262.

[24] Ælfric, *CH* I, *Dominica in Quinquagesima,* p. 264.

self than the body. The commonality of ideas between the two suggests both a similarity of purpose and, at least in the case of the poet, a confidence that the audience will recognise the significance of the patterns and figures employed.

The homiletic advice in the second part of *The Seafarer* focussing on the inevitability of death, and the importance of moderation, the rejection of the worldly and the infinite superiority of the eternal, complements the narrative of the speaker-soul who sees the departure from mortal life towards the eternal as desirable, if not without anxiety as to how the soul is to be judged. It is clear that in his deployment of mental and physical acts the *Seafarer*-poet is drawing heavily on a Christian homiletic tradition.

The interaction of mental and physical acts in *Juliana* is again different in that it does not show a balance of mental and physical acts as *Maldon* does and it does not distribute mental and physical acts in the way that the *Seafarer*-poet does. The saint's refusal to admit any importance to her physical self, however, does not mean that she does not give importance to physical acts. Her mental adherence to God is beyond question, but she will not perform the physical act of sacrificing to false gods and her one moment of fear occurs when the devil tells her that God wishes her to do this. The devil demonstrates at length how his ability to influence the minds of good Christians and turn them away from God involves inciting them to perform sinful physical acts. As in *Maldon*, control of mental acts leads to a certain type of physical act. Juliana's fear of performing a sinful physical act implies that the two are

inextricably linked; even if the act is performed as a result of trickery, that is to say that the mind of the actor has not made a conscious decision to turn away from God, but believes him or herself to be performing God's will, the result is the same. *Genesis B* describes how a devil tricks Eve into believing that he is a messenger from God and that by eating the apple she is doing God's will.[25] Juliana has enough wisdom or mental strength to question the trick and as a result she succeeds where Eve failed, but the nature of the devil's tactic was the same in both cases. It is as if the performance of the act will have an influence on the steadfastness of the mind. We see in the brief instant where she feels the emotion of fear, that her soul is momentarily unfixed from its steadfast position. It is the devil who displays the greatest attention to the importance of the interaction of mental and physical acts in his lengthy confessions where his methods are made clear. Influence the mind, control it and incite it to perform wrong actions and the soul will be his. The description of the mind in physical terms, which we also saw in *The Seafarer,* is used here to such an extent that the mental or spiritual world seems more real and tangible than the physical one.

The opposition of movement and stasis is at once mental and physical and the poem is structured around references to this opposition. The devil tells Juliana that since the beginning of the world no one was *þus þriste* (511, as audacious) or *þæs modig* (513, as courageous) as she. The language describing the saint as a bold warrior is quite similar to the language used to describe the heroes of

[25] *Genesis B*, 578-99.

*Maldon*. Both parties must remain steadfast and refuse to move or be moved; they must control their minds to resist cowardice or temptation and to act correctly. The only acceptable movement in this figure is a movement towards God which is ultimately a movement towards death, like that of the seafarer-soul. It is not dissimilar to the movement of the *Maldon* soldiers after the passing of Byrhtnoð or Juliana's movement towards the place of execution, or indeed Christ, in *The Dream of the Rood,* mounting the cross.

All three texts are concerned with the journey of the soul after death. In *Maldon* it is a touching detail to reinforce our understanding of the pious nature of the English chief (173-80), in *Juliana* it is the poet's concern for the fate of his own soul (695-731) and in *The Seafarer* it is the central preoccupation.

*The Seafarer* perhaps has less in common with the other two poems studied. The poet has deployed the relationship between mental and physical acts in order to differentiate between the acts of a soul and the acts of physical bodies. However, it finds a great many echoes in the homilies and in the Alfredian translation of Boethius through the imagery of a moving and turbulent world as symbolic of this mortal life and a reminder of the eternal steadfastness of the heavenly. In this way, albeit indirectly, the imagery of movement and stasis is common to all three poems.

These areas of common ground do not indicate a common genre, but they do offer an indication of the prevalence of this way of thinking, suggesting that all three texts are influenced by the same kind of

thinking that underpins the sermons of Ælfric and Wulfstan, *The Old English Boethius* and *The Benedictine Rule*. This in itself questions the current assumptions about the vernacular and classical traditions. Old English poetry cannot be so easily divorced from the prose.

Taking each poem individually, the study of these patterns has shown a consistent deployment of the use of balance and excess in *The Battle of Maldon*, which must necessarily bear on our understanding of the term *ofermod.* Whilst the poem does not use any great amount of figurative language, the patterns suggest that the poem has a much stronger symbolic element than hitherto recognised. The deployment of mental and physical acts in *The Seafarer* draws our attention to the true nature of the speaker as a soul and not a whole man, thus clarifying the crux of *sylf cunnige*. He moves from his reflections on the past where he has been trapped in a body, tossed on the cold and turbulent sea of this mortal life, and looks forward to taking his own journey towards the stability of the heavenly kingdom. Finally, in Cynewulf's oppositions of motion and steadfastness and of emotion and wisdom we find an echo of the Anglo-Saxon homilies. In the diabolical attempts of the devil to influence the mind of good Christians tricking them into wrong action we find in *Juliana* that emotion, as motion, belongs to the devil.

Taking the poems as a whole we find a consistent approach to the relation between mental and physical actions which brings us a little closer to understanding the Anglo-Saxon world picture.

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