

# The Stanzas of the Old English Rune Poem

Volume 1  
of  
The OERP Book  
Second Edition

By Gary Stanfield, 2012

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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The study of rune lore is, among other things, a study of wisdom poetry and religious mysteries, not merely a study of an ancient alphabet. To refuse to consider stanzas of the *Old English Rune Poem* as having metaphorical meanings is to insist that it is inherently superficial. To refuse to consider that the people of the Dark Ages might have been thoughtful and philosophical enough to give us a work of art with profound multiple meanings is to condemn the poem to a level of artistic ordinariness. This is your invitation to consider otherwise.

A major conclusion of this study is that the *Old English Rune Poem* presents us with a complex layering of multiple meanings. At its more abstract levels, the poem is a discussion of at least one religion, although it just barely mentions religious topics at the explicit level.

J. R. Hall observed some time ago (1977) that whoever composed this poem “manages to suggest multiple aspects of the created world through wordplay and the use of comparison and contrast”. This is definitely true, but no one tried to bring all that out in print before the first edition of this book was published at the end of the Twentieth Century.

But there is a fundamental difference between the way Hall sees this piece of art and the view taken in this book. He emphasized “the realities that the rune-names designate in shifting perspective”. As you will see, the rune names are not so important.

This book has numerous appendices because of the variety in the intended audience. Some readers will benefit from going directly to appendices after reading this introduction. Philologists are familiar with ancient sources, but many religious reconstructionists would be well served to start with Appendix

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<sup>1</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1996b).

## Stanzas of the OERP, Introduction

A, on editing an ancient document for use. Many non-philologist students of this poem will benefit even more from Appendix H (on prosody), since the analysis of the stanzas is quite technical. Radical scholarship is common in academe, but reconstructionists and those simply curious about the methods and analysis might want to read Appendix B (on methods used in this study).

The most important appendix is probably Appendix F. Religious mystery seems to be foreign ground to many students of rune poetry, especially in academic philology. Therefore Appendix F defines that kind of mystery and discusses mysticism. Also, Appendix F briefly describes how people could use the stanzas of the OERP to enhance wisdom or enlightenment, or simply to communicate with each other without regard to mysticism.

Realizing how it might have been used is part of understanding the poem. This is a wisdom and mystery poem. In addition to addressing questions we can pose and answer in words, the *Old English Rune Poem* allows meditations that give us information that we usually cannot adequately describe in words.

### ***The OERP as Ancient Culture***

The study of rune poems shows clues to the philosophies of ancient Pagan Teutonic cultures. This particular poem presents a philosophy of religion, and therefore touches on some issues that are universal to all religions. The present author has been surprised that the stanzas at all levels of meaning are not very culture-bound.

Some students of this poem claim that they see it as Christian or as bowdlerized religion. There may have been some influence of Christianity upon Teutonic religion, at least in the handling of religious universals. This study shows that the poet(s) who made this particular work of art were aware of other religions, but this poem definitely expresses Pagan culture, albeit sophisticated Pagan culture or possibly a syncretized form of polytheism.

## ***Modernity***

The apparent modernity of this poem's philosophy seems incongruous with its cultural sources.

Teutonic Polytheism is not a medieval religion. It has its origins in pre-medieval times and it was never adjusted from tribal to feudal culture. Instead it was superseded and suppressed by syncretic Christianity. This helps explain why this religion is not so alien from a modern cultural perspective, for it is less authoritarian than some would expect.

Also, this poem does not present any part of the superstitions or magical thinking that was common in pre-Medieval or Early Medieval Ages. Modern people interested in soul travel, divination, or magic may well find the *OERP* as here analyzed useful. But the poem per se seems -- at least from the present perspective -- to not address those topics.

But this poem does not necessarily represent every Anglo-Saxon's version of polytheist or mixed religion from the Early Middle Ages.

## ***Religion and Progressive Mysticism***

Following Buddhist scholar Ken Wilbur and various anthropologists, let us consider that every religion has two aspects. Each has an exoteric set of functions and an esoteric set (Evans-Pritchard, 1956; Geertz, 1966; Malinowski, 1926; Malinowski 1956: Chapters 7 and 8; Radcliffe-Brown, 1953; Stanner, 1962; Wolf, 1958; Wilbur, 2001).

One aspect (or group of aspects) includes a broad range of societal and individual-level functions. Religion makes the person more comfortable by providing certain services. It provides social cohesion, partly through physical symbols, mass liturgy, and the appearance of consensus. It provides explanations (mythic beliefs) that seem to say that everything is alright. It authorizes various governmental arrangements. It provides means of reducing

## Stanzas of the OERP, Introduction

tension: ceremonial magic, egoic petitioning prayers, ritual formulas, and amulets. In addition, the myths and religious doctrine can help resolve or “explain away” interpersonal or inter-community conflicts. This aspect of religion tends to be conservative on a personal and group level. But it can also authorize major social changes. It normally tries to make people behave with enlightenment and compassion. It can provide fellowship and responsible good fun. *The Old English Rune Poem* warns against excessive emphasis on this aspect of religion but acknowledges its great value.

I call the other aspect progressive mysticism. Progressive mysticism uses meditations upon religious (or “non-empirical”) mysteries to achieve radical personal transformation. This transformation is not achieved by making a sudden transition from the exoteric to a mystical, paradisaical state of being. The transformation is achieved by making a transition to becoming ever more enlightened. The transformation is to a state of change.

To the progressive mystic, the ultimate struggle is for improvements in ethical judgment, rationality, and self-control. The sidebar, “The Principle of Divinity” describes a characterological goal of progressive mysticism, although the Platonic concept of divinity presented in the sermon I quote is too simple to describe a whole collection of deities and other spiritual beings or an all-powerful mono-god. Later in the analysis, I indicate a distinction between “deity” and (“divineness”).

### **The Principle of Divinity**

“Whenever we invigorate the understanding by honestly and resolutely seeking truth, and by withstanding whatever might warp the judgment; whenever we invigorate the conscience by following it in opposition to the passions; whenever we receive a blessing gratefully, bear a trial patiently, or encounter peril or scorn with... courage; whenever we perform a disinterested deed ... whenever we war against a habit or desire which is strengthening itself against our higher principles; whenever we think, speak, or act with moral energy and resolute devotion to duty ... then the divinity is growing within us.... True religion thus blends itself with common life.”  
From the sermon *Likeness to God*, 1828 (Channing, 1898).

## Stanzas of the OERP, Introduction

The OERP is ambiguous enough to allow the student to bring out some of that which is deep within and to find personal directions. Thus, study of runic lore can provide similar benefits as would study under a Zen master or treatment in some types of modern talk therapies or study of Rumi poetry (Barks, et al, 2004; Kopp, 1972: 3-10). (Yet this particular body of lore might tend to seem less puzzling to an Occidental than would Oriental structures for seeking.)

Osborn and Longland (1982: 79) indicate how metaphors we can find in the focal poem relate to progressive mysticism. They infer that in the *OERP* the terms for rich and noble indirectly refer to the “greater man” from the I Ching, the one who is “actively engaged in the struggle towards self-consciousness” and control. Likewise, the terms for poor and outcast persons refer to individuals who do not struggle to exert enlightened control, or who may have given up and resigned themselves to fate. They are referring to a distinction in characterological wealth.

### ***Comparison to Other Ancient Rune Poems***

Four ancient rune poems have come down to us. *The Old English Rune Poem* probably dates from around 750-950. The other three poems are in Old Norse and Old High German. *The Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme* dates from the 1200's. It is based on a now-lost manuscript that was preserved in the Copenhagen University Library. *The Old Icelandic Rune Poem* dates from the 1400's and is based on four manuscripts still preserved in another Danish library. In addition, there is the “Abecedarium Nordmanicum” which dates from the early 800's and has but a single verse. It seems to have been written by a Christian cleric to describe Norse religion, and it is too primitive for us to get much out of it at present. (See Dickins, 1915; Osborn and Longland, 1982: 17, 18; Page, 1998; Thorsson, 1987: 93-105; 1993:15-27).

The Old Norse poems reflect a different system of mysteries than does the *OERP*, and the Old Norse poems seem more concerned with conduct of everyday life and less with conduct of religion. This point is reinforced by an

## Stanzas of the OERP, Introduction

addendum to Chapter 1, where the initial verses of each of three poems -- the *OERP* and the two Old Norse poems -- are compared. The chain of ownership of the Old Norse and Old English poems can be traced, but the trail does not go back far enough to indicate whether any of them was ever in a monastery.

### *Interpreting The OERP*

Good translation necessarily involves interpretation. The work of interpretation constitutes most of this book, and advances in thorough interpretation of the *OERP* are the main contribution of this study.

Interpreting this poetry outside of its native cultural context has some difficulties. These difficulties relate both to form (grammar, spelling, and phraseology) and content (what the words mean). They are addressed in the substantive chapters as they are encountered.

The interpretation methods used in this study involve attempts at perfect translations, examining key words for clues, and looking for complex organizations of meanings. In several chapters non-verbal aspects are also discussed, because they impact our impression of the words, and because the nonverbal communications are part of the originally intended message. The rune names are clues of no greater importance than other nouns in the poem.

#### ***“Perfect” Translations***

Thoroughness of translation is one of the important distinctions between this study and those that have provided bases from which to start. The translations of individual stanzas offered here are very thorough because interpretations are very thorough and vice versa.

In each chapter, the first translation into poetic form (Translation B) is an attempt at a rendition that presents all of the original content, verbal and non-verbal, by reproducing the objective structure of the original. The objective standards for this “perfection” are described in Appendix B, on methods.

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Briefly, the standards were to match rhythm, alliterative pattern, and word-sense.

The present author was surprised at the degree of success attained. Most people think it is impossible to translate poetry without losing or adding something. But most of the “perfect” translations are close enough to perfect, even by more exacting standards than the relatively crude objectives used for Translations B’s “perfection”. Appendix I compares the metrical structure of the original and the Translations B in detail.

Making a close enough study to “perfectly” translate inherently brings a more profound understanding. This is because one is self-compelled to make decisions one can avoid if one is satisfied with blank verse or with prose that is simply laid out on the page as if it were poetry. (This latter is my regret about Bark et al’s 2004 translation of Rumi poetry: I cannot hear poetry in the translations, and I am sure there is much I am missing.)

A modernized-meter translation is also provided in each chapter. Usually the modernized translations are redundant.

In a few instances, the modernized translation is a better representation of the original intent than is the strict mimicry of the original prosodic structure. Of course, translating half-line by half-line and mimicking the original structure can sometimes hinder communicating the intent behind the original. Sometimes a freer translation in which one tries to express the ideas and emotions of the original to a modern audience in a modern way can be relatively efficient, especially where there is difficulty fully translating the ambiguity of a word with a one-word equivalent. (But this turned out rarely to have been a problem.)

However, there is a more important advantage of making a modernized-meter translation. Comparing the two styles of translation can be an excellent way to investigate the original intent. This is demonstrated in some of the substantive chapters.

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Almost all the discussions of non-verbal communication consist of explaining how the “perfect” translations or the modern-meter translations are not so perfect after all. At least this criticism helps us understand the original more thoroughly. The problem with discussing the nonverbal aspect of each stanza is that the nonverbal content mostly addresses matters best addressed in rhythm or by other nonverbal means.

### ***Chief Stave Analysis***

Discussion in the substantive chapters makes much of “chief stave analysis”. This is an examination of the main word in each line of each strophe.

A stave is actually a letter. In traditional ancient Germanic poetry, one of the words in the second half of a line typically sets the alliterating letter for the whole line. Strictly speaking, that letter is the chief stave.

But in interpreting the poetry, I almost never need to talk about individual letters; I need to talk about words. And the most important word in each line prosodically is the one that contains the chief stave.

Hence, in this book “chief stave” is a convenient alternative to the more correct but ponderous “chief-stave-including word”. The “chief stave” is therefore metrically the principle word in each line.

So the “chief staves” are analyzed to see what they hint at. This only works with stanzaic poetry, but it was helpful with the *Old English Rune Poem*.

### ***Multiple, Layered Interpretations (“Stanzas”)***

Each stanza has an intricate structure which requires some effort to find. That is, each original stanza has a three-layer tree of interpretations. This includes at least one interpretation of explicit meaning, and the structure includes trunks and branches of implicit meanings based on the explicit interpretation or interpretations.

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I call each of the explicit and implicit messages or interpretations a “stanza” for linguistic convenience. No separate poetry will be seen for such “stanzas”, except for insertion of a piece in the parsing of “Lagu”, playfully put in but seriously meant. (From alliterative poetry I could not relent; it’s peppered into the prose; but lightly so, the less to distract.)

The first level of meaning is called “explicit” for obvious reasons. Of course, each original set of words has at least one explicit interpretation, but in a few cases you will see more than one explicit-level interpretation based on nuances present in a stanza. First-level stanzas satisfy the curiosity of people who are not ready for profound study of religious lore. This level satisfies the least curious that they have understood the poem, usually without fully perceiving nuances that are evident at the explicit level.

At the second level at least some of the terms and topics of the physical stanza are metaphors. Second-level implicit stanzas are likely to satisfy the unguided, who will infer that they have found the deeper meaning of the poem if they find one satisfying meaning at the metaphorical level. Usually, uncoached people opine that a strophe cannot possibly have alternative, and certainly not contradictory, valid metaphorical meanings.

Third-level stanzas are inferred from first- and second-level stanzas and/or other third-level stanzas. These are called “derived stanzas” because they are messages or interpretations that are inferred from other stanzas.

How do we know that this inferred structure was intended? The validity of the inference is based on how well it explains a puzzle that is frequently noticed. Someone or some persons intelligent enough to compose at the observed level of technical skill gave us some apparently thoroughly quotidian if not boringly obvious content. Surely, it seems, that not so shallow could have been the content; and a reason to write can be found.

In other words, we know the author or authors surely could not have been as uncreative and stupid as they tried to look.

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We can infer some rationale for this structure. One function of this structure is to stop people who are not ready to go inside. As mentioned above, the less prepared will likely go away happy instead of overwhelming esoteric seekers with numbers of the less mature. The poem was also not politically correct, so the complex structure of meanings helps preserve the poem -- and perhaps the poet -- from physical destruction. Also, some of the messages are difficult to understand profoundly if stated baldly. Some things are best arrived at indirectly. And finally, this layering also allows the poem to be densely packed with meaning. If you have to put all your eggs in one basket, pack in as many as you can.

This kind of ambiguity and richness of implied meanings is a mark of high art.

### ***Punctuation***

The apparently sloppy use of punctuation was examined for clues. It is no secret that at least some scribes of the Dark Ages were aware of translation issues and of changes in languages over long periods of time. They did a lot of copying manuscripts in foreign languages and from earlier phases of their own languages.

Prior to deciding to attempt “perfect” translations, I tried translation by punctuation units, just as I also tried translating by sentences and half-lines.

Some of the apparent errors in punctuation did give useful clues to units of meaning, that is to how half-lines were grouped into meaningful clauses not apparent from grammar. Some of the punctuation errors seem to be merely random mistakes. You can tell how well this worked out by how infrequently these clues are mentioned.

### ***Rune Names and Stave Shapes***

In this book, the runic letters have been omitted from the chapters on the stanzas because they are of no importance in interpreting the stanzas per se.

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Likewise, the chapter titles do not include the rune names, because those names make poor titles for the chapters. Often, they are misleading if considered by themselves. In a few instances we are not sure what the rune name denotes, and that is not a significant obstacle to interpreting the stanza in question.

The present author had difficulty coming up with short clauses as titles to summarize all the chapters. Rune names even if not misleading would have certainly been too simple.

### *Voicing the Stanzas*

Performance of poetry as art is definitely related to meaning. Consider the familiar song *This Ole House*, which can be a sorrowful ballad or ecstatically happy rock and roll piece. These radically different impacts simply depend on how the song is performed ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This\\_Ole\\_House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Ole_House)).

There are two points to be discussed in this section regarding how the stanzas were performed. (1) Were the stanzas performed at a steady pace all the way through? (2) Was the poem intended to be performed as a whole or as individual stanzas?

(1) Performed art must have enough variety to hold an audience's attention, and help convey meaning. The poem was definitely not intended to be performed straight through at a steady volume and timber and with the same time taken for each sub-subdivision of each line. Consider analogies: no symphony, dance concert, or play would be performed straight through at a single pace, volume and sound. Nor was it intended that for this poem some equal-time-consuming measures would be performed with faster or slower speech depending on how many syllables were in each. This is also mentioned in the appendix on prosody.

Moreover -- and this is important -- the last verse in almost every strophe is more effective if the performer significantly alters the use of his or her voice in the last half-line. That is, they almost all can benefit from a mixture of decrease in pitch, volume, and/or pace in the last verse -- with the best mix of decrease

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varying slightly from one stanza to another. Likewise, all the four-line stanzas tend to benefit from some combination of a drop in pitch, volume, or pace in the last whole line or half-line.

This modulation depends on the intent behind each stanza. Sometimes, the speaker ends a strophe with an expression of satisfaction, sometimes irony, sometimes relief. Some stanzas end with a smile in the voice and on the face, and some end “deadpan”.

The skeptical reader should read a stanza aloud and feel the difference in emotional evocation. Stanza 13, 20, or 21 would be good candidate for the trial because each of those chapters includes some discussion of the consequences of correct performance.

This is one of the reasons that the present author does not accept the isochronic theory -- that practically all of the half-lines in Old English poetry were supposed to take the same length of time to perform. That would have been too limiting a tradition and would have greatly reduced the experience of both audiences and performers.

(However, it is the case that in Stanza number 20, rigid isochronic recitation helps one hear irony through the camouflage.)

**(2)** Now for the second question regarding performance. Because the poem does not have a story line or some other clearly-evident theme to hold the audience' interest, it was surely not intended to be performed all at once. Instead, it was intended to be performed in individual stanzas or in short groups of stanzas selected for a specific purpose. This is briefly discussed -- and demonstrated -- in Appendix F.

## ***The OERP and Reconstructionist Religion***

Any well-developed religion has a wisdom tradition. True religious lore cannot consist exclusively of tall tales with no moral to the stories.

Therefore, to reconstruct an ancient religion, it is necessary to find its wisdom tradition. For Teutonic polytheistic religion, most of the surviving wisdom tradition is in three rune poems. Meaning can also be found in the myths, but they are not as densely-packed as the rune poems. And as the myths are typically used, at least some of them seem to have even less meaning than the stories parents read to small children at bed-time.

But the rune poems are mostly neglected, even though they constitute "the oldest systematic body of lore attached to the staves" (Thorsson, 1987: 93; Thorsson, 1988: 17).

Instead, only the "imaginative runologists" (as Page calls them) use rune lore, and then only for magic or divination. Typically, their ideas of rune lore are based primarily on the stave shapes and their names, plus the idea that there is only one poetic-metaphorical meaning per rune name. (Yes, using three or four ancient poems, and those poems reflecting two or three distinct systems, reconstructionists commonly come up with but a single symbolic statement per rune.) And they practically never find any contrasts to contemplate

Just one "imaginative" study takes the *Old English Rune Poem* seriously as religious or thaumatological art (Albertsson, 2011: 137-140). But even that author is affected by the normal tendency of his colleagues to get distracted from the poetry. For example, in the chapter on the strophe "Ís", that author has 10 paragraphs. Of these: 2 analyze the stanza, 3 discuss ice and heat, 1 draws inferences from the shape of the letter, and 4 discuss divination and operational magic.

Reconstructionist religious people need to have available profound analyses of ancient runic poetry.

## ***Radical Study***

This study represents a radical approach. “Radical” means “going to the roots”. The radical scholar questions “everything” in hopes of finding something new and valueable. For example, the radical scholar does not assume that the rune “Feoh” is about cattle or money, merely because the name of the rune stave is “cash” or because it is etymologically related to another word for “cattle” or “cow”. The radical scholar asks “is this strophe really about what everyone says it is about?”

## ***Specialized Terminology / Glossary***

Unfortunately, the present author did not find a way to avoid using certain terms in a specialized way in this book. The alternative would have been neologisms. The terms are mentioned above but repeated here for convenient reference if needed.

“Chief stave” denotes the most important word in a line based on prosodic considerations. It practically never refers to a letter, except in discussions of this book’s jargon .

“Explicit stanza” denotes an interpretation based directly on a translation of a strophe. In this book, the term “explicit stanza” never refers to a translation. An “explicit stanza” is always an interpretation expressed in prose.

“Implicit stanza” refers to a metaphorical interpretation of a strophe or to an interpretation derived from one or more interpretations. The expression of an “implicit stanza” is never exclusively in poetry.

## FIRST STANZA: THE SUPERSOUL CALLS<sup>2</sup>

Feoh byþ frófur; · fira ġhwylcum;  
Sceal ðéah manna ġhwylc; · miclun hyt dælan;  
Gif hé wile; for drihtne · dómes hléotan

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration:*

{Material wealth, wealth; money; cattle} is {comfort, solace}

(To) {person, living person} {each, everyone, all, whoever}

Must {though, however} (of) persons each (one)

{In great quantities, greatly, lavishly} it {deal out, share, distribute, dispense,  
bestow}

If he wants; {before, in front of} (the, a) {lord, Lord}

(of) judgement {to take a chance; “roll the dice”}

#### *(B)*

Cash does comfort • a creature that’s human.

Must each person though • plentifully give it

If one does want a judges’ • judgment to chance.

---

<sup>2</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1996c).

**(C)**

Money is a comforting thing for anyone. However, each of us must hand it out abundantly if he or she wishes to take a chance on lordly judgment.

**(D) Modernized Meter**

Cash does comfort any creature that's human.  
But each person must plentifully give it  
If wanting a judges' judgment to chance.

## *Issues in Translation*

***Fira***

To capture the subtle nuance of “fira”, in Translation B I rendered this word as “human creature” and put “creature” in the alliteration as the chief stave-defining word in the first line.

This word is commonly translated as “man”. However, if we examine the use of *fira* in various contexts, we can see that it never explicitly refers to male persons. It seems to indicate an adult in singular and all adults in plural. For example, “fira” occurs twice in the *OERP* and does not refer to specifically male activities or conditions, although it does imply adulthood.

Examining the examples shown by Bosworth and Toller (1898, 1921), we see that “fira” is never used in a way that implies enlightenment. Instead, it seems to refer to the lower-animal, or less divine, aspect of mankind. Detailed consideration of a couple of their examples might help make the case. In lines 534-536 of *The Phoenix*, we find “...swá biþ anra gehwylc / flæsce bifongen fira cynnes / ænlic and edgeong...”. In Modern English this would be “...so are every one of the flesh-wrapped kin of human creatures splendid and becoming young...” The emphasis on the physical aspect of humankind is obvious. In *Cædmon's Hymn*, we find “Hé ærest sceóp eorðan bearnum / heofon tó hrófe — Hálíg Scyppend. / Þá middangeard monncynnes Weard, éce Drihten, æfter teode firum foldan....” This says: “He first created heaven as a roof for earthly people,

did the Holy Creator. Then the Guardian of Middle-Earth mankind — Arch Lord — afterward brought forth human creatures from soil.” Here again, we see an emphasis on physical conditions of human life and no mention of consciousness on the part of mankind. (See Gollancz, 1895: 232; Mitchell and Robinson, 1994: 222).

This shows also in other stanzas of this poem. For example in “Asc”, the firas attack the ash-tree. But in “Dæg” it is “mannum” who receive light (enlightenment). Later in this chapter, we see that in “Feoh”, “fira” is used when the stanza is referring to a very juvenile attitude and “mann” is used when the stanza refers to a more socially aware attitude.

### ***Hé***

The *Old English Rune Poem* is not politically correct in American culture of the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First centuries. The messages of the poem are not strictly male-oriented, but the nouns and pronouns are. Consider that prior to 1970 modern English speakers often spoke or wrote “he” to indicate an individual who might be of either gender. Likewise, they also sometimes used “she” in the same way.

Other than to preserve the political incorrectness of the original, it might see that line 3 could have been “if one wants a judges’ • judgment to chance”. But the problem with that version is that “one” is not a pronoun referring back to “each person” in verse 2a. Likewise, to render verse 2a in the politically incorrect “but must men every” engenders metrical issues.

### ***Dómes Hléotan***

The phrase “dómes hléotan” has provided challenges to philologists, for it is an idiom, a verbal expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from its elements. Moreover, it is not translatable directly into a simple Modern English term. It means “to take chances on a determination by another party”. It is literally “determination’s lots to cast”.

My translation of the “dómes hléotan” is based on Bradley’s (1982: 273) translation of the same phrase in another poem: to take one’s chance on judgment. This interpretation is consistent with all known uses of the focal expression. Details follow.

There are two basic divisions of meaning for dóm: (1) informed / expert opinion, favorable opinion, or competent opinion; and (2) exercise of control. In the first sense, dóm denotes: glory, praise; interpretation, advice; good sense. In the second sense, it denotes: juridical decree, judgment, binding decision, justice; or jurisdiction. Dóm is related to the verb dómian, meaning “to glorify”. It is also related to sé dómere, denoting a male judge. (Bessinger, 1960; Bosworth and Toller, 1989; 1921; Hall, 1960).

By itself hléotan either (A) refers to obtaining or failing to obtain something through means beyond the focal person’s direct control, or (B) it refers directly to casting lots. For example Bosworth and Toller show an example of obtaining something at another person’s will: getting a combat wound. Another example is Yahweh disallowing the Israelites to have landed possessions during part of their history. Hall simply defines this verb as denoting “to cast lots” or “obtain by casting lots”. (See Bessinger, 1960; Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Cameron et al, 1986; Hall, 1960).

If we simply combine separate meanings of dómes and hleotan, no permutation of those separate meanings makes sense of the phrase in question. However, the two words do carry the related idea of one’s outcome depending on another person’s discretion.

“Dómes hléotan” appears in the surviving Old English literature only three times. One instance is in a poem about Saint Guthlac (*Guthlac B*), and the other is in a list of months and Christian holy days (*The Menologium*). In both instances, the references are to saints having gone to heaven and being now with Yaweh. This explains why some translators like “gain glory”, which is modern English jargon for going to heaven. However, in the contexts of both poems, we could easily say that the saints took their chances on Yaweh’s judicial ruling.

This is S. A. J. Bradley's (1982: 273) interpretation, shown in his translation of *Guthlac B*.

However, elsewhere the expression has been interpreted variously, and the reader can check other sources for himself or herself. Some interpreters render "hleotan" as "to gain", but this omits the element of chance. These tend to be earlier and more secular interpreters. (Cameron et al, 1986; Dickens, 1915; Grienberger, 1921; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Page, 1973; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1972). The phrase is sometimes translated as "casting lots of judgment", which resembles transliteration. This interpretation is made in more recent works, and by students with a more religious or divinatory interest in the *OERP* (Thorsson, 1987; Osborn and Longland, 1982; E. Wódening, 2002a; S. Wódening, 1996a). Their interpretation -- which implies use of slips of wood in a divination exercise -- is not consistent with the ancient uses of the idiom in question.

In the 1996 edition of this chapter, I opined that this first strophe of the *Old English Rune Poem* mentioned divination performed by a lord for one of his subjects (1996c). That was incorrect.

The original presents a nonverbal clue. The medieval editor(s) left us an apparent punctuation error – shown in the edition for this chapter by a semicolon that divides verse 3a. (This is a dot in the original). The punctuation irregularity tells us that "to take chances on judgment" per se (verse 3b) is not intended as a unit of meaning. Instead, the unit of meaning includes "for drihtne". The hint emphasizes that the determination is by one who has some kind of political or moral authority and whose determination cannot be known in advance.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is not an exact match to the original's patterns of rhythm, alliteration, and word-sense. Both are subtle variances from the original.

In the first line, there are some minor imperfections. The alliteration is an excellent to the original. The rhythm deviates trivially from the original by

having anacrusis at the beginning of the “off” verse. But the translation makes less emphasis on the idea that *every* “fira” is comforted by money, and the translation does not match the musical “every” at the end of the line. Instead, most of the line is taken up with the translation of “fira”. So there is a trivial re-arrangement of the ideas that the original presented in line 1.

In the second line, after shuffling around the words for “must” and “each”, an exact match was achieved for alliteration and rhythm. And the alteration in the pattern of word-sense is trivial with regard to both the verbal and non-verbal messages of the stanza.

The issue with line 3 is that the translation uses a type C verse to translate a type A original. The type C verse has a more dramatic effect than does A, so the non-verbal aspect of the original is not translated efficiently. There is also more emphasis verbally on taking one’s chances in the translation than in the original.

Translation C shows what can result from translating this strophe into prose. Read Translations B and C aloud for best comparison. On paper, they appear to say the same thing, but with C being the more direct statement. But aloud, C leaves something out.

The modernized meter translation (D) is actually a failed attempt at a “perfect” translation -- this explains the alliteration match to the original. The basically dactylic rhythm achieves about the same effect as the original’s traditional verse structure. In the modernized meter translation, the stress on “chance” in the last line makes up for the pause, slow-down in pace, and softer voice is used to dramatize the idea of taking chances in the original.

## *Discussion*

This is the most difficult of the OERP’s stanzas to penetrate. It is as if the author(s) intended to stop us at the door unless we are very determined and well prepared to go on. If you are studying this poem without a guide, it is easier to

start near the middle. But if you have a coach to ask leading questions and give a few hints, the first verse is the place to begin.

This strophe introduces a major theme of this poem: the need for people to be ever more conscious, rational, responsible, and self-controlled. The first stanza shows other characteristics that we find elsewhere in the poem. The most prominent characteristic is a focus on a bipolarity, contradiction, or paradox. The second is illusory political correctness in the culture of England in the 900's. The apparent political correctness functions to indirectly teach by stimulating the student's attitude, in addition to its function to protect the lore.

“Feoh” is not about money. The chief-stave-defining word in the first line is more a clue to the subject matter of the stanza than is the name of the rune. That is because in this context “fira” refers to the need to increase one's level of enlightenment.

At the lowest level of abstraction, the stanza appears to be about generosity. However, the implicit stanza “Misers Risk Going to Hell” is an illusion. “Feoh” looks bowdlerized to many scholars. But a subtle use of ambiguity helps protect the lore of the poem from exoteric Christians and syncretists who might censor or simply misunderstand it. This veneer is pretty thin; the poem could be taken to mention Yahweh at most three times (in its first, twelfth, and twentieth stanzas), and these mentions are not clearly consistent with Christian dogma nor are they necessarily all favorable.

Getting past the illusion, “The Moral Paradox of Possession” reminds us of a lesson most of us learned as small children: if you want to fit into normal human life well, you cannot afford to be too naively selfish. This is one of the more significant mysteries of human life (see also Appendix F). Also at the lowest level is “Indirect Exchange”, which reminds us that (in enlightened interaction) we are sometimes handing things over without expectation of a direct return.

At the second level of abstraction, “Toward-Other Orientation” presents a more general principle than those found at the lowest level. Also at this level, “Seek

For Enlightenment” beckons those who are ready to profit from esoteric study of this lore.

At the third level “Feoh” tells us that “Esoteric Religion Starts from Within but Is Manifested Without”. Also at this level, “Responsibility for Mankind” discusses higher motivation.

### ***Misers Risk Going to Hell***

At the most superficial level, “Feoh” seems to imply that chronically stingy people are liable to offend Yahweh. Therefore, it is easy for post-Conversion students of the *OERP* to see “Misers Risk Going to Hell” as the meaning of “Feoh”. It would certainly seem fitting if somewhere this poem would refer to the (very noble) Christian principle of charity or perhaps to the similar virtue of generosity that was emphasized by Pagan Teutonic cultures.

A clue that this is not a Christian-charity stanza is the lack of mention of the indigent or unfortunate (who are mentioned in subsequent strophes of this poem). Also, there is no mention of an altruistic or loving motivation, which is part of all Abrahamic-religion doctrine on charity.

Also, “Feoh” does not refer to Teutonic Pagan generosity at this level of meaning. For example, it does not mention wayfarers nor kin, who are mentioned elsewhere in this poem and who we would expect to be major objects of Pagan generosity.

There is a didactic reason for the presence of a faux message at the outermost level of the first stanza. If one is clever, subtle, and skeptical enough to see that there is an illusion at the gate,

#### ***The Odian Method***

Being ready for esoteric runic studies means being ready to profit by the Odian runic method. The Odian method is outlined in *Havamál*, stanzas 138-141. Oðin undergoes a traumatic period of discovery followed by formal instruction, and after that he is able to progress on his own as it were. “Word after word for me sought for word; deed after deed for me sought for deed” (my translation from the edition by Neckel, 1936a). In this poem, one message leads to another if you are ready for the travel. This sidebar is mentioned in discussion of the illusory implicit stanza, “Misers Risk Going to Hell”.

then perhaps that person is ready to rise above night's darkneses. If so, then puzzling out one of the hidden meanings can stimulate further questing. Thus, in the process of realizing that "Misers Risk Going to Hell" is an illusion, you get a nonverbal clue to how an esoteric Teutonic Pagan would study the rest of the poem. (See also the sidebar, "The Oidian Method".)

Hence, this is a phantom or deceptive implicit stanza. It stands guard at the apparent front entrance to the poem to help any person who possesses or performs this poem — and the poem itself — survive to ripe old age. This illusory implicit stanza also protects the unready hearer or reader.

There is a sense in which "Feoh" does tell us that chronically stingy people offend The Lord, and in that sense it is Christian, Taoist, Hindu, Teutonic Pagan, etc. However, our ability to perceive this message depends on our understanding of "The Lord", and that topic is taken up in later in this chapter.

If this stanza is not focused on generosity, then what is it talking about? It is certainly not saying that you have to spend money to enjoy goods and services. So just why is it necessary to hand off of lots of this cash? As you answer those questions, you can see that a common religious theme is addressed: the moral paradox of possession.

### ***The Moral Paradox of Possession***

"The Paradox of Possession" is concerned with willingness to let go of money. As mentioned in the section on the illusory implicit stanza "Misers Risk Going to Hell", this is not about charity. It is true that during a lifetime you have to circulate money to live well materially. But the "Paradox of Possession" is not specifically about spending nor investing. This willingness to let go of money lies behind generous acts, spending and investing. Mostly, though, this implicit stanza is looks like something out of Objectivist philosophy.

What has letting go of money have to do with taking chances on a lord's determination? You have to be effective in the community — by action or inaction — to get the lord's attention. One way or another, you have to be part

of the social give and take. If you just take but never give, you will not prosper as will the others, and you will not appear to be a constructive neighbor. If you need to get any kind of determination from a lord, you might not like your chances, because the lord might have no more use for you than do your neighbors. You could secede from any human community and live as a free hermit or as a wild man, but doing so would be considered highly self-sacrificial. People need community, and in medieval society that means they usually (indirectly) need lords (Block, 1961a, 1961b).

“Feoh” does not explicitly mention the lord as loaf-giver, although the lord in ancient Teutonic societies was expected to also be a give-and-take member of the economy. This omission of the loaf-giver idea is because at higher levels of abstraction, the lord is a surreal representation. If the lord in question were described as someone who is supposed to be generous, a metaphor would be lost. (Our modern English “lord” descends from “hlaford”, which in turn is a contraction of “hláf-weard”, or bread-ward. “Lady” descended from “hláf-dige”, or bread-maid.)

### ***Indirect Exchange***

Another paradox is that you have to deal out money not necessarily to a source from which you desire favor. You have to distribute cash plentifully, but not to any named recipients. A cogent basis of this inference is that *dælan* always denotes dealing to more than one person. (See the examples provided by Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921). If *dælan* denotes dealing to more than one person, but the source of judgment is singular, then the recipients are necessarily not the one from whom one seeks reward.

### ***Toward-Other Orientation***

Now we have arrived at the third level of meaning in “Feoh”. This interpretation is supported by any the first-level implicit stanzas and by “Indirect Exchange”.

In “Toward-Other Orientation”, the *drihten* is a metaphor for a conscience that originates in explicit social rules. That conscience arises in early childhood. This

aspect of consciousness can be experienced indirectly, but it is never perceived as a whole and clear image. Unlike development of primitive conscience, a person must be self-motivated to come to perceive this. Instruction from more enlightened persons is helpful, but the motivation comes from this aspect of consciousness per se. It is something we might call a supersoul or divine principle. See also the sidebar “Lord” and the appendix on religious mysteries.

The meaning of “Toward-Other Orientation” is that if you want to have a respectable place in human society, you have to take a “positive” or supportive attitude towards other people. It is not that this attitude is based on expecting a direct and immediate reward from any individual. Instead, the motivation is one’s relation to an abstraction. In this implicit stanza, money is a metaphor for any exchangeable resource. The range would include, among other things, esteem, food, medical supplies, clothing, and information. In “Toward-Other Orientation”, the drihten is a metaphor for a supra-individual motivating set of explicit maxims such as to share and to love our siblings.

This is something we learn very early in childhood, long before we learn the value of money. When we first learn this lesson, our parents are the agents of that social conscience, and they train us to internalize a conscience.

### ***Seek For Enlightenment***

This implicit stanza is supported by an examination of the off-verse alliterating words: *fira*, *miclun*, and *dóm*. As stand-alone words, these can mean “adult human creature”, “greatly”, and “advice / judgment”.

Read in reverse order, the off-verse alliterating words of the initial stanza hint that the *Old English Rune Poem* presents advice of importance to people who need to become enlightened. In other words, the chief stave-defining words offer a cryptic message to look for lore of more profound meaning than the stanzas present at their lowest level.

Also half-buried in the ambiguities of “Feoh’s” chief staves is a hint at greater esteem (or at least stronger self-esteem) for those seeking enlightenment. From

an esoteric religious point of view, the process of self-transformation is in a sense a very mature glory of Mankind.

***Esoteric Religion Starts from Within but Is Manifested Without***

This implicit stanza is suggested by all the stanzas at lower levels and by messages in “Cen”. If the *OERP* is a repository of lore for adults in search of enlightenment, then the major terms of this stanza must refer to moral learning above a level for small children. This would be the case if the drihten of “The Moral Paradox of Possession” and the culturally supplied maxims of “Toward-Other Orientation” are metaphors for a deeper and less explicit supra-individual motivating factor.

If “Feoh” has meaning above a primitive level, then the rune name must represent a metaphor for anything that is as transferable and as valuable as money. The metaphorical feoh is also not something that we give to the Lord. For example, signs of caring such as advising, trading (fairly), or building sandbag walls in flood-threatened communities far from one’s home are not trades nor taxes, but they tend to put us in better stead with the divine principle.

In other words, we have to care and we have to act. Teutonic Pagan religion is very community-oriented (S. Wódening, 1994c). Thus, the toward-other orientation is a reference to a major theme of this religion.

***“Lord”***

When religious practitioners talk about “Lord”, “God”, or “Great Spirit”, they are not always talking about the same thing. Common use often denotes a discrete being who gives orders and who enforces morals by causing bad luck or by sentencing the offender to after-life punishment. Progressive mystics sometimes refer to something else, too subtle to be completely described by words. “Lord” means that they accept a complex relationship to the supersoul or a deity. Unlike an ancient governing official, this drihten speaks with a voice that is quiet and subtle; maturity is required to be aware of it.

This is related to the drihten as a metaphor in “Esoteric Religion Starts from Within but Is Manifested Without”.

Since healthy human lives are social, the message here might be a religious universal. For the object of the progressive mystical aspect of any religion is not enjoyment of meditations or pageantry, nor is it avoiding eternal damnation. The object is to live a better life.

### ***Responsibility for Mankind***

This implicit stanza is at the third level of abstraction, supported in part by “Toward-Other Orientation” and by “Esoteric Religion Starts from within but is Manifest Without”. To see this implicit stanza, it is also necessary to have studied the 29th explicit stanza, “Ēar” and have found its implicit stanza “Remains”.

Every one of us, including those who are not parents, can leave at least some minor thing(s) of positive value for those who live after us, including subsequent generations. Our responsibility for other persons is to the lord within. Our responsibility for those who live after us is not to our survivors or to the yet-unborn, for feedback from them is not in question.

It is ironic that to be a self-directed person, we must accept domination by the collective awareness. It is not necessarily the case that we are driven by a lower-animal instinct below our level of awareness. However, many people do manifest the urge to leave at least some small legacy without being aware of the lord within and without accepting their proper relation to it.

Thorstein Veblen called the tendency to care for those who live after us “the parental bent”, and he discusses the proclivity at greater length than is possible here (Veblen, 1914: 313-315).

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Money
- Need for human enlightenment
- Enlightenment
- Handing off
- The less-enlightened aspect of the human psyche
- Conscience
- Self-control by supra-individual psychic component
- Giving without consideration of direct return
- Early childhood learning
- Moral imperatives
- The subtle voice of the Lord within
- Motivation by the supersoul

### *Contrasts*

- Self versus other
- Possess versus give
- Adult versus child
- Naïvely selfish comfort versus enlightened comfort
- Divine versus lower (contrast theme in every stanza, not listed after this)
- Subjective versus objective
- Deeply internal psychology versus empirical manifestation

### *Brief Summary of Advice for Living*

View religion as self-improvement. It is a process that is motivated by a subtle inner governor; but it is a process that improves relations with others. The governor is inside your psyche but is shared with others.

You cannot be advanced in the human condition unless you are ready to make a transition similar to that which you made as a small child. The transition may seem unpleasant at times, but it will produce a new point of view and a new and more powerful sense of gratification from which you will not wish to retreat.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	A	5
2a	B	6
2b	A	5
3a	A	7
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	11
3	11
	31

### *Addendum to Chapter 1: A Comparison with “Fé” in the ONRR and OIRP*

Many students of runes look for clues to one stanza’s meaning in correspondingly-entitled stanzas of another poem. For example, to understand “Money” in the OERP, they would examine “Money” in Old Norse poems.

However, the Old Norse stanzas are not based on the same organization of mysteries that is the basis of the *OERP*. Considering all stanzas, the Old Norse poems supplement each other such as to imply that they are different “takes” on the same system. Therefore, the Old Norse system is related to the Old English system, but the two are distinct.

For example, examinations of the initial stanzas of the two ancient rune poems in Old Norse reveals that the Old Norse stanzas are not about the same esoteric subject matter as the Old English stanza. Although R. I. Page (1999) points out that the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* looks convincingly like a didactic aid to teach the names of the runes. There is a catch. Five hundred years after Iceland officially became Christian, the person taking the test would have to know more about the Norse Pagan religion than about the names of the runes for the poem to work as a riddle or test.

The editions of initial Old Norse stanzas shown below are copied from Halsall’s book (1981: Appendix B). The more-or-less literal translations are mine.

### **“Fé” in the ONRR**

The first stanza in the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme (ONRR)* is entitled “Money”, and is usually assumed to deal with the same topic as “Feoh”. However, the *ONRR* strophe is:

“Fé vældr frændr róge / føðesk ulfr í skóge”  
 “Cash causes cousins strife / feeds (the) wolf in (the) forest”.

Clearly, this strophe is not about money. It concerns the tensions of cooperation and conflict in close human relationships. Thus “frændr” (cousins) is a better clue to the topic than is “fé” (money).

There are two different verses here. At first look, this verse seems to say that "scarce" resources are a cause of strife, and that fierce, menacing individuals grow up in a dangerous, mysterious environment. However, a deeper examination tells us that a cooperative and gentle society is possible. Wolves do

a lot of growling, snarling, and tooth-baring, but they are pretty cooperative within their own packs. In North America, some Amerindian tribes allowed their children to put on face paint to pretend to masquerade as wolves — and go play with the wolf cubs in their dens while the wolf parents/babysitters watched. This verse is telling us that we don't have to fight over "scarce" resources and that doing so makes society less pleasant for everyone.

Although the *ONRR* and *OERP* stanzas are concerned with sharing and support of (various sorts), the two stanzas handle the issue very differently as regards holy versus beastlike motivations, the role of a “lord”, and social strife.

Thus, these *ONRR* and *OERP* stanzas supplement each other in some senses, but they concern distinct mysteries.

This stanza also shows a stylistic difference between the two poems. The *ONRR* appears not to have been made to get lore past decades or centuries of neglect and oppression. It has no meaning at its lowest level; the need to think deeply is obvious.

### ***“Fé” in the OIRP***

The first stanza in the *Old Icelandic Rune Rhyme (OIRP)* is also entitled “Money”, but it also deals with a different set of mysteries than does “Money” in the *OERP*. The stanza is:

Fé er frænda róg  
Ok flæðar viti  
Ok grafseiðs gata.

Cash is cousin’s strife  
And conflagration (in the) lighthouse  
And grave-fish’s path

“Grave-fish’s path” is a kenning for gold, probably based on the literary motif of dragons guarding buried treasure (Dickens, 1915: 28).

Here also, the “frænda” is a better clue to the meaning of the stanza than is the title of the rune stave. However, in the *OIRP* the most important clue in a stanza is the alliterating word in the second line – in this case, “conflagration” (a lighthouse beacon).

This strophe refers to conflict among close and allied associates, to a clear sign of warning, and to unseen churlish surprises that lurk near a fine-looking prize. The esoteric implications of “Fé” in this poem relate to struggles against temptations. This strophe also relates to a basis of self-discipline for an enlightened person and what a broadened consciousness includes. The stanza introduces the student to the poem by indicating that it helps achieve to an enlightenment that can help you pick your way through life avoiding unnecessary social conflicts and other hazards that a naïve person might eagerly stumble into. The principle medium of social exchange -- and perhaps social exchange per se -- is both an attraction and a warning that danger is about.

We can see that in some ways “Fé” in the *OIRP* supplements the initial stanza in the *OERP*, but the *OIRP* stanza has a focus on social conflict and it handles self-discipline differently. In turn, this tells us that these stanzas are based related, but distinct organizations of religious mysteries and bodies wisdom.

### ***Conclusions***

It should not be surprising that the initial stanzas in these poems show that the 29-rune row and the 16-rune row are different organizations of religious mysteries and different presentations of ancient bodies of wisdom.

Of course, none of the Old English or Old Norse stanzas in this comparison is about money! This addendum illustrates the need to look more deeply than the name of a rune when trying to understand the subject matter of a stanza in any of the ancient rune poems. The scholar needs to take into account the overall organization of mysteries that each poem represents. Sometimes, the clue the student seeks is not in a correspondingly-named strophe in a “foreign” poem.

Instead the clue may be in a combination of other strophes in that poem, or there may be no cross-poem clue at all.

Page (1999: 33-34) also concludes that the Old Norse and Old English rune poems are basically different systems, but his analysis proceeds strictly on a more superficial level. He only points to dissimilarities at the lowest level of meaning. For example, there are no equivalent phrases at the explicit level that the f-rune stanzas in Old Norse share with the f-rune stanza in the *OERP*.

## Second Stanza: Excess and Mettlesomeness<sup>3</sup>

Úr byþ ánmód; • and oferhyrned;  
 Felaftrécne; déor • feohtep; mid hornum;  
 Máere morstapa; • þaet is módig wuht;

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{moose, (European) elk} is {resolute; brave, daring; fierce; proud}

And {very large-horned; super-antlered; immensely-antlered}

(A) {very dangerous, very fierce} {animal, beast}

(That) fights with {horns, antlers}

(The) {well-known, notorious} {moor-dweller, ranger in the moors}

That is (a) {spirited, daring, bold; impetuous, headstrong;  
 arrogant; high-minded, noble; mettlesome} being

#### *(B)*

Elk is awless • and ultra-antlered.

Too-much tough, that beast • tussles with antlers.

Famous fen-dweller, • that's a feisty one!

#### *(C) Modernized Meter*

Resolute is the moose and heavily horned.

<sup>3</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1996d).

A beast very fierce, it fights with those horns.  
That famous moor-dweller's a spirited wight!

### *Issues in Edition and Translation*

Three issues are discussed here. (1) Translation of the title word is a problem because the consensual translation contradicts the stanza. (2) Most students of this poem regard certain word separations and punctuation irregularities as mere errors, but perhaps they are intended to help us interpret the stanza correctly.

#### *Úr*

Translation of the title word as “moose” is unusual. Like moose — and unlike aurochs — the animal of this strophe is a swamp denizen. On the other hand, the strophe appears to require that females and males of the species be armed with “horns” all the time. Other characteristics mentioned in this stanza are shared by moose and aurochs. Neither an alcid nor a bovine animal is a perfect fit. However, this strophe is not a zoological treatise; it is about excess and threat. The implicit stanzas would all mean the same for religion if the *úr* were a moose, ox, bison, or mythical creature. (See also the sidebar “Elk or Moose?”)

We must get our clues to the empirical referent of “*úr*” from the *OERP*. Although “*úr*” is used in other contexts, elsewhere the rune name does not refer to a feral animal. The rune stave for *úr* is used in the *Cynewulf* signatures, and in those contexts it means “our” or “our things”. Rune names in the Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme and the Old Icelandic Rune Poem are cognate with the Old English *úr*, but those names also do not refer to a feral animal.

Typically, students of the *OERP* interpret the title word as denoting aurochs, an extinct species of wild ox that formerly inhabited much of Europe. Wild oxen and buffalo are herd animals. Typically, wild cattle and buffalo of modern times are plains- and meadow-dwellers. They prefer grass and need lots of it; but grass growth in forests is inhibited by tree-shade. Nonetheless, we are told that the aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) was a forest animal, typically six feet at the shoulder and black. Like modern African water buffalo, aurochs were aggressive could

not be raised as livestock nor used as draft animals. Aurochs were extinct in the British Isles before Teutonic settlers arrived in the 400's CE, but they did not become extinct in continental Europe until the seventeenth century CE. They had wide, forward-curving horns, sometimes reaching a span six-and-a-half feet across. The horns were prized as drinking vessels in medieval Europe, despite — or perhaps because of — the unhandy length and the capacity of over a gallon. (See Dickins, 1915; Britannica, 2002a; Halsall, 1981).

The points of agreement between “aurochs” and “úr” are that both male and female aurochs were horned and that, if they behaved like African buffalo, both males and females were aggressive and bold fighters. Of course, aurochs would have been known to the Anglo-Saxons.

Moose (*Alces alces*) fit the description of úr in this stanza in four ways. (1) They are adapted to wetlands. Moose often inhabit moors, and they like to browse on water plants while wading. Their long legs and splayed hooves are well suited to wading in muddy waters. In addition to water plants, moose eat tree and bush leaves, and lichen. Moose are not so interested in the grass of open plains and meadows.

(2) Moose can be bold and aggressive. Moose are usually shy but sometimes belligerent, and they can be impractically bold attackers. Adults are commonly five to seven-and-a-half feet (1.5-2 meters) at the shoulder, and weigh 820 kg (1,800 lbs). That size is not big enough to take on a locomotive, but moose have been observed attacking locomotives, cars, horses, or people. Just as African buffalo sometimes attack lion prides, moose sometimes run off bears. Bulls in rut and females with calves are particularly likely to be short-tempered. However, moose are often placid plant-eaters who avoid conflict.

(3) Bull moose can be well armed. Fully developed, a bull's antler span would be almost the same measure as his height at the shoulder and it might weigh about fifty pounds. “Antlers” means that only males have these weapons and only in season, so a cow who threatens a bear is doing so unarmed. Fortunately for protective mothers, their large size is enough to make moose dangerous

when they feel like attacking. People residing in northern areas advise: when moose wander into town, just leave them alone.

(4) Moose would have been known to the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and other Germanic nations. Nowadays their natural range includes a region from Norway to Mongolia in Eurasia plus much of North America. Of course, nowadays hunting and expansion of human land-use has decreased the habitat used by moose. Like aurochs, moose were extinct in the British Isles before the Anglo-Saxons began to take over England. (See Animal Planet, 2001; Britannica 1998e; Interactive Broadcasting, 1998; Jackson Hole Net, 1998).

Ironically, some of those who translate the title word as “aurochs” see the animal’s metaphoric value more in terms of moose characteristics. For examples: Halsall (1981) and Wódenig (1996a) both draw our attention to the úr as resembling an outlaw. In ancient Teutonic societies, outlawry was for a person whose crime was so offensive, or whose recidivism was so excessive, that the community gave up on that individual. The protection of the law was withdrawn from them, and this tended to make residing in human settlements hazardous for them.

A herd animal would not fit the description of a human outlaw. A solitary, temperamental, dangerous lower animal who lived beyond civilized control would be a better symbol for an outlaw than a herd animal would be. Moose, unlike aurochs, are solitary except during the mating season and except for mothers with calves. Moose are very difficult to domesticate. On the other hand, this stanza does not characterize the úr as a loner nor refer to Teutonic outlaws at its explicit level of meaning.

Some students of this poem might prefer “elk” as the translation for “úr”. In Europe these animals are called “elk”, but in North America “elk” denotes wapiti. Therefore, “moose” is a less ambiguous translation in an international context. “Moose” is based on an Algonquin word meaning “twig eater”. The American term might not be familiar in Europe, but at least it does not suffer from being extensively used to refer to an animal very different from the one the referred to in “Úr”.

***Apparent Spelling Errors***

All the editors agree that in three instances words in the original were separated into two elements “in error”. As Appendix A shows, in original shows “ofer hyrned”, “fela frécne”, and “mor stapa”. The question we need to ask is, “is there a reason someone would commit those errors?”

It is possible that two of these “errors” are intentional clues to deeper meaning. “Ofer” and “fela” refer to excess. On the outside, “Úr” seems to express the admiration so many of us have for forcefulness, intimidation, and violence. However, if we use apparent errors as hints, it is easier for us to see that the úr is a little too much. These clues might be seen as needed because whoever wrote the original document could see of linguistic change and disappearance of poetic lore from English culture.

The separation of “mor” from “stapa” also could have been intended as a clue. It is as if to prevent us from mistakenly opining that the úr was an aurochs or bison, someone decided to emphasize that this is a wetland-dweller.

***Apparent Punctuation Errors***

Translation E shows the punctuation irregularity in Modern English. The “error” separates out the notions of “very threatening”, “lower animal that fights”, and “with horns”. Of course, the punctuation might be simply in error. On the other hand, suppose we ask if the irregularity is an attempt to draw our attention to sub-units of meaning. Separating out the notion of extreme threat (“felafrecne”) highlights that the úr is not good for mankind. Grouping “beast” with “fights” leaves another clue that the admiration for violence that we see on the outside layer of the stanza is not all that this stanza offers. Isolating the notion of “with antlers” helps us to see that the excessive armament carried by the beast is mentioned twice and is part of the problem.

***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B presents a practically exact match to the original in patterns of alliteration, word-sense, and rhythm. Line 2a is a five-syllable D2 in the original, and a five-syllable hypermetric A in the translation. The differences that the original has a (relatively strong) secondary emphasis on the last syllable and the translation has a primary emphasis on its last syllable. The musical effect of the difference is trivial.

The modern-meter Translation C is basically dactylic, with practically the same rhythm in each line and no attempt at alliteration. In initial reading, Translation C differs from the original and the “perfect” translation chiefly in making its statement of terms more forthrightly. But in both its non-verbal and verbal aspects, it communicates the tone of admiration of the original more effectively than does Translation B. That is probably because the rhythm and wording in the modernized translation pulls in the modern listener as the rhythm in the wording in the original would have pulled in an Anglo-Saxon.

There is another matter concerning non-verbal communication. When the present author hears Translation C, it seems to have an almost childish cadence that practically begs one to look for more adult levels of meanings. The original is not so simply structured, so it is not clear that it would have had the same non-verbal effect.

***Discussion***

“Úr” is ambivalent about the moose. At the outside layer of the stanza, it shows us admiration for a bold and formidable animal. At higher levels, it shows unfavorable critique and then changes the subject to give advice on religious enlightenment.

At the lowest level of interpretation, the úr is either “The Mettlesome Moose” or “A Belligerent Threat”, depending partly on whether you speak (or sing) the last

verse with an admiring or blaming tone of voice and with a smiling or scowling countenance.

At the second level of meaning, we are reminded of the “Admiration for Misbehaving Persons” in order to instruct us on a typically Pagan view of human nature — that good and evil are not separable absolutes. We are also advised that “A Tough Person Can Be Too Much”.

At the third level of meaning, we are reminded that “The Nonconformist Is Sometimes Admired”. Then Pagan religious philosophy comes more clearly in focus in “the Challenge of Moral Contradiction”, and as we are advised that “Moral Struggle Is a Handling of Inherent Human Contradictions”.

### ***The Mettlesome Moose***

The stanza seems to admire the ferocity, determination, and courage of the moose, especially if one has had a pretty good diet of heroic literature. Translations D and F present this view most clearly. Translation D renders *mære* as “glorious”, and Translation F renders *mære* as “celebrated”. Those translations also sum up the moose’s description as “a bold being” or “a spirited being”.

### ***A Belligerent Threat***

In “A Belligerent Threat”, lack of inhibition is associated with excessive armament, exaggerated potential for harm, and aggressive hostility. Translations C and G present this view of the stanza most clearly. They sum up the description as “a headstrong” or “impetuous being”, calling into question the animal’s judgment and referring to its impulsive aggressiveness. Also, the poem emphasizes that the *úr* is armed by telling us this in both the first and second lines.

Chief stave analysis provides a clue to the existence of this implicit stanza. Translation B shows that the chief staves are “excessively” (“over”), “tussles”, and “mettlesome”. This view of the stanza is also reinforced by punctuation

clues and by apparent errors in word separation, which are discussed under issues in editing and translating.

### ***Admiration for Misbehaving Persons***

This implicit stanza presents the moose as a metaphor for one who is churlish, headstrong, and dangerous. The wasteland is a symbol of an unpleasant lifestyle. This is second-level implicit stanza can be seen most clearly in Translations D and F, and it is based on part on “The Mettlesome Moose” and “The Belligerent Moose”.

Many persons would like to be fearsome fighters almost as much as they would like to be liked, so they enjoy identifying with those who are out of social control, aggressive, violent, and dangerous. Therefore, many people have secret — or exhibit quite open — admiration for villains. Just as pro wrestling bad guys and gals fascinate fans and draw more paying customers than do the “fan favorites”. For another example, convicted multiple murders in death row confinement sometimes receive multiple offers of marriage from free women. At the time of this writing, one could see “Admiration for Misbehaving Persons” in admiration for vikings. At the time of this writing, people in many countries in and outside of Scandinavia referred to all Scandinavians as “Vikings”. Apparently many professional historians, religious authors, sports commentators, etc feel that “Viking” is a complement as opposed to an ethnic slur. In ancient times, “viking” only referred to raiders — people who committed arson, kidnapping, burglary, murder, rape, vandalism, and wanton destruction of means of making a living. In the movement to reconstruct Teutonic polytheist religion, many persons and some organizations in the movement (for example, the Asatru Alliance) admired viking ways.

Moral ambivalence characterizes the human condition. Despite enormous human variety, there are no people who are strictly useless, harmful, hateful — or enlightened. Even the most enlightened of us at least secretly is fascinated with Mafioso, Old West outlaws, Nazi Stormtroopers, professional athletes who throw fits during sporting contests, etc. We differ in our degree of ambiguity

and in how aware we are of the moral contradiction and in how we handle the conflict.

### ***A Tough Person Can Be Too Much***

This stanza is derived from “A Belligerent Threat”. The moose represents one who is well known for putting excessive emphasis on weapons, ferocity, intimidation, fighting, and lack of inhibition. In this implicit stanza, the moose-person “doesn’t give a damn”.

Here we are considering the “outlaw” theme mentioned in the section on translating úr as “moose”. Therefore, the “outlaw” analogy refers to the kind of person we do not want to be or to associate with. This is a wight who is regarded with both admiration and aversion, but mostly with aversion.

People who act like this are sometimes innocent as are very young children or lower animals. We might say that they know what they are doing, but that they do not really know what they are doing. They are definitely in need of some enlightenment, but we need to avoid or restrain them. (See also Stanfield, 2003.)

### ***The Challenge of Moral Contradiction***

This implicit stanza is based on “Admiration for Misbehaving Persons” and on “A Tough Person Can be Too Much.” You have to be a módig wuht to do esoteric religion. The reason is that it is difficult to see through your own psychological defenses and control yourself. Self-indulgence is often so much easier, even if less beneficial in the long run. And despite liturgy and the social company of those who are enlightened, ultimately you have to enter your own wild wasteland and conduct your own struggles. These struggles for self-control involve shifting the balance of good and ill that is in all our souls.

The challenge of moral contradiction is a potential tool for those who can handle it. Therefore, we can see a hint that symbols of ferocity can be used for peaceful, constructive purposes in ritual meditations. Examples are the use of swords or

fighting knives as altar equipment or to “cut a circle”. This is like fighting fire with fire. Advanced techniques of mysticism are understood only by mature persons and should not necessarily be tried by everyone.

***The Nonconformist Is Sometimes Admired***

This implicit stanza is based upon “The Mettlesome Moose” and “Admiration for Misbehaving Persons.”

The practitioner of transformative or “magical” religion, the person whose practice is called “esoteric” in this book, tends to be stronger-willed and less conformist than the general run of the population. Enlightened people are often less interested in controlling others than is the “average” person, so advanced practitioners are not necessarily executives. In short, the esoteric religious person should try to “fit in”, but in some subtle ways such a person can seem different enough so that they can seem intimidating.

In addition to being subtly above average, the esoteric practitioner is involved in pursuits that are forbiddingly difficult for most people to understand and very challenging to do. These pursuits are symbolized by the marshlands.

This stanza encourages esoteric practice by reminding us that sometimes people admire courage, determination, energy, and independence regardless of the circumstances.

***Moral Struggle Is a Handling of Inherent Human Contradictions***

This implicit stanza is based on all those below it in the hierarchy of abstraction in “Úr”. “Admiration for Misbehaving Persons” reminds us that moral perversity is intertwined with other elements in the human soul and that can be decreased but not removed. A struggle for the progressive mystic is to manage this internal conflict in a productive and responsible way.

“The Challenge of Moral Contradiction” points out that to strive for an enlightened balance, we require a subtle mettle. For a person avoid being “too

much”, there is no efficient substitute for internal motivation, self- and social awareness, and psychological strength. This is consistent with implicit stanzas in “Feoh”, which tell us that the main motivation for enlightenment has to be internal.

Having this enlightenment is a difficult and mostly solitary struggle, but at least “The Nonconformist Is Sometimes Admired”.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Excess

Threat

Region beyond routine human control

Toughness

Mettle

The unenlightened person as a social danger

Hostility

Weapons

Being armed

Admiration of the very unenlightened

Respectful admiration of the very enlightened

Ferocity

Danger

Mettle needed for religious enlightenment

Moral contradictions inherent in human nature

Inner moral struggle

Constructive nonconformity

Balance of moral contradictions

### *Contrasts*

Aversiveness of excess and threat versus appeal of reasonableness

Excesses as opposed to wise self-control

Admiration for the well-behaved as contrasted with admiration for the misbehaving

### *Advice for Living*

A certain moral perversity is intertwined with other elements in the human soul. Exploitation of inherent moral paradoxes is a technique available to the sophisticated mystic, but it is important not to go to excess. To control this with awareness and self-discipline, we need a type and degree of toughness or courage that is not necessarily common. For avoiding being “too much”, there is no efficient substitute for internal motivation, self- and social awareness, and psychological strength.

Enlightenment is a difficult and mostly solitary struggle, although the mystic is struggling with contradictions inherent in being human. Fortunately, the struggle has its rewards in respect and admiration of others as well as in self-satisfaction.

## *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	A	5
2a	D2	5
2b	A	5
3a	D1	5
3b	B	5

Line	Syllables
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1	8
2	10
3	10
	<hr/>
	28

## Third Stanza: Grasping and Pain<sup>4</sup>

Dorn byþ ðearle scearp • ðegna gehwylcum  
 Anfengys yfyl • ungemetum répe  
 Manna gehwylcum • ðe him mid resteð

### *Translations*

#### **(B) Transliteration**

{thorn; thorny plant} is {severely, strictly, excessively} {sharp, harsh,  
 penetrating}

(to) {servant, disciple, retainer; freeman; noble; military person, warrior,  
 hero} {each, ever

y}

(Of) {grasping, taking, receiving, acquiring} evil

{immeasurably, excessively, immoderately, extremely} {fierce, cruel, harsh,  
 severe, terrible, dreadful}

(To) man {each, every}

who them {among; with} {remains; rests; reposes, ceases from toil; lies  
 unmoving

#### **(B)**

Prickle plenty sharp • princes, to each is;  
 taking is torture. • Total fierce the pain for  
 each individual • who'll one not release.

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<sup>4</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1996d).

***(C) Switching from Singular to Plural Subject***

The thorn is extremely harsh to every noble; evil to the grasp. And they are  
excessively grim to every person who lies on then.

***(D) Modernized Meter***

Very sharp is a thorn for the ones who are noble,  
evil to the grasp.

And extreme is its fierceness for any person  
sticking with it.

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

“Pörn” presents one issue in edition and one issue in translation. The edition issue is a minor matter of whether to leave in a hyphen that occurs in Hickes’ copy. The translation issue significantly affects interpretation, and revolves around whether the last half line implies “amidst thorns” or to “with a thorn”.

***Anfengys***

The “original” text says “anfen-gys”, but following Grienberger (1921), most editors regard this as a printer error. The word in question is the genitive of “grasping / taking to oneself / receiving”. It would have more usually been spelled “anfenges” and is not normally hyphenated in the surviving corpus of Old English.

***Plural or Singular Implicit Pronoun Reference***

It is a mistake to infer that this stanza refers anywhere to a plural of “thorn”. Translation C implicitly but clearly summarizes the argument. But since there has been widespread misunderstanding on this, details follow.

Grammatically, “Pörn” has two sentences, as you can see in Translation B. The subject of the first sentence is the singular “Pörn”. The second sentence has an implicit subject (also þorn) and a subordinate clause modifying “every person” and introduced by “who”.

It is obvious that the subject of the first sentence is a prickle and not a thorn bush or tree, because a bush or other thorn-bearing plant would not be “scearp”. It is (partly) to make this clearer that Translation B says that prickle is sharp to princes instead of saying the thorn is sharp to thanes.

Most translators of “þorn” render the second sentence as if its implicit subject were “thorns”. This view — a consensus of Twentieth Century students of the *OERP* — is represented here by Translation C. That rendering is a sentence-based translation which has “any person” resting among (plural) thorns. Less grammatically correct examples range from Dickens 1915 translation (“...an evil thing for any knight to touch, uncommonly severe on all who sit among them.”) to Pollington’s 1996 translation (“seizing it is bad, excessively severe for any person who lays (sic) among them”).

Perhaps Twentieth Century scholars examined uses of *restan* and found that it is very similar to the Modern English “to rest”, emphasizing that the whole body is not in motion. Since it is not possible for the whole body to rest on a thorn, there must be many of them. If there are many thorns, “him” in 3b has to be plural. This also means that “mid” must denote “amidst” or “among” instead of “with”.

However, if there is an implicit plural pronoun in verse 2a, this would likely tend to baffle the listener or reader, and it would constitute an abuse of poetic license. Consistent use of the singular throughout the stanza would agree with the pattern in all the other stanzas of this poem (and in the stanzas of the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme* and the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*).

The dative “him” in Old English can denote Modern English “him”, (þorn is grammatically masculine in Old English) as well as “them”. (See for example Diamond, 1970: 23-24.) In this context, *restap* is therefore better rendered as “remains” than as “rests”. This is the point of view taken by Kemble prior to the modern consensus. In his 1840 translation he sees the stanza as one long sentence with its subject as a single þorn. His translation, in part: “bad to take hold of, / immeasurably severe / to every man / that resteth with him.”

Grienberger (1921) agrees that the thorn must be singular throughout the stanza, but he opines that þorn must be a thorn bush because in the last verse the focal person is spoken of as lying amidst one. Grienberger's definition would be contrary to other usages in Old English, where þorn is definitely not a bush. (The comedic notion of a person voluntarily lying on a thorn bush has puzzled Teutonic religious reconstructionists for decades, since many of them take the plural translation of "him" as authoritative.)

The resolution is to translate restap as "remains" and mid as "with", so that verse 3b says "who remains with the thorn" in the sense of sticking with it (the pun is irresistible) as opposed to putting the awful thing down.

It happens that you do not get the same metaphoric messages from both interpretations of the pronoun reference in this verse 3b. That is either you have to (1) leave many minor troubles, or (2) let go of one thing that is bad for you.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

For "Þorn", the attempt at a perfect translation produced a very close rendition of the original. There have been several compromises, but most of them are very minor. However in this instance, for the Twenty-First Century cultures, the modern-meter translation seems to convey the original verbal and non-verbal intents more efficiently.

In line 1, word-sense has been compromised to get the alliteration and rhythm perfectly matched. The translation says that the thorn is "plenty" sharp, thereby losing the some of strong emphasis on severity, which the original author(s) clearly intended to achieve by repetition. This compromise is justified in view of the fact that the evil and ferocity of the thorn is still getting heavy emphasis. Also in line 1, the thanes have been promoted to princes, and this could have implications at the metaphorical level, since the pain exists for all seekers and not merely their elite.

Line 2 is a practically perfect match, although that word-sense has been very slightly compromised. “Torture” in verse 1a lacks the slightly more morally evaluative ambiguity of “evil”, but the difference here is trivial because “torture” can be a metaphor for the “evil”. The substitution of the modern-slang “total” to represent the idea of extreme-ness has the flaw of missing the grammatically correct “-ly” ending.

In verse 3a, the order of ideas was altered to get a match on rhythm and alliteration, with “person” (individual) and “each” swapping places. In order for the translation to match the original rhythm, it is necessary to use resolved stress on the last two syllables in “individual”, but many native speakers of Modern English do that in prose as a matter of habit.

In verse 3b, the rhythm match was slightly compromised to get a good match on word sense and alliteration. The switch to a five-syllable type B rhythm from the original’s five-syllable type A is not significant in this instance. In the original, the “h” in the word for “each” in 3a alliterates with the “h” in the word for “it” in 3b. Hence it was necessary to use a word starting with a vowel in 3b to alliterate with “each” in 3a, but in this context “one” is not significantly different from “it”. The translation communicates the notion of inactivity in “restan” by using “not release”. An alternative would have been to render 3b “with it remaining”, which is exactly what the original says. But in that rendering “it” would be unstressed and therefore out of the alliteration.

The modern-meter translation, free from the restrictions of traditional meter, shows ways to get the original messages across in a modern context. For example, Translation D is anapestic except for the second line, which has a sudden change of meter and line length to communicate a shock suggesting pain. Also, the first two lines are punctuated and laid out on the page to cause a pause between “noble” and “evil”. This unsmooth transition between the lines helps to make up for the use of “very sharp” instead of “severely sharp”; also the most-stressed syllable on the first line is “sharp”.

The present author rather likes that pun in Translation D, “sticking with it”.

## *Discussion*

At the lowest level of meaning, “Porn” reminds us of our “Aversion to Thorns”.

As the metaphorical level, we are warned that “Attractive Phenomena Can Be Dangerous” and that “Possessing Can Be Painful If Done Poorly”.

At the third level, we are advised that “You Have to Let Go of Things That Drive You Crazy”. Then all the implications of first- and second-level implicit stanzas are applied to philosophy of religion.

### *Aversion to Thorns*

The *ḍorn* is unambiguously evil. Touching is bad; grasping is evil; holding on is extremely torturous. Well, maybe so and maybe not.

Of course, the stanza assumes that the thane has not grasped the thorn safely. Jones (1967) observed that whoever composed this poem had a firm grasp of the obvious, but in this case it is obvious that at the explicit level, the stanza’s statement is not so obviously correct.

In fact, when one is stuck by a thorn it is usually because one has grasped the plant that has one, not because one directly grasped a thorn.

### *Grasping an Affliction*

This implicit stanza is a warning to the mystic seeking personal growth. Here, the thorn is a metaphor for some affliction or for afflictions in general, the noble is a metaphor for a seeker of enlightenment, and obtaining is a metaphor for obtaining a profound understanding. Seen this way, “Porn” speaks of the sympathetic experience that can come from a deep meditative realization of the afflictive aspect of human life.

Realizing this sort of thing is a natural part of coming to grips with reality as a mystic. And the empathy that accompanies the “all-is-connected” aspect of reality tends to bring a sympathetic response, even though no specific individual or aggregate of individuals is in one’s mind when the realization occurs.

This experience is not a bad trip in itself, but we are advised not to remain with the meditation that brings this experience too long. Also, it is not healthy to obsess on it afterward.

### ***Attractive Phenomena Can Be Dangerous***

Osborn and Longland observe that thorns are a common and nonlethal form of defense. Therefore they infer thorns symbolize common difficulties and obstacles of life (Osborn and Longland, 1982: 20-30, 88). The thorn can also symbolize complications with uncommon phenomena. And these are not just any difficulties or obstacles, but ones that we actively acquire.

Although the strophe does not mention anything that is protected by the thorn, it is a metaphor for something that is a defense of (or problem with) something else. Why else would we touch, grasp, or hold on? The answer is that we have an ambivalence about the phenomena that the prickles guard. Sometimes the attraction is hidden. Thus, person can dwell on complaints about an ex-spouse because of the joy of rage, for certain endogenous body chemicals associated with rage can make one high. Or a person can avoid putting war experiences behind because the person enjoys remembering his youth and a macho image. Alcoholics may like to be high and to have an excuse to not exert self-control. (Of course there are withdrawal symptoms for alcoholics also.)

The examples show that there are phenomena — ranging from minor bad habits to horrible substance addictions — that people often need to be told to let go of. This implicit stanza is a way of phrasing the message that there are things that are driving a person crazy because he or she is hanging onto them. The indirect nature of the reference to ambivalence is part of the message about it. People are often not aware that they are the reason they have some of the troubles they complain of, and sometimes they actively deny responsibility. Sometimes, if

you can make a person figure this out from a stanza for himself or herself, you can have more effect than by just preaching.

### ***Beware of Thorny Members***

In this implicit stanza, the bearer of the thorns represents a person. A thorny person in a temple has aspects that are to be avoided. It is not possible to engage the whole person because he or she is just too unpleasant for the other members.

It is fairly common that people have aspects of their lives or personality that they wall off from one or more groups they are in. This is advice to let them do that.

Of course, some people do not protect their friends and other associates from their thorns, but instead make trouble. So do not try to remain with them.

### ***Possessing Can Be Painful If Done Poorly***

Consider the thorn as a metaphor for the complications that inhere in taking to oneself things that are beneficial. The grasping then metaphorically represents an attempt to acquire or retain that works out to one's disadvantage because of a technical mistake.

Just as one might carelessly attempt to pick a rose or extract water from a cactus, one can fall in love selfishly and hurt oneself with jealousy. One can fall in love competitively, wanting to somehow be better than the other, and get hurt with envy or with alienation of the other. Trying too hard to be impressive or dominant or submissive without spending some effort on understanding the other can bring the touch of a thorn. One can smother offspring with unneeded caring that is offered mainly to maintain possession. One can pursue a business relationship with a hyperexploitative style. Of course, it is only human to love and be a little possessive, demanding, servile, or competitive. And there is no business relationship without profitable use. These are matters of degree, but if the grasping is done clumsily, then you are likely to find the thorn.

The prickle can also be the “catch” that comes with an offered love, a business proposition, or some other item or action. You do not have to reach out very far or be very aggressive, but passively accepting causes pain. A gift of computer software can be like this, as can a drug offered by a friend that causes hangover. If you are on the receiving end of a selfish love, the affection, praise, and attention can have a thorn attached.

### ***You Have to Let Go of Things That Drive You Crazy***

In this implicit stanza, the thorn is a symbol for things we can possess or obsess on that have net aversive consequences. The reference to grasping tells us that these are not necessarily things that happen to us but things we can possess. In this aspect, the stanza says that we have to let go of certain things. In concrete terms, we might say: you have to stop dwelling on resentful complaints about your ex-husband; you have to let go of your emotional experiences in Vietnam and put away or discard the souvenirs that symbolize them; you have to give up your addiction to alcohol; etc.

This is a message not just to people who have unusual difficulties, but to all of us. This view of the stanza is evident in Translation B along with “Attractive Phenomena Can Be Dangerous”.

### ***Some Things Are Unambiguously Bad***

This implicit stanza is derived from “Aversion to Thorns”.

The idea that the good and bad are intertwined, or that nothing or no one is all good nor all bad, can be found in much religious or philosophical literature.

Actually, that notion is contrary to our experiences in daily life. Each of us has had the experience of something here or there that simply has no redeeming features for our experience. There are (some very few) phenomena which show themselves as entirely awful or joyful, sometimes because we do not get a complete experience of them.

***Beware of Bad Religious Scholarship***

This topic is emphasized in Appendix F: Mysteries, in the section “Study”. A little skepticism can be helpful to distinguish between lore and disinformation. This implicit stanza is derived from “Attractive Phenomena Can Be Dangerous”.

In 2012, most of the bad religious scholarship in Teutonic reconstruction is superficial. Usually, pretend expertise results in egregious misuse of ancient words or false explanations of rituals. Sometimes people pretend that the ancient lore supports some moral or political idea that would not have occurred to the ancients at all but does not do any harm nowadays. On the other hand, too much of this hinders learning the religion because people are hassled with learning unnecessarily weird terminology or some other distractions. And, of course, accepting bad scholarship can lead people in directions contrary to enlightened religion.

Two examples might make this situation clearer.

At an Asatruist convention in 2009, someone gave a lecture class on “blotes”. The speaker was a priest. He told us that the 3-round toasting ceremony which is customary among Asatruists is based on the symbol in *Beowulf*. At the Asatruist modern ceremony, people take turns making toasts, usually a round for deities, a round for heroes, and a free round for just any brief speech or song you want. Among other things, there is an official called a thyle who is charged with challenging promises (called “boasts”) that would “put bad luck in the...well”. The thyle in these ceremonies, supposedly as in the classic poem, has the job of making sure that no one makes a promise in excess of what he or she can fulfill. Anyone who knows Old English or who has at least studied *Beowulf* would know that the lecturer in this “workshop” had not read the poem and had not even bothered to look up “symbol” or “þyle” in a dictionary. There is no such drinking ceremony in *Beowulf*. Also, the poem is quite explicit that the þyle is an orator or royal spokesperson who argues with the hero over his promise to kill Grendel simply out of jealousy and immaturity. And a symbol is a banquet, not a formal drinking ceremony.

Another example is in Alaric Albertsson's generally well-thought out and well-written (2011) book, *Wyrdworking*. On pages 3-4, he defines wyrd as similar to karma. It is a common misconception. This definition does not harm the rest of his fine book, which is not about theology. But if you believe that wyrd is how the future "unfolds from from all of our past words and deeds", then you will not really understand the distinctive theology of Teutonic polytheism. Albertsson is very careful to say things that would influence a person to behave well; he takes his responsibilities as a religious leader very seriously. And this mis-definition of wyrd is morally harmless.

When I began studying English polytheist religion, I would often encounter a document which would begin with something like "Frith is usually defined as peace, but that is not a good definition". Then the author would go on for several pages of discussion based on the definition of "friþ" in the Cleasby-Vigfusson dictionary of Old Icelandic. She/he had obviously not bothered to consult an Old English dictionary nor to directly examine English uses of the word in question.

(Yes, the present author is simply ignoring the racists.)

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At this point, an aside to give advice might be helpful to readers who are not familiar with early medieval English culture. How might one protect oneself against false lore?

Part of the problem, as noted above, is that you cannot judge content by the person who offers it. Very conscientious persons in the context of largely excellent work will sometimes make the mistake of passing a false rumor in writing.

The answer is to require that people show their work. Remember when you were in primary school taking a math test, and the teacher required that you show your work, not just put down the right answer? She or he wanted to reduce the chance that you guessed or copied off someone else's exam (and she/he wanted to have a chance to coach by seeing where you went wrong if you did).

By insisting that people either tell you how they arrived at their conclusion, or at least whose paper they copied off of, you can more easily detect the false lore. Also, insisting that people “show their work” gives them an incentive to examine their own logic and data -- not to mention keep track of their sources.

This should not cause any problem for reconstructionists. Professional academics tend *not* to have a problem with this -- they habitually support assertions. Christians do not have a problem with this, they often literally cite chapter and verse out of habit. Sometimes, that is all they give you -- just the reference.

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### ***Religion Is Beautiful but Can Be Harmful***

This implicit stanza is built upon all those at lower levels. Any noble person can find aspects of religion which are best avoided or let go of. A seeker can try to have and want to do well, but approach it badly, like the seekers of human ties in “Possessing Can Be Painful if Done Poorly”.

One can become obsessed with harmful superstitions or with the outer trappings of religion and wander away from its essence. Care and humane standards should be applied. In modern times, we all are aware of crusades, witch hunts, and other unenlightened activities that appear to be religious but are contrary to humane ethics. Involvement in such pseudo-religious movements can hinder the development of a person if not drive him or her a little crazy. However, there are personal-level thorns that are more frequently encountered. Power struggles over church committees, overemphasis on a particular ritual style, spending too much time in meditation or ceremony at the expense of a healthy social life — are examples of thorns growing in the vines of religions. Superstitions, overuse of escapism, and naïve attempts to feel superior to the less enlightened are thorns whose pain is not always apparent. The *OERP* returns to this topic in subsequent stanzas, as in “Lagu” and “Ýr”. The role of insecurities in causing us to grab thorns is a theme of “Ĉén”.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Careless reaching out.  
Hanging onto that which is harmful  
Aversive phenomena  
Fascinating and attractive aversive phenomena  
Attaining things one does not want  
Grasping  
Holding on despite severe pain  
Unequivocal evil  
The evil that grows on the same vine as the beautiful  
Emotional insecurity  
Unselfish love  
Ethical business

### *Contrasts*

Attraction versus aversion  
Properly done versus carelessly done acquisition  
Holding on versus letting go  
Desire to rest or persist versus compulsion to go  
Enlightened love versus emotionally insecure love  
Fair business versus business that is destructive

### *Advice for Living*

Technical skill, care, and humane standards should be applied to interpersonal relations, hobbies, work, play, and religion. We sometimes forget and treat badly people we need. We can ruin our enjoyment of love by grasping thoughtlessly or ineptly. Attractive things and doings can be dangerous. Sometimes one must be skillful when approaching or retaining, and sometimes people need to be told to just let go. Although there may be some inherent yin-yang, good-bad, aversion-attraction balance in the course of human life, one can encounter aspects of things or events that are purely evil as far as you are

concerned; the good is for someone else's benefit. In the pursuit of progressive mysticism, you can expect to confront all of reality. Although the overall balance of human lives may be "positive", anyone will encounter times to just let go. Although it may be difficult to engage the flywheels of one's conscious mind in the presence of compelling passion, desire must be tempered with discipline. Let go of superstitions that hold you back.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D2	5
1b	A	5
2a	A	5
2b	Hypermetric A	6
3a	A	5
3b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	11
3	10
Total	31

## Fourth Stanza: Rational Consciousness, Speech, Wisdom, and Blessedness<sup>5</sup>

Os byþ orðfruma • ælcra spráce  
 Wísdómes wraþu • and wítana frófur  
 And eorla gehwám • éadnys and tóhiht

### *Translations*

#### *(C) Transliteration*

{god named Os; principle of divinity} is (the) {creator, cause, ultimate source, first cause}  
 (of) {each, every} {speech, speaking, discourse; power of speech; language}  
 wisdom's {support}  
 and (to / for) {knowledgeable persons; those competent to give counsel} {comfort, consolation}  
 and (To) {earl, noble; warrior; man; hero} {each, every}  
 (it is) {richness; happiness; blessedness} and {hope, confidence, trust; glad expectation }

#### *(B)*

Os is end-cause of • ev'ry speaking,  
 Sapience' shore-up, • and sage-person's comfort;  
 To barons each one, • blessing and high hope.

#### *(C)*

Os, the meta-deity, is the ultimate source of every language, a support of wisdom, plus a comfort to the knowing. And it is happiness and confidence to every noble person.

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<sup>5</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1996d).

**(D)**

All-Parent's the ultimate source • of every speaking  
 And sapience's prop-up • and sages own comfort.  
 To earls each one, it is • asset and promise.

**(E) *Modernized Meter***

Os is the source of all our speech,  
 and wisdom's pillar, and counselors' comfort,  
 and to all patricians -- contentment and hope.

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

Three topics are discussed under this rubric. (1) The major dispute among scholars regarding this strophe is the meaning of the title word. (2) There is a minor issue regarding the translation of eadnys. (3) The third topic is a criticism of Translation B.

***The Title Word***

There are two issues regarding the title word. One is the meaning of "Os" and the other is pronunciation.

Os is the name of the principle of divinity or a personification of divinity. Other interpretations — "mouth" or Wódan — do not fit meaningfully into the stanza. The word cannot be translated into a simple term in Modern English, possibly because the notion of a general principle of divinity apart from any particular divinity is alien to Abrahamic religions. (These religions are so dominant that it is often difficult for people in many areas of the world to understand theology in terms that re not derived from Abrahamic religions.) Apparently, the lack of familiarity with the notion represented by this word has produced substantial confusion . Hence, the arguments in favor of the present interpretation are long enough to be presented in the addendum to this chapter.

What does all this add up to? The principle of divinity is a part of each of us. It is part of the human mind or psyche. Each person might have more or less of it, but it ties us together and sets us apart from lesser species, including those that can talk and use tools. In Teutonic Pagan systems, this mental aspect also distinguishes between deities and giants (Olsen, 2011; Stanfield, 2003).

In this book, the rune name is pronounced like “Oz”. Most students of the *OERP* indicate that Os is pronounced with a long “o” (as in “dose”), following Campbell (1959: 50-52). But Campbell’s argument is that the sound in question started out as *ǫ*, evolved from that into *á*, and then into a long “o” and now we have the short “o”. His case is well-reasoned and based on thorough research which we have to admire. But I think that we have a straighter path from the Proto-Germanic (short) “a” represented in *ansuz* to the (short) “o” that we hear in the modern “Oswald”.

### ***Eadnys***

Despite different renderings of this word in various translations, we have a one-word equivalent in Modern English. That word has all the ambivalence of the Old English original. Checking Old English dictionaries and directly examining use of this word, it is clear that “*eadnys*” means about the same as Modern English “blessedness”. Both words refer to both a material condition (wealth) and psychological condition (happiness). Sometimes, they refer to a combination of material wealth, peace of mind, love, and/or some sort of sense of being gifted by at least one divine being. Sometimes “*eadnys*” and “blessedness” denote simply being lucky.

However, in the present context, the author(s) intended to denote the psychological meaning, “happiness”. Material equipment, supplies, real estate, and dumb luck are outside the scope of of the stanza.

***Critique of Translation B***

Despite -- or rather because -- of the use of non-Germanic words in the translation, it has been possible to get an excellent match of rhythm, word-sense, and alliteration in Translation B.

The original calls our attention to a subconscious need for complacency and hope. This is done by both the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the stanza. It is clearer if you perform the last line with a change in style of speaking after the caesura. This means that in the last line there is a powerful emotional impact in the transition between “And to earls every one” and the slower, softer rendition of “(pause) blessing and hoping.” This transition helps you feel the emotional need that the whole stanza is talking about.

There is also a certain direct uplifting of spirit from the combination of rhythm and words.

These effects are less subtle in Translation B than in the original.

The more modernized (iambic pentameter) Translation E appears to convey all the features of the original except the rhythm. The rhythms are nonetheless similar. The original has a type D1 (falling-by-stages) rhythm in the first verse, but the remaining verses are all types A and B, which resemble iambic pentameter. Translation E seems to flow smoother because of the way it is phrased, not because of its modern meter. In Translation E, if you enunciate the final phrase, “contentment and hope”, slower and softer than the rest of the stanza, you communicate the same emotional uplift as in the original in the modernized meter. And you also reveal the implicit message regarding subconscious need for complacency and hope.

***Discussion***

This is a complex strophe. The implications of “Os” range from the meaning of divine beings for religious persons to the value of high levels of awareness and rationality in human life. In some ways, this strophe seems to strongly endorse

worship of one or more deities. But it also has a way of stimulating a critical attitude toward deity worship.

This stanza is mainly concerned with matters of interest to all religions. The stanza “Os” does not explicitly deny nor advocate strict polytheism, strict monotheism, nor some kind of syncretic compromise. It implicitly regards the matter as a distraction.

Chief stave analysis of “Os” in the *OERP* supplies a clue that “Os” is ultimately about human nature and not about a specific god. The chief staves are: “each”, “wise persons”, and “assets / blessedness”. Following these and other clues, we are to find both questions and answers. What is it that blesses each of the wise as a shrewd or knowing person? It is the divine in human nature, and the hypersoul that motivates us to pursue that divinity. And what is the importance of Os to progressive mysticism?

### ***Attractions of Divine Worship***

“Attractions of Divine Worship” presents a description of what we get from deity worship. The attractions listed are those of deity worship per se. They are not to be confused with attractions of being a member of a temple, having one’s sense of identity anchored partly by a group identity, or other benefits of religious practice or belief. By referring to Os, the stanza avoids discussing any particular deity.

The emotional attraction is described not only by the words but also by the lyrical effect of the whole structure of the stanza. You would never perceive this from a prose rendering like Translation C. Even the relatively awkward style of (half-line based) Translation D is not sufficient to transmit what the original author(s) of the *OERP* were trying to tell us.

A person who has not previously experienced direct contact with the divine will most likely not recognize this aspect of the stanza without coaching. Direct contact derives from substantial experience with worship of the divine or meditation on religious mystery. Contact with the divine is a topic discussed in

Appendix F (on mysteries), but it is also dealt with by other stanzas of the *OERP*.

Although the *OERP* refers only to a Germanic divine being by name, this is another case of a religious universal.

### ***Deity Awareness***

And if we look upon the nobles as a metaphor for progressive mystics, we can see some advice: take cognizance of the divine. Accept it in whatever form seems natural to you. Include it in rituals and meditations. It makes both the seekers and their leaders more confident, wiser, and more comfortable.

Piety is a way of connecting to the divine that people seem to be comfortable with. Connecting to the divine without worship is possible, but seems a rather unpopular approach. Perhaps declarations of love and admiration, or declarations of surrender, bring a degree of inner peace and a subtle sense of thrill in addition to that which can be obtained by means of nontheistic meditations or ceremonies.

By means of worshipping, one can meditate upon our divine aspect and focus on attempts to enhance the degree to which one manifests divinity.

### ***Divine Aspect of Humanity***

This implicit stanza is a description of the divine aspect in human nature. This notion relates to that which sets mankind apart from lower animals, and it relates to topics in Teutonic myth.

Other animals have spoken language and culture, but mankind is far above them in language development. This suggests that -- by definition -- highly-developed language use is part of the divine aspect that contrasts with our lower-animal aspect. Also, in deity-oriented religion the deities are — or the Deity is — supposed to support wisdom, to give comfort to sincere practitioners, and generally to be a source of psychological strength and health for those who are

ennobled by religion. These benefits are present not just for moments of crisis or hardship, but also in routine awareness of the dark-and-light nature of life. And when there is nothing particularly difficult to understand or cope with, the great joy that is to be had from piety is similar to that which one can find from being in love.

The notion of the speech-gift is supported by one of the creation stories in the Prose Edda, which says that a deity gave mankind the gift of speech. That myth says that three divine brothers, Óðinn (Inspiration), Vili (Will), and Vé (Temple, Holy Place) found two trees along a seashore. They made one into a man called Ask (Ash) and the other into a woman called Embla (Elm). Óðinn gave the man and woman spirit and life. Vili gave them understanding and movement. Vé gave them form, speech, hearing, and sight. All three gods gave Ask and Embla clothes and names. This is a mythic way of laundry-listing characteristics that distinguish mankind from our lesser relatives (“*Gylfanning*” – Young, 1954: 37).

### ***The Quality of Divinity Sets Mankind Apart***

What is it that sets mankind apart from dumb animals? Some lower animals use tools and language. But they do not get as much out of such use as do folks, because there is some degree of divinity in each of us. This is what sets us off from lower animals. Each of us does, indeed, have an animal aspect, but we also have something else. It is not speaking, wisdom, nor knowledge; instead it is something that lies behind speaking and thinking.

The divine aspect of human nature is emphasized in the myth *Rigspula*, where we are told that persons of all social classes are descendants of a deity. Although people may vary greatly, divinity is that which makes us different from lower animals (Bainbridge, 1997; Hollander, 1962: 120-128.)

### ***Rational Consciousness is the Human Treasure***

Here, we are taking the nobles and the wise people as standing for seekers and their leaders respectively. Os represents rational consciousness as a mental

quality. Viewed this way, the poem gives us advice regarding the value of rational consciousness in progressive mysticism.

This rational awareness is behind a wide variety of human activities, from intellectual achievement to idle conversation. We enjoy achieving awareness and understanding of our surroundings, our fellows, and ourselves. Use of rational consciousness supports learning and shrewdness in general. For creative intellectuals, enlightened use of their minds brings a sense of relaxation and contentment by satisfying a deep-seated urge. And for every person who intends to do well, the potentials inherent in use of enlightened mentality contribute to a positive emotional state.

### ***The Complement of Wyrd***

Wyrd is that which you cannot fully account for and have to work around or exploit but cannot change (see Appendix E). Os is the complement of wyrd, because Os lies behind communication, knowledge, and shrewd decision making. As there is yin, there must be yang. As there is light, there must be dark, by definition of each. As there are unconsciousness, there is consciousness. And it is consciousness that ultimately helps us find or create assets and confidence as we cope with life.

### ***The Appeal of Mythology Can Be A Weakness***

Here, the poem touches on subtle irony. This implicit stanza is supported by a critical examination of first- and second-level implicit stanzas. They are only partly true.

It is not literally true that a deity — or the principle of divinity — is the source of every human utterance, for much of what people say is obviously not divine. Some of what appears to be rational discourse actually expresses nonrational emotions or simply uncalculated talk. Every reader of this book has had plenty of experience with unshrewd, unlearned, poorly-spoken and hopelessly garrulous wretches who seem to gain plenty of gratification in oral discourse — to the discomfort or amusement of their wiser companions — without learning

anything from the experience. And whether we are at work or at play, it often seems that those who do not hesitate to think do most of the talking out of sheer aggressiveness. They seem to act out of an unconscious and unreasoning urge to dominate.

If the first statement in the stanza is only partly true, let us question the rest of it. Yes, the divine in us raises us above the lifestyles of lower animals, giving much greater conscious self control. But the apparent seeking of religion is also a comfort to and resource for people who are arrogant, violent, insincere, or otherwise ignoble. Deity worship can be wonderful, but must not be taken too simplistically.

Over-commitment to the literal truth of metaphorical statements inhibits communication, opposes shrewdness, discomforts the knowing, and can hinder and frustrate those who would attempt to be enlightened.

Thus, the poem indirectly tells us that the deities of our myths, who seem so attractive and useful, can also give us ways to entrap ourselves. Too much literalism and piety leads to superstition and illusion, and away from true religion.

The existence of bad (or false) religion is another religious universal. That is to say that this problem occurs in every religion.

### ***Worship and Surrender Can Help and Hinder***

This implicit stanza is supported by all the implicit stanzas below it. Cultivation of deity-oriented religion tends to be comforting. But being ennobled by relating to deities (or a deity) means not being carried away. Otherwise, illusion and failures of self-control will eventually make the vessel of religion get frighteningly out of control on the rough seas of reality.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Attractions of divine worship

The idea of “god”

Humanity’s aspect of divinity

Shrewdness

Knowledge

Superstition

Doubletalk

Attractive, misleading ideas

Illusion

Comfort

False comfort

False version of (any) religion

False enlightenment

A comfort that freezes one in immaturity

Knowing persons

Rational consciousness

Attractiveness of worship and surrender to a deity

Attractive trap

### *Contrasts*

Dysfunctional comfort versus productive comfort

Superstition versus progressive mysticism

Facilitation versus hindrance

Literal truth versus metaphor

Truth versus illusion

Enlightenment versus false enlightenment

### *Advice for Living*

There is a comfort to be found in cultivating psychological qualities that separate mankind from lower animals, and such cultivation is rightly regarded as

divine. There is a natural comfort in relating to divine-ness and to other humans by worshipping deities. But there is also a trap in common human religious practices — the trap of illusion. The path that the supersoul bids us to follow may seem less comfortable than more conventional approaches. However there is a deeper and more thorough serenity and comfort in the struggle of progressive mysticism.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Rhythm Type	Number of Syllables
1a	D1	5
1b	A	4
2a	A	4
2b	A	5
3a	B	5
3b	A	5

<u>Line</u>	<u>Syllables</u>
1	9
2	11
3	10
Total:	30

### *Addendum to Chapter 4: “Os”*

The purpose of this addendum is to present arguments in favor of the present interpretation of the title word.

Those who favor “mouth” as the meaning or an alternate meaning see os as a (rarely-occurring) Latin import. However, “mouth” is not at all a plausible translation.

Three additional arguments support the present interpretation. (1) Os cannot be interpreted as mouth anywhere that it occurs as a standalone word. (2) Os was a common word in OE, not a rarely-used Latin import. (3) The word denotes “divinity” or “principle of divinity” (but not any specific, anthropomorphic god or goddess).

### ***Os as a Standalone Word Does Not Mean “Mouth”***

Prominent students of this poem have been about evenly divided on the “mouth” versus “god” issue. Os has been interpreted by some scholars as “mouth” (Halsall, 1981; Juszcyk, 1998; Kemble, 1840; Shippey, 1972; Osborn and Longland, 1982), by some as “god” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; Grienberger, 1921; Hall, 1960; Pollington, 1996; Thorsson, 1993). It has been translated by some as “god / mouth” (Page 1973; Thorsson, 1987 – but he changed his mind in 1993). And some scholars simply do not translate the word (Dickins, 1915; Paul 1996; S. Wódening 1995b).

The scholars who contend that os in the *OERP* means “mouth” contend that it is an import. There is a Latin word “os” meaning “mouth”. But as Dobbie (1942) points out, there are no other Latin words among rune names; they are all Germanic words.

There are only two instances of os as a standalone word. Other than in the stanza “Os”, the word survives in plural genitive (“ese”) in the charm *For a Sudden Stitch*.

There is a scholarly consensus that in *For a Sudden Stitch*, the reference of ese is clearly to divine beings, not to mouths. The charm twice mentions “shot by” ese as a cause of the patient’s malady.

Certainly, in the context of the *OERP*, Os cannot be translated as “mouth” and still have the stanza make sense. If the mouth were the ultimate source of every utterance or of language itself, then talking would inherently be literally mindless (even more often than it is). Moreover, “mouth” — not speaking — would be a comfort to the wise and support of wisdom. And we would be expected to believe that the human mouth is more a comfort to earls than to talkative fools.

Juszczk has asserted that os is a borrowing from Old Norse *oss* (mouth). But my own examination of the Old Norse rune poems and dictionary entries implies that *oss* always means estuary and never denotes the human mouth. At least two of the three “Osgodby” English villages in the former Danelaw are definitely not near estuaries, hence those names must mean “Divine-Good-Settlement” (as opposed to “Mouthy-Good-Settlement”). (See Bartholomew, 1997; Cleasby et al, 1957; Halsall, 1981; Juszczk, 1998; Zöega, 1910.)

### ***Os as a Common Element in Compound Nouns***

Os was not rare; it was a common element in personal and place names. (Ironically, Osborn and Longland justify their view that Os is Latin in part by claiming that use of Os in Old English was rare.) Not only was the word common in compound words, it could not make sense in any of those compound words if it meant “mouth”.

The focal word was a common element in Old English men’s names. Examples: Osbeorn or Osborn (God-man, Divine-noble), Oswald or Osweald (Divine Power), Oswine (Divine Friend), Oswy (God-Image), Osgód (Divine Good or Divine Benefit), Osric (God-Power), Oslác (Divine Gift), or Osmund (God-Power or Divine Hand). The modern surname Osbald implies God-Bold or Divine Confidence. The modern surname Osbert probably derives from Osbeorht (God-Bright). The modern surname Oswell seems to refer to God-Spring or Divine Stream. The following are also found: Osfrið (Divine Peace), Osric (Divine Power or Divine Ruler), Osræd (Divine Counsel).

Os was also used in women's names. King Alfred's mother was named Osburg (Holy Fortress). Queen Osþryþ (Divine Power) ruled in Mercia in late 600's. A queen of Northumbria in the 700's was named Osgifu (Divine Gift).

The word is an element in surviving place names. A modern road atlas lists Oscroft (god's small enclosed field or divine small enclosed field). Osmotherley implies an outdoor place for worship of Frige or Mary, but it could just as likely meant that motherhood itself was considered divine by the polytheists.

(For personal and place names, see Barber, 1903; Bardsley, 1884; Bartholomew, 1997; Bede, 731; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Branston, 1974: 38-45; Dickens, 1915; Dobbie, 1942: 154; Fletcher, 1997: 217; Garmonsway, 1972: 27-29, 168, 171; Hanks and Hodges, 1988; Osborn and Longland, 1982: 30; Stenton, 1971.)

### ***Mind?***

On page 225 of their (1898) dictionary, Bosworth and Toller define "ós" as "mind" -- "mind is to every man prosperity". This paraphrase of the stanza "Os" appears in their definition of "eadnys". That definition of this stanza's title word is not consistent with their explicit definition of "ós" on page 768 of the same volume!

The way "mind" fits the title word of this strophe is that a mental quality appears as a metaphorical implication of "Os" at the second level of meaning.

### ***Relation to Wóden and to Old Norse "Áss"***

Were it not for the lack of gender specificity as "Os" was used in Old English, Os could indirectly refer to Wóden in this stanza. The Eddas tell us that articulateness, shrewdness, and knowledge are more the specialties of Óðinn / Wóden than of any other Teutonic deity. Thus, some students of this stanza opine that the title word is an indirect reference to Wóden, or perhaps to an English equivalent of the Norse god Bragi. The strophe "Áss" in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* shows this usage. That strophe says: "Áss er aldingautr / ok Ásgarðs jöfurr / ok Valhallar vísi" ("God is ancient creator / and king of

Asgard / and Lord of Valhalla”). This is clearly a reference to the Norse Óðinn, who was called Wóden in England. But it appears that “Os” and “Áss” are not quite the same thing, since the Old English word is not restricted to the category of male deity.

The reader might think it odd that Wóden would never be mentioned in a rune poem, but He is implicitly present throughout the poem as the patron deity of runology and rune use, so explicit mention is not necessary. (See Bray, 2002; Young, 1954; Hollander, 1962).

### ***Relation to Old Norse “Áss”***

Bosworth and Toller point out that use of os in personal names is similar to the use of áss in Old Norse, where áss meant “god”. (The Old Norse “van” could refer to a deity of either gender.) However, the Old English usage differs from that of the Old Norse áss. The usage differs, first in that Ós is used in both male and female names, so the Old English word is not a reference to a masculine wight. Second, the Old Norse word is used to refer to specific deities, and there is no evidence in the surviving corpus of Old English that Os was ever used to refer to a specific deity.

### ***Generic or Ultimate “Divinity” versus Supreme Deity***

If all other deities were aspects of this Os or were derived from His will, Os would be similar to the “God” in relatively new movements in Hindu religion. Likewise, some Wiccans recognize many deities but conceive the many as aspects of their Goddess or as derived from the Goddess, and we might conceive of Os as corresponding to Her. But Os comes from Germanic Pagan religion, which has no ruling deity. Norse lore depicts Óðinn as the king of their pantheon, but He never administers His kingdom. Nor does He dominate other deities as Zeus/Jupiter does in the poems *Aeneid*, *Odyessy*, or *Iliad*. The most conservative interpretation of Woden’s / Óðinn’s role in Teutonic polytheism is that He is the main exemplar, not the ruler of the deities nor the only real deity. (See Bhaktivedenta, 1984; Butler, 1942; Elton, 1905; Fagles, 2006; Hamilton, 2002; Hiltbeutel, 1987; Hollander, 1964; Rees, 1991).

Os is not alone. In other religions also, we find this idea of a named factor or principle of divinity that does not have mythic representation, temples, nor idols. Andrew Lang cites a description of the god Ahone of American Indians living in what is now Virginia. The Incas believed in Pachamaca, who is not the Creator but instead he is to the universe what the soul is to the body. Among modern Hindus, Aum or Om is the impersonal absolute. It is omnipresent, omnipotent, and the source of all existence. It represents both the manifest and unmanifest of God (Brahman). Brahman per se is incomprehensible but may be connected to by chanting “Om”. The specific deities (including Brahma) are not to be confused with Brahman. (See Das, 2012; Lang 1907: Preface to New Edition and Chapter 6).

An interesting model to consider is Kwoth, of the Nuer religion (Evans-Pritchard, 1956). Kwoth is the name of something like a supreme deity, but the word is also used to refer to minor spirits and to a spiritual quality that manifests itself in various ways and at various times. The Nuer do not have a creation myth, but they regard Kwoth as having created mammals, birds, customs, and everything else. They at times address the moon or some animal to which they have given a sacrifice as to a totem (ideal) animal, but they are addressing spirit (kwoth) or Spirit (Kwoth). Thus, Kwoth is not quite the same as any being in Abrahamic or Greek (Pagan) religion, but is a sort of principle of divinity.

This discussion raises some interesting questions that are beyond the scope of the present study. Is Os identical with the supersoul? Are the other deities merely aspects of Os? Did people pray to or about Os or only meditate on the principle of divinity?

### ***Conclusion***

So in this context, the term refers to a general principle of divinity or to the supersoul. It is analogous (but not identical) to the Hindu concept of Aum (see Appendix F). Os is not a deity, was never worshipped directly, and was therefore not a demon to the Christians. Yet, Os was quite popular. Os can be named and invoked as the supersoul or as Aum is named and invoked, but Os

does not have the specializations, incompleteness, humanity, moral complexity, nor weirdness that we commonly find in polytheistic deities. Os has a vast completeness which defies manipulation by banquets (sacrifices) and prayers. If all this is correct, then He is not really a deity. Os is invoked primarily not by formal liturgy nor by prayer — but as you live.

## Fifth Stanza: Making Progress Is a Challenge<sup>6</sup>

Rad byþ on recyde · rinca gehwylcum  
sefte, and swiþhwæt · þam þe sitteþ onufan  
maere mægenheardum · ofer milpaþas

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration:*

Riding is in {dwelling/palace/hall/building}  
(for) {warrior/hero} {each/everyone/all/whomever}  
{Comfortable/soft/mild/pleasant/effeminate/easy} {and/but} {very  
strenuous/very active}  
(to) {those/he/it} who {sit/sits/is situated} upon above/high  
Horse {very strong-hard/mighty-hard}  
over/above/across {miles-long paths/tracks/ways }

#### *(B)*

When sheltered, a-riding is • for any swordsman  
soft, but quite stressful • for one sitting up high on  
mount so very mighty • over miles many.

#### *(C) Modernized Meter*

A ride indoors is for any hero soft.  
But strenuous it is when you're sitting high  
on a hard-muscled steed on a route that's long.

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<sup>6</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997a).

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The positions of the *The Stanzas of the OERP* on editing onrecyde, onufan, and mīl paþas are conventional. The translation of the rune name and the chief stave in the first line depart from the usual. These decisions are explained below.

In this chapter, I indicate research on the entire corpus of surviving Old English literature. This refers to searching a copy I bought from the Dictionary of Old English Project the University of Toronto. The electronic copy of the corpus has also been a useful resource in word studies in other chapters also.

### ***Issues in Edition***

There are three places in this strophe where the medieval editor may have left errors: “onrecyde”, “onufan”, and “mīl paþas”.

In the first verse, “onrecyde” is run together in the original. This is an obvious error and all scholarly editors separate the preposition from the noun.

At the end of the second line, the original has “onufan” run together. This is probably an optional spelling, not an error. In the existing corpus (as edited by modern scholars), “on ufan” and “onufan” occur about equally often. It is “onufan” 27 times in 21 documents, and “on ufan” 27 times in 22 documents.

In the last verse, “mīl paþas” has an extra space in the middle, and all scholarly editors of the *OERP* join those two words. The absence of an inflexional ending in “mīl” is taken as a clue that it belongs joined to “paþas”.

One might propose the error in “mīl paþas” is the omission of the inflexional ending, but prosodic considerations tell otherwise. Adding the inflexional “e” to mīl does not harm the last verse — if you only count syllables. The verse goes from 5 to 6 syllables, which would be in the normal range for last verses in the stanzas of the *OERP*. But the cadence is off. That is, if you try speaking the last verse more slowly and in a softer voice than the other verses in this stanza, the less rhythmical 5-beat stanza is easier to use than is the catchier 6-beat version.

If you stumble when pronouncing Old English, check this out using Translation B in two versions. (Put “the” before “highways” to get a 6-syllable version of Translation B’s last verse.)

Also, making mil into a separate adjective alters the esoteric sense of the strophe. The word bearing stress in the last verse becomes “mile” instead of “long road”. The chief staves would then be “hero”, “sits”, and “mile” (the hero sits a long time) — instead of “hero”, “sits” and “long road” (the hero has a lot of work to do).

You might ask, “What is a ‘mile-path’ anyway?” It is a way whose length is measured in miles instead of shorter measures (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Grienberger, 1921).

### ***Translation and Spelling of the Title Word***

In this context, “riding” is clearly the closest translation of rad to fit this context if we are just trying to produce a prose version of the stanza.

Various definitions for the title word have been proposed, but most of them do not fit the context. Some propose that in this stanza rad is an alternative spelling of ræd (advice), but this proposal weakens the contrast which forms the main theme of the stanza. (See the “Discussion” section below). Also, Bosworth and Toller (following Chadwick) offer “furniture” and “trappings”<sup>7</sup>. Dobbie rejects “furniture” and “trappings” outright, and I find Dobbie’s objections persuasive. Moreover, the stanza “Yr” refers to equestrian trappings. Another example: in *Futhark*, Thorsson defines the rune name as “riding, way”, but later in *Runelore* he translates rad as “(a) ride”. (See Bessinger, 1960; Borden, 1982; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dickens, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Thorsson, 1984: 28; Thorsson, 1987: 205; Toller, 1921).

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<sup>7</sup> Bosworth and Toller offer this translation of the stanza: “In the house is furniture for each man soft, and (the furniture of the horse, the harness) very strong for him that sits on the stout steed, traversing the roads.”

Spelling is also an issue in the literature. In Hicks' publication of the OERP, the name of the rune is as given here. However, Thorsson says in *Futhark* that the name is "rað," and a primary source called MS 17 (shown in a photocopy in Page's book) also indicates that the name of the rune is spelled with an eth instead of a "d". The "d" spelling, which is accepted by most students of the *OERP*, is consistent with most manuscripts listing rune names. (Bessinger, 1960: 51; Borden, 1982: 1093; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Hicke, 1703-1705: 135-136; Kemble, 1840; 26, 29; Page, 1987: 14; Thorsson, 1984: 28; Thorsson, 1987: 205; Toller, 1921).

### ***Translation of Rinca***

In this context, the rinc is most likely someone in a role that calls for being active and facing hardship. The original artistic intent was to present a heightened sense of irony, and this intent would be better served if the focal person were described not as a generic man, but as a sort of person who should be adventurous, tough, or forth-going.

Therefore, I have departed from what you can find in dictionaries by not offering "man" as translation. Bosworth and Toller tell us that rinc is a poetical term that denotes "man". However, in each of the examples they give, "warrior" or "soldier", or "hero" would more precisely fit as a translation than would "man". For example, the expression "fallen angels" would more likely have been translated into Old English as "fallen heroes" than as mere fallen men. Hall defines rinc as "man, warrior, hero" (Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Hall, 1960).

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B fails to preserve position of the rune name for sake of alliteration and rhythm. Even so, the original's six-syllable D1 (falling by stages) first verse is translated into type A of the same length. If the original author(s) had not intended to have a secondary accent on the second syllable in "recyde", the their verse 1a would have been unmetrical. If, indeed that were the case, then Translation B's verse 1a would be a faithless improvement on the original.

All the other verses are matched exactly for patterns of rhythm, word sense, and alliteration.

However, to modern audiences the iambic pentameter translation sounds more like poetry than does Translation B. In that sense, Translation C is a more faithful rendition.

### *Discussion*

“Rad” contrasts two aspects of the same person. Other scholars have pointed out the unusual use of “and” instead of “but” to contrast “riding” in shelter against real riding. They opine that the artistic intent was to make a more immediate contrast (Grienberger, 1921; J. R. Hall, 1977; Larrington, 1993; Halsall, 1981). The conjunction used does make the contrast more immediate, but it might also have been intended to help us figure out the full variety of meanings of the contrast. The “and” is a hint to us that the contrast is between two aspects of each of us, not just between two types of person.

At the first level, the implicit stanza is “Riding Is Harder Than Is Talking about Riding”. This one plainly contrasts the comfort of the hall against the stresses of a long horse ride.

At the second level, the implicit stanzas branch out in four directions. As a group, they contrast vicarious adventure, fantasy, planning, criticism, or ambition against doing or being. Most go beyond that to give psychological perspective or advice about specific situations. They are: “Talk is Relatively Cheap”, “Rapport is Easier if You Share Experience”, “More and Less Challenging Aspects of Religion”, and “Soul Travel Is a Challenge”.

At the third level we find several more implicit stanzas. “Planning Is Easier Than Doing”, “Progress-Makers Deserve Support”, and “Doing Both Aspects of Religion” extend second-level branches. “Religious Solidarity”, “Missionaries”, and “The Advanced Mystic is Involved in the Mundane” tie most of “Rad”

together. (The present author was not able to tie the soul travel branch back into an overall summary.)

### ***Riding Is Harder Than Is Talking about Riding***

This implicit verse indicates a higher valuation of action than of talk, for “Riding” contrasts the ease of sheltered fantasies, planning or idle talk with the strenuous nature of riding a powerful horse over long distances.

Riding a horse over long distances is much less comfortable and restful than is riding in a modern auto or bus on well-paved roads. If the horse hurries, the rider’s butt tends to bounce on the saddle repeatedly, and this can be painful. (Movies often show only the more colorful or glamorous aspects of cowboy or ancient-warrior lifestyles.)

### ***Talk Is Relatively Cheap***

This verse reminds us to respect those who are getting out and making things happen. In this implicit stanza, riding is a metaphor for any for any activity that brings progress for oneself. “Talk Is Relatively Cheap” is based on a second-level stanza but is very easy to see.

Osborn and Longland (1982: 31) see “Talk is Relatively Cheap” as the main point of “Rad”. They say that “Riding” criticizes the substitution of talk for action. Osborn and Longland also point out that we can see a denigration of boasting. In “Talk Is Relatively Cheap,” we can see an implicit skepticism of what people claim to have done.

### ***Rapport Is Easier If You Share the Experience***

Here, sallying forth on a powerful horse is analogy for any kind of stressful, constructive experience. For the storyteller, this is a warning that listeners might not readily understand the full experience. Some things are difficult to put into words, and require non-word tricks with speaking, leading people through a physical exercise, or some other extraordinary means of communication. For

listeners, this is a caution that they might have to pay unusually close attention or ask questions.

But what is most important is that “Rapport...” reminds us that seeing into another’s troubles or pride of accomplishment is a skill. Looking from the outside, it is easy to say what you would do, as people so often show in facile claims of how they would have handled a situation. But (“and”) it is very challenging if you are doing instead of talking.

Also, we are reminded that having experiences in common with others can make us better friends for them.

This implicit stanza is based on “Riding is Harder Than Is Talking about Riding”.

### ***More and Less Challenging Aspects of Religion***

In “More and Less Challenging Aspects of Religion”, shelter represents temple-space or set-aside worship time, and riding is a metaphor for religion. The contrast is between doing religion in a temple versus practicing continuous self-improvement in everyday life. This is one of the more important implicit stanzas in “Rad”, because it takes us furthest toward the top of the implicit-stanza tree.

This interpretation is based partly on the use of “riding” to mean two radically different things. Religion is used to make us comfortable and complacent, and to provide human social solidarity. But religion can also help us transform. The relationship between the two senses of “riding” in this stanza is the same as the relationship between the two senses of “religion” in common uses.

Use of the travel theme at a metaphor for religion appears elsewhere in this poem. In the stanza “Ing”, a vehicle is used as a metaphor for progressive mystical religion. Likewise, “Lagu” uses boats to represent religions, where it says that people need stable, well-founded religions.

“More and Less Challenging Aspects of Religion” is also supported by chief stave analysis. The chief staves of “Rad” are: warrior or hero, sits, and long roads. This is a hint that whoever would progress courageously will sit not at rest but have hard work.

### ***Soul Travel Is a Challenge***

In this implicit stanza, riding represents soul travel, which was a part of ancient Teutonic religion. For example, travel to other spiritual realms on a horse is analogous to Wodan’s trip to Hel in *Balder’s Dreams*. (See Bates, 1983; Gundarsson, 1994; Gundarsson, 1995; Hollander, 1962: 105-106, 117; Hollander, 1964: 10; E. Wódening, 1996a; 1996b; 1996c; S. Wódening, 1996).

“Soul Travel” tells us that shamanic work is not for everyone who thinks it might be a neat thing to do. Achieving the self-control to perform trancework is a challenge.

### ***Planning Is Easier Than Doing***

With this stanza, we arrive at the third level of meanings. This implicit stanza is a corollary of “Talk Is Relatively Cheap.”

This implicit verse assumes that the subject of discussion in shelter is the travel or the reason for travel. “Planning is Easier than Doing” therefore contrasts making plans, or just talking, with going out and making an effect using powerful means.

Psychologically, this implicit verse points out that it is easier to have a clear head in giving advice while sheltered at headquarters than when acting out in the open.

### ***Progress-Makers Deserve Support***

This is an indirect reminder that persons who are doers deserve the best from those who support them by planning or arranging. Also, this verse implicitly

advises that priestly staff deserve to have the lore-revealers put themselves into their work quite seriously. This implicit verse is based on “Planning is Easier than Doing”.

### ***Fucking Versus Adventuring***

The Early Medieval Anglo-Saxons were well aware of sexual intercourse. Riding in the dwelling or hall is a metaphor for fucking. This implicit stanza says that making love is easier than adventuring. A ride inside is soft for a hero.

### ***Its More Comfortable at Home***

It is a lot more comfortable if you do not do it in the road.

### ***Doing Both Aspects of Religion***

This implicit stanza is derived from “More and Less Challenging Aspects of Religion”. This implicit stanza is also based partly on the assumption that each progressive mystic will practice two aspects of religion. One aspect is a comforting refuge and yet is a basis for the more strenuous aspect. Ceremonial formulas and mythological frameworks learned in the more comforting aspect are related to those used in progressive mysticism; progressive mystics are recruited from the more comforting aspect; and progressive mystics continue to need the fellowship and other advantages of the more comforting aspect of their religion. Those into progressive mysticism might not do as much of that other aspect.

“Doing Both Aspects of Religion” advises us to save some energies for the more challenging aspect of religion. One can be distracted by pageantry and other peripheral matters. This message is easier to perceive if one is familiar with other stanzas of the *OERP*. This matter is emphasized in the stanza “Yr”, where the robes, public rituals, buildings, etc are compared to fancy horse tack. This matter is also a major emphasis of “Os”, where third-level implicit stanzas advise us that “The Appeal of Mythology Can Be a Weakness”, and that “Worship and Surrender Can Help and Hinder.”

***Religious Solidarity***

If “Planning is Easier Than Doing”, “Progress-Makers Deserve Support”, and the best religious leaders are “Doing Both Aspects of Religion”, then people need to support both aspects of whatever religion they have. This means volunteer labor, coming to the defense of their religion when it is threatened, and sacrificing material resources or cash to support the religion or its organizations.

Since progressive mystics are into the more challenging aspect of religion, they deserve some support and some (modest) recognition from their fellow seekers. Likewise, progressive mystics should support the more comforting aspect of their religion to the extent that doing so does not lead them away from progress.

***Missionaries and Priests are Elite***

Also, if “Planning is Easier Than Doing”, “Progress-Makers Deserve Support”, and the best practitioners are “Doing Both Aspects of Religion”, then missionary and priest/ess staff are front-line people who deserve support and recognition. They are under more pressure from public attention to live up to their religion than are the rest of us. Moreover, if “Rapport Is Easier If You Share the Experience”, then missionaries and priests need to have more experiences — or to get more out of their experiences — than do most people.

***The Advanced Mystic Is Involved in the Mundane***

The author(s) of this poem intended to imply that the advanced mystic is not totally withdrawn from mundane life. As Osborn and Longland put it, “a man should often pound ‘the long mile paths’ in order to retain his perspective” (1982: 31).

“The Advanced Mystic Is Involved in the Mundane” is derived from all the other implicit stanzas in “Rad”. Also, it is easier to find this implicit stanza after one is sufficiently familiar with later stanzas to see a theme. (This is one reason

why having someone to coach in person can speed up one's progress.) A related implicit stanza in "Eoh" is "The Proper Mystic". In "Éþel", there are three related implicit stanzas: "A Mind at Rest Tends to Remain at Rest", "Dissatisfaction Can Lead to Progress", "The Homeland of Infinite Progression".

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Progress
- Making things happen, action
- Strenuousness
- Challenge
- Shelter
- Responsibility
- Keeping a clear head under pressure
- Leadership
- Passivity
- Soul travel
- Involvement
- Riding

### *Contrasts*

- Sheltered versus nonsheltered situations
- Action versus inaction
- Highly effortful progress versus low effort stasis
- Physical effort versus talk
- Ambition versus accomplishment
- Making love versus adventuring

***Advice for Living***

The accomplished practitioner of religion is familiar with worldly efforts and conditions. Good progress is paid for with the coin of hardship and effort. Achievement of high levels of self-control is more easily talked of than accomplished. To understand others, it helps to have experiences. The performance of advanced magical or meditative techniques is not as easy as it looks from the outside and is not for everyone. To be a leader in a religious sense, you must be prepared to set an example. Your religion should get your active support.

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D1	6
1b	A	5
2a	D1	5
2b	A	7
3a	hyper. A	6
3b	C	5

Line	Syllables
1	11
2	12
3	11
	34

## Sixth Stanza: Passion and Enlightenment<sup>8</sup>

Cén byþ cwicera gehwam • cúþ on fýre  
blác and beorhtlic • byrneþ oftust  
þær hí æþelingas • inne restap

### *Translations*

#### *(D) Transliteration*

Torch is (to the) living each

Known by {fire, flame}

{Pale, pastel} {luminous, bright}

Burns most often

Where they {princes/nobles}

{Within, inside} rest

#### *(B)*

Lamp is by sentient ones • seen as flaming,  
bright and blond-pale. • Burns most often  
where aristocrats are • inside resting.

#### *(C) Modernized Meter*

To all living the lamp is plain from its fire,  
so pale and shining.  
Yet it burns most oft where noble ones  
are inside resting.

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<sup>8</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997a).

### *Issues in Edition and Translation*

There are two issues regarding translation. Translation of the title work is a minor issue. Although this stanza is more about knowing or awareness than about light, we cannot help but be curious what a cén is. The second issue is the rendering of “blác and beorhtlic”.

#### *Definition of Cén*

“(Oil) Lamp” fits the context in this stanza better than does “torch” or “candle”. Although the rune name is commonly translated as “torch”, the context in this stanza requires that the cén be more common in wealthier homes than in commoners’ homes. Anyone with an ax can cut off a piece of pine and get some resin and straw to make a torch. Candles were also common in the runic society. By contrast, both the fixture and the fuel for an oil lamp would have been more costly.

Other clues to the literal meaning of cén are slim. The name of this rune occurs 10 times in the surviving corpus of Old English literature. One is in this poem. Five are in mere lists of runes, which do not give a context for definition. The remaining four uses are in the Cynewulf signatures.

The difficulty — and advantage — with inferring meanings from Cynewulf’s signatures is that he used rune names figuratively. Cynewulf inserted the letters of his name as rune staves into sentences, with the staves used as abbreviations for their names. In his signatures, the author used the rune names as names of spiritual beings. Thus, he wrote of cén as trembling with fear or as using skills. With this type of use, we have better clues to the metaphorical connotations poets might have attached to cén than to the literal meanings of the word. More is made of the Cynewulf signatures later in this chapter, in discussions of metaphorical interpretations. (The Cynewulf signatures are shown in: Halsall, 1981: Appendix A; or Pollington, 1995: Chapter 3.)

Some have suggested that *cén* refers to pine wood used for funeral pyres. Such a translation would not make sense in the context of this stanza. This would imply that pine is used most often to cremate corpses of nobles. Commoners would get some other fuel (oak? cow dung? Whale oil?) or would have to settle for burial.

### ***Definitions of Blác and Beorhtlic***

I translated *blác* as blond (for pale yellow) because oil typically burns with a pale yellow flame. The usual definitions offered for *blác* and *beorhtlic* would have them as redundant terms. A closer examination of their uses shows that these terms refer to pastelness and to luminescence respectively. The contrast between soft color and vigorous light was a popular poetic formula in ancient England.

The major dictionaries define both *blác* and *beorhtlic* as luminescence, but other definitions are also offered. *Blác* is also defined as colorless or pale. *Beorhtlic* is also defined as excellent, and (in reference to sound) as clear or loud.

In every example of *blác* given by the dictionaries that give examples, a definition of “pale” or of “pastel” is consistent with the context. In many of these examples, *blác* occurs in close proximity to *beorht* or to a *beorht*-related word. Therefore, either “bright and shining” was a popular redundancy in ancient times, or the less redundant “pastel and shining” was intended. In other examples, the object modified by *blác* is a light source that is readily perceived — in other words we already know it is bright to the naked eye.

One example of *blác* — is it dark or is it bright? — is in *The Phoenix*, lines 295-296: “þonne is feinta • fægge gedæled / sum brun sum basu • sum blacum splottum”. Gollancz (1895) translates this as “thereto, its tail is beauteously divided, part brown, part purple, part studded cunningly with pale spots.” The Dictionary of Old English defines “blacum splottum” as “bright spots”. The intended contrast could be between dark and light colors or between dark and bright colors. To decide which, you have to look at *blác* in other contexts.

An example of blác juxtaposed with beorht is in lines 1516-1517 of *Beowulf* (Chickering's 1977 edition). In this scene, Beowulf has been carried into the waterproof, underwater den of Grendel's mother. Upon arrival, he sees fires: "fȳr-léoht geseah, / blácne léoman • beorhte scinan". ("... fire-light saw, blácne lights • beorhte shining".) The poet probably did not intend to say "bright fires brightly shining". Instead in this context the poetic contrast of low-energy color and high-energy luminescence was intended ("pale fires brightly shining"). Also, the poet probably intended to describe the source, color, and intensity of the light instead of telling us the same thing repeatedly.

Other poetical contexts for blác also intend to give us the emotional contrast of pastel color with light energy. This inference is consistent with the frequent juxtaposition of blác and beorht as words in OE. (See Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dictionary of Old English Project, 2003.)

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is a faithful reproduction of the original except for major variance in verse 1a. However, comparing the "perfect" translation with the modernized version provides a helpful comparison.

The original verse 1a is a seven-syllable unmetrical clause as shown in the following table.

/	x	/	x	x	x	\
cen	byð	cwic	er	a	ge	wham

The translation is has a six-syllable D2 (broken-fall) rhythm type. This does not match the original, but at least from an Anglo-Saxon perspective it would be an improvement. In addition, the explicit notion of "each" is missing from the translation and "lamp" does not alliterate with the chief stave "seen".

/	x	x	/	x	\
lamp	is	by	sen	tient	ones

Verses 1b through 2b and verse 3b are exact matches to the original in the overlaying patterns of word-sense, alliteration, and rhythm.

Verse 3a is also a perfect match if one accepts a lack of stress in the pronoun that appears in that verse. The present author tends to enunciate that verse as shown in the following table, which presents a D2 rhythm type.

x	/	/	x	\	x
ðær	hi	æð	e	ling	as

However, it seems logical that the native speakers of Old English would have given the excess “they” (hi) a lack of stress just as we speakers of Modern English (at least in the USA Midwest) tend to put no stress on the excess “the” when we insert it. This would produce a type A rhythm type (which is what I matched in the translation) as shown here.

x	x	/	x	\	x
ðær	hi	æð	e	ling	as

Translation C is in trochaic lines of alternating long (11 and 9 syllables) and short (5 syllables) lines. It benefits from page layout and punctuation to provide clues to how to read the stanza that were not available in Early Medieval English culture. Sometimes the modernized meter translations are easier to understand in our times because of smoother phraseology, but that does not seem to be the case here. On the other hand the idea of “plainly observed” (in Line 1) is probably closer to the original intent than is the original word “known” (cúþ). People know of lamps whether they are lit or not.

## *Discussion*

At the first level, “Lamp” describes the often-overlooked paradoxes or contradictions associated with this household object. At the metaphorical level,

“A Source of Passion that Enlightens” raises the question of just what this source is. At the third level, “Fearless Passion Is the Voice of the Supersoul” answers the question, and finally “Mystical Knowing” advises us to exploit the lamp.

### *Lamp*

This implicit stanza says that a torch is noticed because of its fire, which has the remarkable property of being softly-colored but energetic enough to emit light. And yet, this magical energy is most often found in a human atmosphere of comfort and peace.

### *Perceiving a Source of Enlightenment*

In this implicit stanza, the oil lamp (punningly) represents the source of enlightenment. The nobles are a metaphor for seekers of enlightenment.

The analogy between cén and the supersoul is not perfect, for it is not true that lamps, torches, or candles are known to us only by the flames they sometimes show. However, the source of our enlightenment is known to everyone by the enlightenment it gives. It is not commonly directly perceived. Although the source-phenomenon is commonly perceived and may be widely acknowledged as holiness, it is not equally available to everyone. This inequality of access is also widely acknowledged.

There is an interesting irony that the enlightenment itself is an energy, but this energy is most evident when our minds relax. It is also most evident to people who have begun to work on being enlightened.

This is “perceiving”. Many people perceive and even honor religious enlightenment but do not quest to further themselves in this regard.

This is a basic topic among experts on secular and religious meditation. Hence, this and the next implicit stanzas are among the more important messages in this poem.

***A Source of Passion that Enlightens***

This is a more metaphorical version of “Perceiving a Source of Enlightenment”. But in this implicit stanza there is more made of the contrast between seeing the flame and awareness of the source. Or perhaps we should speak of levels of awareness of the source.

Here, the energy which is mentioned only indirectly, is a metaphor for emotional energy. Figuratively, cén stands for a source of passion. The small, pale-but-bright flame symbolizes a subtle but powerful energy. The nobles symbolize those of enlightened intent. Therefore the lamp would represent an aspect of religion or of the human psyche.

Chief stave analysis provides a clue to the existence of this implicit stanza. The most important clue to what a rune is about is the chief stave in the first line. In “Cén”, that stave is “known”, and the other chief staves are “burns” and “inside”.

This highly metaphorical implicit stanza says that the lamp is known for the emotion that enlightens, and that it usually works when people combine intent to grow with inner peace.

This is not to say that fearless or secure passion is the only emotional source of enlightenment. One can learn much from one’s own or others’ jealousy, fear, selfish love, envy, etc. However, to learn from such emotions, it helps to relax and reflect when you can feel safe about being objective. In “Cén”, the emotion in question has to be one that is most likely to appear under psychologically safe conditions. This passion has to be unencumbered by distracting insecurities and misgivings.

It seems that the oil lamp or its flame was commonly taken as a metaphor for constructive passion in Old English poetry. Two of the Cynewulf signatures make more sense if we interpret cén in this way. For example in *The Fates of the Apostles* (lines 96-108), Cynewulf says cén fought against nights’ restricting difficulties. Metaphorically, the reader understands the source of flaming light

as representing a factor militating against fear and ignorance. Also in *Elene* (lines 1251-1271), Cynewulf says that until he received the enlightenment of Christianity, he was a lamp a-failing (cén drúsende). That is, he lacked healthy emotional spirit. This interpretation is at least not inconsistent with the more ambiguous uses of cén in *Juliana* and in *Christ II*.

### ***Fearless Passion Is the Voice of the Supersoul***

This implicit stanza is based on “A Source of Passion that Enlightens”. The lamp is known to every living being, but like the supersoul, it speaks most often to those who want to listen to it, who concentrate on it, and who accept the love-like but awesome emotion with which it speaks. Like the supersoul, the lamp is available to every living being by the subtle emotion with which it speaks. Therefore, the supersoul is the source of the passion of enlightenment, and it is to your advantage to be attuned to that source.

Controlled passions are crucial to the practice of progressive mysticism, and the practice itself helps one to control emotions. The practitioner can get a “feel” for which emotions are holy and which are not. Some religious people are tuned in to their irrational tendencies but not really listening to the supersoul. Thus, during apparently religious ceremony they experience fearful, envious, and jealous passions that darken the heart and mind and then have to be overcome. Some are distracted and do not overcome destructive passions. These are the emotions that lead people to fire mortar rounds at apartment buildings inhabited by persons of an alien religion, to destroy large ancient statues of Buddha, or to exclaim “kill them all and let God sort them out”. These are the passions that, when dominating human minds, make loving spouses break their own hearts and those of their partners. Such are the passions that hinder doing good works. An extreme and well-known example of such failure is the Taliban movement, at least as of the year 2001. Most religious people do not experience extreme failures, but the work is difficult because petty emotional control is difficult.

Skill and willpower are important. To achieve a strong and focused emotion, some mystics like to start with a more common emotion (such as horror or sexual arousal) and then sublimate it. Unfortunately, some persons observe this

technique and fail to understand it. More commonly, mystics avoid such feelings during meditation because negative passions are simply distasteful, and sexual or food-hunger arousal can be highly distracting. It may be easier for you to stick with more conventional meditative techniques. An extreme effort to avoid distracting insecurities is monasticism.

There is an interesting discussion of the complex emotional experience of the holy in Rudolf Otto's 1950 book, *The Idea of the Holy*.

### ***Mystical Knowing***

This implicit stanza is based on all those below. Your own passion is a source of knowledge. With some experience of mysticism, one can find that knowingly and willingly experiencing this divine emotion brings insights or long-term, subtle psychological changes. Some of those gains can be expressed verbally, and some cannot. But those gains do add up to a more competent and comfortable life.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Emotion  
 Passion as a source of knowledge  
 Emotional security  
 Noble intention  
 Subtle energy  
 Inner source of passion  
 Misgivings  
 Insecurities  
 Being tuned in to the supersoul  
 Emotional calm  
 Learning from emotional experiences  
 Passion that leads to emotional self-control  
 That which is known all of mankind  
 Degrees of awareness of the supersoul

***Contrasts***

Constructive versus destructive emotion  
 Emotional security versus emotional insecurity  
 Casual awareness of enlightenment versus seeking

***Advice for Living***

In each person, there is a source of special passion that we can all feel if we open our minds to that source. That emotion is a subtle, yet powerful and attractive experience. To avoid excessive hindrances or wrong-way movement, one should practice noble intent and emotional security. Therefore, somehow, we should find means to achieve the proper state of mind.

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	Unmetrical	7
1b	A	4
2a	A	4
2b	A	4
3a	B	6
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	11
2	8
3	10
	29

## Seventh Stanza: Honor, Belonging, and Boundaries<sup>9</sup>

Gyfu gumena byþ • gleng and herenys  
wraðu and wyrþscype • and wræcna gehwam  
ár and ætwist • ðe byþ oþra leas

### *Translations*

#### *(E) Transliteration*

gifting (genitive plural) humans' is

{decoration, adornment, attractive array} and praise

{help, maintenance, support} and {manifestation of dignity}

and (to) refugees each

{honor, respect, glory / kindness, favor, mercy, substance, support, help /  
revenue / messenger, angel} and {being, existence, presence,  
substance, social acceptance}

who is otherwise without.

#### *(B)*

Gifting is humans' • praise and garnish,  
Support and approval. • Brings poorlings homeless  
help and honor • for those who would lack.

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<sup>9</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997c).

***(C) Modernized Meter***

Gifting for people is praise and adornment;  
 it is goods and honor.  
 But it's every outcast's respect and mercy,  
 which are otherwise lacking.

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The theme of the stanza is social nexus, and the emphasis is on how giving unites – or at least how it ameliorates – divisions between people. Most of the issues in interpretation relate to the degree to which the interpreter perceives this emphasis.

Chief stave analysis provides a helpful clue. The chief staves are: decoration, wretch, and without. This implies that people decorate each other socially because they are miserably isolated if they do not.

***The Title Word***

Of the various translations offered for gyfu, only one can be used here. In this context, the notion that best fits the title word is that of giving a gift. This translation reveals the full ambiguity of the stanza. The principle of generosity would fit only if the stanza were only about amount and frequency of giving. Moreover, the stanza is not about paying liberal wages nor making enlightened business deals. Likewise, “gift” does not fit the context; the stanza is obviously talking about an act, not an object.

The title is not the more generic “giving” (handing over). This is easily discerned from the stanza per se, but Old English has other words for giving/handing over. They are “sellan” and “dælan”, and one of them would be the title word if the original author(s) meant to bring in that concept. In fact, “handing over” is dealt with in another stanza.

***Wræcca***

The translation of this word is not controversial, but some readers will not be aware of the full implications of the term.

“Wræcna” is the dative plural form of *wræcca*, which denotes a person without normal social connections due to exile or voluntary travel. There were other words for “traveler”, but *wræcca* was intended to imply misery as a traveler. Thus, the word is related to our modern “wretch”. (See Bosworth and Toller, 1921; Fisher, 1973: 192, 329, 331; Hall, 1960; Houghton Mifflin, 1993: 1557; McQueen, 1995; Osborn and Longland, 1982: 33-34; Wormald, 1982a: 101.)

Most of these social isolates would have been good folks in strange lands, but some would have been bad actors suffering the legal punishment of outlawry . Outlawry was ostracism accompanied by exclusion from protection of the laws. (The legal outcast’s situation is described in: Anonymous, 1245; Anonymous, 1280; Fisher, 1973: 251-252; Pálsson and Edwards, 1976; Pálsson and Edwards, 1989)

***Ár***

There are two meanings for this word, and only one fits as a translation in this context. But ironically, consideration of the other meaning provides a clue to the intent of the poet(s).

Gifting to a wretch is a communication of mercy and respect. The Old English words for “angel” and “honor” — *ár* — differ in gender as well as meaning, but they are spelled and pronounced the same. In this context, “angel” relates to the meaning of the stanza, because a gift can show recognition of human worth. In a sense, the gesture of making a present is a message from the above-animal in one person to the above-animal in another that says “I see you.” It is thus a hailing from the divine in one person to the divine in another.

To understand this, it is necessary to realize that in the Bible, all angels are messengers of Yahweh. In a metaphorical sense, an angel would be anything that brings a message of holy recognition or mercy.

*Ætwist*

Here, *ætwist* denotes acknowledgement of human value and social presence – the most basic element of social integration. In this context the reference is not to physical sustenance.

The present definition contradicts the usual translation. Most students of the OERP have seen *ætwist* in this context as referring to subsistence supplies. This is partly because dictionaries define *ætwist* both as (A) socially acknowledged presence and as (B) subsistence supplies such as nourishment. (See Bosworth and Toller, 1921; Dickins, 1915; Dictionary of Old English Project, 2003; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Page, 1973: 78.)

Actually, *ætwist* probably never refers to subsistence materials. Consider the examples provided by Bosworth-Toller and the Dictionary of Old English.

The Bosworth-Toller dictionary shows several examples of the use of *ætwist*. The “substance” referred to in their examples is the substance of the focal person, not his or her material resources. Moreover, the “presence” or “substance” denoted by *ætwist* in the Bosworth-Toller examples is not physical existence, which is taken for granted in all of their examples. Hence, their examples all show us that the word refers to socially-recognized presence.

Two examples are shown by the Dictionary of Old English to support “present resource, subsistence, sustenance” in the sense of subsistence supplies. However both examples can also support “socially-recognized presence”.

- (1) The quote from Genesis they show is “...þonne him god heora æhta and *ætwist* eorðan gestreona on genimeð and heora aldor somed”. This can be read as “when God takes from them all at once their esteem and social acceptance, their material possessions, and their lives.” It can also be read as “when God takes their property and subsistence supplies – their worldly possessions – and their lives all at the same time.” Both readings are

consistent with the way Old English poetry was often written – with conjunctions omitted and without helpful punctuation.

(2) Their other quotation is this stanza in the *OERP*. But “Gyfu” focuses on social acceptance as its major topic, so “sustenance” is not as consistent with the rest of the stanza as is “social recognition”.

### *Critique of Translation B*

Translation B shows some deviations from the original’s overlaying patterns of alliteration, word-sense, and rhythm. In this chapter, the translation into modern meter might be a better communication of the original authorial intent.

The present author decided not to match the original of verse 1a. The original is an unmetrical six-syllable verse. But the corresponding verse of Translation B is an ordinary five-syllable type A half-line, as shown in the following table.

<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	x	x
unmetrical, 6	gy	fu	gum	en	a	byð
	/	x	x	/	x	
A, 5	gift	ing	is	hu	mans'	

Verse 1b in the original looks unmetrical at first glance, with too many unstressed syllables at the end. However, the author(s) surely intended to use resolved stress. This is shown in the second line of Old English in the following table -- by the apostrophe in place of the second “e” in “herenys”. The translation matches the pattern of rhythm exactly, but Translation B has the alliterating word last, which does not match the original and is unusual in Old English.

/	x	/	x	x
gleng	and	her	e	nys
				Page 109

/	x	/	x
gleng	and	her'	nys

/	x	/	x
praise	and	gar	nish

In Translation B, a departure in rhythm is used to get matches in word-sense and alliteration. The original's verse 2a is a six-syllable verse of type D1. The translation is a six-syllable type A verse, but the emotional impact of the two in their contexts is similar.

/	x	x	/	\	x
wraþ	u	and	wyrð	scyp	e
x	/	x	x	/	x
sup	port	and	a	prov	al

Translation B matches the original with only minor deviations in half-lines 2b and 3a.

Half-line 3b matches a five-syllable type B with another five-syllable type B, but the stresses in the translation are not exactly the same. The translation has a more musical sound than does the original, and therefore produces a slightly less “downer” emotional impact. This reduces the contrast in non-verbal communication. between an image of gift exchange between equals and giving to the downtrodden.

The modern-metric Translation C has alternating iambic pentameter and trimeter lines. The short lines highlight transitions and contrasts. The first transition is the close of a sentence about how nice it is to give and receive. The second transition is to the contrast of how miserable it is to be an outcast. And even though the last line is formally trochaic trimeter, it sounds like the listener has been taken down from the almost-cheerful rhythm.

## ***Discussion***

The material value of the gift is not important in this view; it is the thought -- or rather, the social intent -- that counts. This strophe is nuanced enough to have three explicit stanzas. At the most primitive level, “Gyfu” emphasizes (A) the meaning of giving to the giver and to the receiver, (B) the role of gifting as social glue and structure, and (C) gift-giving as a way to gain entry. At the more abstract levels, the stanza refers to efficiencies in conduct of religion.

The generosity spoken of in this stanza implies a generosity of the spirit. Therefore it does not refer to the feudal-era interclass giving some would claim to find here. Dark-age England had a strongly delineated two-class system (nobles and commoners) in which respectability and wealth were tightly correlated. Hence, interclass giving would have a different meaning for both parties than would ordinary gifting. The donor of higher class could be politically elevating a lower class donee by demonstrating a government connection, or by formally appointing the donee to a job. Or the giver could be paying a wage or be politically obligating (subordinating) the receiver. Intraclass giving, therefore, would have complex sociopolitical implications which are not countenanced in “Gyfu” (Bloch, 1961; Halls, 1990; Homans, 1961; John, 1982a: 168-169; Mauss, 1923; Osborn and Longland, 1982: 33-34; Raw, 1992).

Gifting between people is a common religious concern but not a religious universal. Religions vary greatly in the emphasis they put on gifting and in how they handle the matter, and some appear to ignore the issue. (For examples see, Pickthall, n.d.; Burt, 1955: 91, 109-110; 120-122, 136; Hultkrantz, 1987; Mauss, 1923).

### ***The Humane Value of Gifting***

For mankind, gifting is a matter of adornment and praise, support and dignity. It is the glory of the species. And to any wretch who would otherwise be without, it shows mercy and social acceptance.

For present purposes, it is not a concrete gift nor the principle of generosity that counts so much; it is the act of giving. You do not have to give a lot in material value (be generous). It is true that some gifts ennoble one party or the other (for example, a heroic sacrifice or a certificate recognizing obscure but high achievement). It is true that sometimes material possessions given can be very useful. But for social structure, what counts the most is the expression of esteem toward the recipient and elicitation of esteem from the receiver and any witnesses. The social glue function of gifting is an emphasis of Teutonic religion. For example, consider *Havamal*, strophes 2, 41, 42, 44, 48, 52, 135 (Hollander, 1962: 14-41; 53-64; Hutton and Warmington, 1970).

Often, people experience an urge to get into a formal or informal organization merely because they desire to take part in a network of mutual appreciation. They might not really want to be in the focal group, but they regret or even resent being left out. They want to be in on the “gleng and herenys”, to have their humanity validated.

Gifts between friends, relatives, and colleagues are thus important. But a donation to someone who actually needs membership in a human network is another matter. A gift under that circumstance ameliorates or ends a desperate “lone wolf” status. True stories of POW escapes, polar explorers, and other reveal that humans can survive physically alone for extended periods. But they are driven by thoughts of and desire for social relations.

### ***Social Glue***

Gifting is important for the health of a group per se, or at least for close dyadic relations. In the first half of the stanza, we are told that an exchange of esteem takes place. This exchange of esteem provides or reinforces social structure, making people more attracted mutually (if not equally) than would be the case otherwise.

Although the “decorating” may seem asymmetrical, an exchange of gifts brings both sides into balance. Possibly uncomfortable gratitude is canceled out by the exchange, but mutual esteem remains.

In the second half of the stanza, we are reminded that gifting is a way to bring outsiders in. This applies both where the gifting is to an otherwise isolated person and where a gift is accepted from an isolate.

### ***Gifting is More Important to Outsiders***

Comparing the first and second halves of Translation B, we detect an emphasis that gifting is more important to outsiders, since they lack other means of communicating social attraction or of establishing social attractiveness.

If one has at least minimal entree in a community, there are less dramatic alternatives which can help achieve social integration and which are easier to use. For example, praise or shaking hands or sharing meals or swapping jokes are good ways to reinforce social connections.

### ***Gifting Religious Enlightenment***

At the second level of meaning, the wretch represents a person without a religious home or without enlightenment. Gifting in this sense is handing over symbols or sharing knowledge of enlightened religion. That which occurs between members of a temple or movement helps keep them together. Sharing religion with outsiders brings them to a level of social integration – not just religious enlightenment – which they need.

In other words, gifting is not merely a matter of building individual enlightenment. It is a means of building and maintaining religious community.

Thus, “Gyfu” instructs us that to have a viable religious community, people it is advantageous that members communicate their enlightenment to co-religionists and to outsiders. Moreover, the spirit has to be one of appreciation, not of attempting to control others.

***Giving to the Deities***

This brings us to the third level of meaning. Based on implicit stanzas below, we can see that gifting to the deities can be a holy glue. Teutonic reconstructionist interpreters of “Gyfu” commonly mention gifting to deities in connection with this strophe (for example, Thorsson, 1987: 119-120). Surely if there is something holy about giving between people, then there is an implication of holy offering.

This sacrificing elevates the worshiper at the same time that it honors a deity or deities. By privately making an offering, a person can build his/her own self-esteem and achieve a calming, quiet satisfaction. This could be especially useful to a social isolate. When a group makes something a sacred gift, the group members in general can experience a calming increase in self-esteem and mutual attraction.

***The Gift as a Token of Membership***

This stanza is derived from “The Humane Value of Gifting” and “Social Glue”. Gifting between members of a movement or organization -- or between an organization and its members -- reinforces solidarity. Tokens of appreciation given to outsiders attract positive attention, often on the part of persons who do not receive the gift in question.

***Gates and Fences***

This stanza is derived from “The Gift as a Token of Membership”. Gifting formally established boundaries, for exclusion from the gifting of materials and information shows who is outside the fence. Secret rituals and lore increase the value of membership.

***Profound Recognition of Human Value***

This implicit stanza is based on all three explicit stanzas. It says that in a way, a gift is a communication of recognition from the supersoul in one person to the supersoul in another.

Gift-giving is one of the aspects of human nature that we can call divine as opposed to animal, because a relatively strong tendency for gifting is one of the behaviors that distinguishes humans from lower animals. Yes, many people have been given offerings of dead mice or birds by their housecats. And some lower animals give grooming as service to one another, and some male birds present potential mates with courtship gifts. But gifting in the materials, frequency, and formality that persons show requires ownership of property or supplies, and highly developed language.

Hence, this behavior seems to come from somewhere deep in the psyche of one person and to be aimed at someplace deep in the psyche of the other. The gesture says, “the divine in me honors the divine in you”.

This aspect of “Gyfu” appears related to the first stanza of the Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme, “Fé”. “Fé” contrasts selfish internecine human conflicts with communalism among feral wolves. (Canids who hunt in packs often share food with babysitters back at the den.) But that stanza sermonizes about exploitation or predation versus fairness, not about gifting versus mutual isolation. Ironically, the stanza in the Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme implicitly advises us to be more human.

***Monotheists Are Not Necessarily Hostile***

This implicit stanza is based on “Gifting Religious Enlightenment”. The message is that when members of Abrahamic religions try to convert us or to educate us on their religions, they are not necessarily trying to control us. They may simply try to share with us something meaningful to them as a way of showing love. Anyhow, they have to be open, and at least moderately aggressive, about their religion for it to survive.

***Recruitment***

This implicit stanza is based on the other implicit stanzas in this chapter except for “Giving to the Deities”. Here, we are reminded that we that we can elevate ourselves and recruit others by allowing persons who have not found a religious home to share our religion. Moreover, it is helpful if recruitment and retention involves gift and knowledge exchanges.

(As a general rule, knowledge and token gifts are better than “heavy” items, which can create logistic nightmares. Also, if you are being persecuted, you need to the option of hiding evidence.)

But beware! Some social isolates are habitual troublemakers, not simply persons who did not find on their own a religion suitable for their personalities. Likewise, some good people cannot adapt to religion, at least not at certain stages of their lives. (The stanza does not give this warning, so the present author is doing so.)

***Themes******Simple Themes***

Social acceptance

Esteem

Gifting

Material as a token of the non-material

The social isolate

Solidarity

Group boundaries

***Contrasts***

Member versus isolate

Recognized social value versus lack of recognized social value

Inclusion versus boundary maintenance

***Advice for Living***

Gifting is not to be overlooked as a symbolic way to create and reinforce social solidarity. Gifting for this purpose can vary from highly ritualized to quite informal, but the material value that is handed over is not as important as the communication of humane intent.

Internal solidarity of a religious group can be reinforced by internal gifting, but also by sacrificing to deities. Gifting to outsiders – and just generally being friendly to them – helps maintain the membership and emotional health of a holy group.

People should give to the group or organization as well as to each other. (Formal voluntary organizations need labor.)

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	unmetrical	6
1b	A	4
2a	A	5
2b	B	5
3a	A	4
3b	B	5

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	10
3	9
	<hr/> 29



## Eighth Stanza: Griefs, Sorrows, Revels, and Resources<sup>10</sup>

Wynne bruceþ þe can weana lyt  
 sares and sorge and him sylfa hæfþ  
 blæd and blysse and eac byrga geniht

### *Translations*

**(A) Transliteration:**

{Joy, pleasure, delight} {uses, enjoys, eats, profits, partakes of, possesses}

whoever {knows/is currently aware} (of) {misfortunes, evils, harm; woes, miseries; sins} {little, less}

{Bodily pains; sickness, wounds, sores} and (of) {sorrows; troubles, distress, cares, anxieties}

and (for) himself has

{Fruit, prosperity, happiness; success, reward, prosperity, harvest} and {revelry, merriment; kindness, friendship, grace, favor}

and {also/moreover/likewise} (a) walled city's {abundance, sufficiency}

**(B)**

Glee is gained • when one's griefs are small  
 (both sores and sorrows) • and one has for oneself  
 bounty, revels • and a town's good reserves.

<sup>10</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997c).

***(C) Modernized Meter***

Of joy one partakes who knows little of woes,  
 (has no sore nor no sorrow), and who on their own  
 possesses some wealth and can party --  
 and moreover can access a town's strong reserves.

***Issues in Edition and Translation******The Title Word and Blyss***

There are two issues regarding the title word. One issue concerns spelling and grammar, the other is concerned with what the title word is.

First, the grammatical issue. In the original manuscript, this strophe started with the rune-stave then “ne bruceþ...” (see Appendix A). Scholars have asked whether “ne” is an inflexional ending or the separate word “not”. Following most of the translators cited in *The OERP Book*, I regard “ne” as an inflexional ending. The rationale for this grammatical: “ne” as an inflexional ending indicates the genitive singular of wen (or wynn), and a genitive-case direct object is required by the verb brucan.

There is also a substantive issue of whether the title word is “joy” (wynn) or “hope” (wén). There are two reasons why we must translate the rune stave as “joy”.

First, “hope” does not make sense in this context. If the rune name were “hope”, then the stanza would say that hope is enjoyed by those who are in pretty good shape. While it is true that hope is does not come so easily to the drastically downtrodden who lack prospects of improvement, hope is mainly of use to those who are not content. In other words, hope is profitable mainly for those who are (A) conscious of a need for improvement, and (B) expecting significant probability of improvement. For example, see Translation D.

Second, the use of this rune as an abbreviation was commonly used as an abbreviation for “wynn” (joy), and that is how it would have been understood by any literate Anglo-Saxon. (Halsall, 1981: 117-118; for examples, see Pollington, 1995: 57-60).

Ms. Halsall points out that “wen” is supposed to be more or less opposed by sores, sorrows, poverty, and isolation. If every thing were copasetic, there would be nothing to hope for.

George Hempl was the first to detect that a scholar working in the early 1700’s (he blamed Hickes) copied the rune name from a defective list of rune staves and names. There is a copy of the defective list on the front cover of *Modern Philology* for the issue containing Hempl’s article (Hempl, 1904).

And it must be added that the major dictionaries define wén as more an assessment of probabilities than an optimistic emotion (Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Hall, 1960). In other words, wén does not mean “hope”. Hence, the stanza would start with “Anticipation of pleasant prospects is experienced by those who...” (already have them).

### ***Blysse***

Interpreting the rune stave as wen/wynn requires that we not translate blyss as “bliss”. Instead, we must interpret blyss as “celebration” or “merriment”. Otherwise the stanza would speak with oppressive redundancy and triteness: joy is enjoyed by the blissful. Several students of the OERP have made this mistake, although one would have expected them to translate the title word as “optimism” or “hope” if they wanted to translate blyss as “joy”. For example, Dickins (1915) has “bliss he enjoys who...has...happiness”. Shippey (1972) has “happiness is enjoyed by the man who...has...joy”. Halsall (1981) has “joy he experiences who...has...happiness”.

***Byrga Geniht***

The phrase literally says “(a) walled city’s abundance”. This interpretation is to be preferred over freer translations made in the past that detract from the sense of the stanza.

The literal meaning seems to have puzzled several students of the poem, so the translation of this phrase has been surprisingly varied over the years. Kemble (1840) decided that it must mean “enjoyment of burrows” (perhaps he meant “boroughs”). Dickins (1915) preferred “a good enough house”. Grienberger corrected these and some other errors in his 1921 article, and Dobbie (1942: 155) followed Grienberger, as did Shippey (1972) and Thorsson (1993). But afterward various others decided that “city” would be “misleading elegance” (Halsall’s 1982 expression), so that that “buildings enough” or “sufficient protection” would be closer to the original intent (Osborn and Longland, 1982; Pollington, 1996).

For some readers, an aside on “burh” is helpful to explain why the translation refers to “reserves”. A burh of a few thousand – or of tens of thousands -- of persons could be a relatively prosperous place for its employed inhabitants due to the advantages of a division of labor. In Old English, a burg is a fortified place, such as walled town, or a building within a fort. Prior to the 900’s, there were small places of commercial significance in Northern Europe that were not walled, and there were commercial centers that were not permanently settled. But typically the major towns and cities were walled when the *OERP* was composed, so that Old English does not distinguish between a town of commercial or political significance and a walled town. Even English towns were small in the 800 and 900’s, and most rural settlements were single households or hamlets of under ten families. Hence, the bigger towns, as opposed to hamlets and smaller settlements, would likely have much better stockpiles of both raw and finished goods (for example: leather, gloves, and shoes) than would the rural areas. Translation B refers to the backup availability of labor and materiel in towns as opposed to tiny settlements. (See Hagen, 1995: 313-323; Hawley, 1971: 18-41; Wormald, 1982: 152-154; Welch, 1992: 14-42, 118-119, 120.)

***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is very close to the original. The rhythm is stronger in Translation B than in the original because of difficulties encountered in the second line, and the first line is not perfectly translated. But the deviations are not significantly damaging, for the logical and emotional message of the original are conveyed faithfully.

In the first line, Translation B has “gained” instead of “benefits” or “is enjoyed” (“bruceþ” in the original), but otherwise it is a perfect match for the original’s overlaid layers of word-sense, rhythm, and alliteration.

In the second line, the first verse has punctuation making it clearer than the Early Medieval Age scribe could that this is a parenthetical clause explaining “woes” in the preceding line.

The translation of half-line 2b sounds upon reading like it has the same rhythm as the original, largely because it ends with a lift and stress, as does the original, contributing to the original author’s intended upbeat atmosphere. However, the translation is a type B while the original is a type E (fall-and-rise) verse. Also, “self” -- the chief stave word of the line -- is at the end of the translation’s half-line but in the middle of the original. Indeed, the idea of “self” gets more emphasis in the translation than in the original. Perhaps the ancient authors would have like that, since it reinforces a point they/she/he tried to make.

Line 3 is practically a perfect match for the original all the way through.

The modernized-meter translation is in anapestic feet and lines of close to equal length. (They are 9-11 syllables, or three or four poetic feet). This meter was chosen because the original intent was to be upbeat and consistent throughout the stanza instead of contrasting good fortune with bad, or warm weather with cold, rest with puncture wounds etc. The grammar of Translation C seems a

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little awkward because “their” is put in place of a singular pronoun, but “their” is often used in place of a singular pronoun in Modern English.

## *Discussion*

In some ways, this is a different sort of stanza from the others in the poem. It does have the usual 3-line structure and looks quotidian at the first level of meaning. But the rune name is a direct object – the others are subjects of their sentences. The stanza is culture-bound in that you have to know what is meant by “the abundance found in major towns” (see discussion of *byrga geniht* above). And, as Halsall (1981) pointed out, joy is a subjective condition, whereas the other rune names denote physical objects or acts.

But in other ways this strophe fits into the general pattern. Subtle clues to the deeper meaning of “Wynn” are built into the stanza. Analysis of the chief staves shows that they emphasize the relationship of mankind (or the individual) and community. The chief staves are: woes, self, and cities. (Woes do not prevent happiness when one’s selfish concerns are met and one has the backing of a strong community.) An examination of the apparent punctuation errors also implies that the strophe is concerned with solidarity, for the original stanza has no punctuation except for the three-dot pattern that marks its termination – it is all one unit.

The author(s) of the *OERP* are definitely not telling us that joy living is impossible in an isolated, bucolic settlement. Surely, there would not have been a total absence of joy, pleasure, and delight in the farmsteads and hamlets where most Anglo-Saxons resided in ancient times. The intent of the Early Medieval author(s) was not to give us a manual on how to live happy lives.

Apparently the aspects of a happy person’s life are only intended as a sample. Nonetheless, it is interesting to consider what is left out. The poem as a whole, and “Wyn” in particular do not mention: smooth spousal relations; happy and

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healthy children/grand-children./great-grandchildren; a secure job; recognition for work; or personal safety. Most people in the USA who use runes for divination seem quite concerned with their love lives and romances -- but there is no cognizance of courtship nor sex in this list of causes of happiness.

### ***Enjoying Good Fortune***

Joy is felt by one who is little concerned with physical issues or psychological pressures and who has for himself prosperity, revelry, and access to plentiful material and social resources.

So basically, this explicit stanza refutes the martyr-complex attitude that suffering (and death) are pleasant and good for you (Bede 731: for example 220-221).

### ***Ecstasy***

In this implicit stanza, “joy” is a metaphor for the euphoria that mystics can get during holy meditation. In this case, the ecstasy occurs under a condition of unconcern. A purity of awareness has been achieved by narrow concentration, but the meditator has not penetrated far beyond the psychological veil that isolates mundane life from divine spirit.

In intense meditation, the ecstasy might be accompanied by a feeling that all mankind, or more broadly all living beings, or even all phenomena, are somehow connected in such a unity of distinct objects. However, this feeling occurs in a situation of intense mental concentration, not a broad awareness of mundane events in one’s surroundings. (Beyond this stage, and not always accompanied by continued ecstasy, is a deep awareness of various aspects of the physical and spiritual conditions of mankind.) Usually, this feeling of connection comes with an emotion like a combination of relief and delight. But sometimes it comes with a realization of how beastly people have at times been to each other.

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This stanza suggests that it is easier to attain this mental state if one's personal needs are not a concern.

### ***Support in Religious Isolation***

This implicit stanza highlights the possibility of naïve bliss in an isolated religious community. Here, the burg represents some kind of highly effective group, such as a temple in which one is firmly rooted and which has strong solidarity and good resources for its members.

The burg can also represent a monastery or nunnery, such as many of the medieval monasteries of the 800's and 900's CE. In addition, many of the priests in England during this period resided in priestly communes (Bede, 731). Despite an oath of poverty on the part of monks, nuns, abbots, abbesses, etc., pre-medieval monasteries were often rich. Moreover, the rule of silence and other requirements for an ultra-serious lifestyle were not always observed, so that blæd and blyss were quite possible in pre-medieval monasteries and nunneries (Hagen, 1995: 247-248, 292-309; Hagen, 1998: 118-123; Harmer, 1989). Writing about monasteries, Hagen suggests that "a plentiful supply of desirable food may have made the church a relatively attractive career prospect" (1995: 309).

None of this is to deny that some modern and ancient Christian nuns and monks perform (or historically performed) acts of generous and caring worldly achievement in addition to isolated and exotically pious lifestyles. This implicit stanza does suggest that religious practice can be restrictive and not fully mature

### ***There Is A Further Stage***

This implicit stanza is derived directly from "Enjoying Good Fortune". What is missing from the picture drawn by "Enjoying Good Fortune"? The focal person is only concerned with himself or herself. There is no hope nor worry for the future, no contemplation of the past, no interest in anyone else. Not that there is

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anything wrong with the focal person's state, but a philosophically inclined person might find this empty, narrow, and unsatisfying in the long term.

This, this implicit stanza highlights a contrast. The poet(s) intended for us to see a contrast between (A) the social and physical circumstances of the focal person's existence and mood and (B) the shallow restriction of his/her attention. The focal person's membership in human community contrasts with his/her selfishness.

But clearly, there is a difference between the naïve joy depicted here and progress toward a more conscious existence. Since we have much plentiful literature from other non-Abrahamic religions, it is useful to consider how at least one of them handles this matter. In the Hindu system, we see the general idea of achieving a certain level of material and social satisfaction, and then progressing to a classier lifestyle. In that religion, the soul is considered to undergo stages of development toward enlightenment during an individual's life. At the earliest stage the person develops basic character and gains practical knowledge such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Children and adolescents desire more adult status, so a second stage is entered. At the second stage, one satisfies sensual and social urges such as sex, marriage, and (possibly) business success. Eventually, this may grow stale with repetition, so a third stage is entered – if somehow the person sees the possibility of a greater understanding. The third stage is a seeking for philosophical profundity. This third stage and the final (fourth) stages are characterized by voluntary acceptance of poverty and absence of social striving; the fourth stage is also characterized by renouncement of feverish desires and hatreds. The basic progression is from focus on sensual delights and personal ambition to adding a focus on duty, and then to a focus on the infinite and eternal. The essential motivation to grow is that the soul becomes tired of repetition, but sometimes a person adds intensity to his/her struggle instead of advancing to a higher stage. (See Smith, 1991: 51-54, 65-67.)

There is no evidence of saints or monks with beggar-bowls in Teutonic Pagan countries, nor is there any other indication that any version of Germanic religion

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conceived of enlightenment as losing interest in worldly life. On the contrary, Teutonic religion – at least runic religion – seems oriented very much toward practical living. In runic religion, philosophic profundity is oriented toward a world-enjoying and world-enhancing attitude rather than world-avoiding or world-denying.

### ***Giving Something Back***

Considering all the implicit stanzas of levels one and two, a subtle voice gently bids us to look for a further stage of development. A relatively naïve and selfish living is not condemned, for such living is healthy and not inherently destructive; indeed one must take care of oneself. But it seems that there is something beyond, something that is more enlightened, is just over the horizon. Perhaps it would be more fulfilling to nurture the community that helps us protect our selves from sores and sorrows. Perhaps there is a higher level of consciousness and responsibility.

### ***You Do Not Have to Base Your Life on Altruism***

This implicit stanza is also based directly on the explicit stanza. Its message is that altruism and generosity might be OK, but do not get carried away with it.

This implicit stanza is reminiscent of the Brahmin advice to be generous with gifts as recounted by Marcel Mauss (1923). The advice did not apply to the Brahmins, only to the wealthy on whom they priests depended to make them wealthy.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

- Pleasure, joy, delight, enjoyment

- Profit
- Physical, psychological, or social wealth
- Physical and psychological health
- Success
- Not having hard times
- Sorrows
- Illness
- Concentration
- Religious ecstasy
- Responsible attitude
- Awareness of difficulties
- The long run
- Having things and fun for oneself

### ***Contrasts***

- Happiness versus sadness
- Awareness versus unawareness
- Long versus short time horizon
- Circumstances of others and your circumstances
- Anxiety versus complacency
- Self versus community

### ***Advice for Living***

Personal satisfaction and security allow one to experience healthy bliss. Religious ecstasy can be experienced by those who achieve concentration, intellectually and emotionally. It helps to have comfort and security and to have fun. But something bids us to go beyond this mode of living, for we do not profoundly happily live only for ourselves. A subtle voice within beckons us to progress.

*Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	B	5
2a	A	5
2b	E	5
3a	A	4
3b	B	6

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	10
3	10
	<hr/> 29

## **Ninth Stanza: From Glamour and Turbulence to Peace and Productivity<sup>11</sup>**

Hægl byþ hwitust corna;    hwyrft hit of heofones lyfte,  
Wealcaþ hit windas scúra;    weorþeþ hit to wætere syþþan

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

Hail {Is/becomes} {whitest/most glistening} (of) {grains/seeds/berries};

{revolved, whirled, turned, moved; converted, changed} it {(1) of, from,  
derived from; (2) among} heaven's {air/sky/clouds}

{(1) rolls/turns, tumbles, revolves, tosses, moves about (2) changes} it of/by  
{winds', gusts'} (of) {(1) showers, tempests; (2) troubles/commotion};

{(1)becomes/happens/(2) settles} it {to/towards/for/in/at/from} water(s)  
{then/afterwards}

#### *(B)*

Hail's the whitest granule. • Whirled 'tis in heavenly vapors;  
wafted by windy storming. • Turneth it to water thereafter.

#### *(C) Modernized Meter*

Hail's the whitest of grains.  
Whirled 'tis in heavens clouds, tumbled by storming winds.  
But then into water it turns.

---

<sup>11</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997e).

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

There are two issues in edition and translation of this stanza. The translation of “corn” is worth discussing. There is also one place in the original where emendation is necessary. But there is also a matter of the overall meteorological background implied by the author(s).

***Corna***

Soem students of the *Old English Rune Poem* like to translate the Old English “corn” as the Modern English “corn”. (For example see Pollington, 1995:47). It must be admitted that well into the Modern English period -- as late as 1776 -- “corn” was used as an exact synonym for “grain”. (For example see Smith, 1776). But since then the Modern English word has come to have a much narrower meaning. It denotes modern hybrid maize. Authors of the Early Medieval Age in Europe could not have had any such meaning in mind.

***Scura***

The problem here is that the original has “wind’s storms” (windes scura) -- with both nouns in the possessive case. It is highly likely that the original author(s) intended to say that hail is tumbled about by “winds of storms”, so that is how I edited the Old English to read.

Some students of this poem render “wind” as possessive singular and “storm” as nominative plural (windes scúras). For example see Albertsson, 2011 -- but he is not the only one. This would give us the awkward “wind’s storms”. This in turn implies that storms are an attribute of winds rather than saying that (strong) winds are a property of storms.

***Meteorological Knowledge of Early Medieval Author(s)***

This strophe is not some tall tale nor religious myth about the weather. The surprise in this stanza is that the pre-Medieval English new how hail comes to be. Many of us thought that such knowledge was a product of modern meteorology. However, a similar surprise awaits in lines 103-105 of *The*

*Seafarer*, where we find that these people also knew that the (spherical) Earth rotates, taking its atmosphere along for the spin. In their definition of “lyft”, the Bosworth-Toller dictionary (1898: 650) quotes the following example: “On lofte heō stynt it [*the earth*] rests in the air”, which we know to be true -- the globe rests in a cushion of its atmosphere. So the ancients had some scientific knowledge, and were not so backward after all.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Most people I talk with about translation of poetry believe that “something is always lost in translation”. Always! So I provide the tables below to show how the patterns of word-sense, alliteration, and rhythm are replicated in Translation B. The duplication even includes double alliteration in line 1, where “h” and “wh” both tie the half-lines together in the translation (“h” and “hw” in the original). There are only the slightest differences in phraseology.

#### **Verse 1a -- hypermetric type A, 6 syllables**

/	x	/	x	/	x
hægl	byþ	hwit	ust	cor	na

/	x	/	x	/	x
hail's	the	whit	est	gran	ule

#### **Verse 1b -- hypermetric type A, 8 syllables**

/	x	x	/	x	x	\	x
hwyrft	hit	of	heo	fon	es	lyf	te

/	x	x	/	x	x	/	x
whirled	'tis	by	heav	en	ly	va	pors

#### **Verse 2a -- hypermetric type A, 7 syllables**

/	x	x	/	x	/	x
weal	caþ	hit	wind	es	scur	a

/	x	x	/	x	/	x
waft	ed	by	wind	y	storm	ing

**Verse 2b** -- hypermetric type A, 9 syllables

/	x	\	x	/	x	x	\	X
weorþ	eþ	hit	to	wæt	er	e	syþ	þan

/	x	\	x	/	x	x	/	x
turn	eth	it	to	wat	er	there	aft	er

This is a case in which caesuras between half-lines, which do not always occur in this poem, are evident in the original and preserved in Translation B. Likewise, the enjambment between lines 1 and 2 is also preserved.

Highlighting that the pauses and the enjambment are clues to the originally intended meaning, they also appear in Translation C.

However, the “perfection” of Translation B is qualified by “whirled” in the first line. The Modern English word includes the notion of rapid movement, but the Old English “hwyrf” does not include any implication of rapidity or lack thereof. At least this deviation is quite minor, since the original is depicting violence in verses 1b and 2a, and this depiction is not altered significantly.

Incidentally, Translation C also conveys the hypermetric quality of the original. In a straightforward line of iambic pentameter poetry, there would be 10 syllables, but every line of Translation C has 13 or 14 syllables.

## *Discussion*

Fundamental change is a major theme of “Hægl”: change in the heavens and change on the ground. As Wódening has pointed out, creative change is alluded to by the choice of words: “hwyrft” (from hweorfan), “wealcaþ” (from wealcan), and “weorþeþ” (from weorþan). “Hweorfan” and “wealcaþ” refer, among other things, to turning, which in ancient English society was associated with creating things. In addition, “byþ” (from beon) refers directly to becoming. (See Albertsson, 2011; Hall, 1960: 42; Wódening, 1995a).

But it is significant that the only violence and chaos of hail’s creation gets the emphasis, not the violence and chaos of damage to crops, roofs, livestock, etc. Destructive change is at most alluded to by mention of gusting showers of ice balls. So destructive change does not have as much emphasis here as does creative change.

But this is not just any change -- it is unintended, uncontrolled, and irresistible change. This weather phenomenon shows the genuinely awesome power of natural forces, but the process is not attributed to divine nor other intelligence. It is not attributed. This is similar to wyrd. One of the elements wyrd shows is the lack of conscious causation (see Appendix E). The issue of conscious intent and control in relation to all these forces of change becomes more apparent as we climb the ladder of levels of meaning.

The other main themes are purity/glory, violence, and gentle usefulness.

The relatively positive attitude here and throughout the OERP is interesting. It tells us something about the extent to which the poem is Christianized. Halsall claims that clearly Christian Anglo-Saxon works of the 800’s and 900’s viewed hail as bringing terror and despair. She also claims that a more cheerful and accepting view can be justified in terms of Christian lore. However, Roper and Timmer have pointed out that a more positive view would represent Pagan rather than Christian biases of the time. As Halsall admits, the Christians of the

800's and 900's in England were much more into a contemptus mundi view of life. This view of life emphasizes the higher desirability of the afterlife they posit as opposed to one's life in the present, which is a punishment for Original Sin, or alienation from God (Halsall, 1981: 57-58, 119; Timmer, 1940 & 1941; Roper, 1962.) This is a contrast between world-affirming and world-rejecting views of life.

Let us turn to a consideration of the implicit stanzas.

### ***Hailstorm***

At this level, “Hægl” is merely pointing our attention to a marvel of weather. Hail is created and bombards the earth in a swirling storm from the sky. There is nothing people can do to cause or stop this furious, chaotic event. But the beautiful gems that heaven throws around so violently mellow into water — an outcome that is also beyond the powers of humans to affect.

When the beauty and violence are gone, water moistens the soil for the sustenance of living things. Peace reigns again.

Thus, “Hail” speaks to us of one of the mysteries of mighty nature. Science can lead us to understand hail and hailstorms in a technical sense. We can predict on what day we will need to run for cover. Nevertheless, hail storms and hail per se provide demonstrations of nature's power that can bring emotions of awe and wonder that sensitive people tend to experience before great mysteries (Stanfield, 1996a). One's awareness of contrasts, power, and sudden change is enhanced because hail means ice in warm weather. (Sleet occurs in winter; hail is a summer phenomenon. Sleet coats things; it is hail that soon melts.)

### ***Non-Apparent Exogenous Causation***

Non-apparent causation is another theme of this implicit verse. Hail particles are generated far out of sight of the human eye. Bombardment simply appears out of the skies, falling full force from otherwise gentle clouds. Hail on its way down

to water may seem rather firm, but the process of its metamorphosis has already begun when people on the ground experience the storm. The ice balls have been exposed to warm air. All this is a natural, inexorable, mindless, powerful process.

Of course, hailstones are not literally seeds. Seeds transform by their own inner mechanisms and environmental opportunities into larger and more beautiful plants. In contrast, ice grains melt due to circumstances outside them. Why is this? Seeds have more complex inner structures and mechanisms. This allows seeds to adapt and take advantage of environmental conditions. Ice-stones are as crude as they are hard.

So the storming stones cannot stay as they are, for they cannot resist the calm but powerful summer warmth.

### ***Natural Turmoil Does Not Last***

This strophe reminds us that although nature gives us a hard time now and then, by and large it is benign and salubrious.

### ***Hate Cannot Endure***

Now we enter the second level of meaning. In this implicit stanza, hail stands for the cold, hard hatred that can result come from the strong, tumultuous emotions in one's mind (heaven's storming). At first, it seems pure and attractive, but it cannot endure the quotidian surroundings into which it plunges and which it temporarily disrupts. The transformation into gentle moisture is the melting of hate into reasonable, useful, and benevolent behavior.

### ***From Attack to Regret***

This implicit stanza is similar to "Hate Cannot Endure". In this implicit stanza, hail stands for social turmoil that can result come from the strong, tumultuous emotions in one's mind (heaven's storming). The (implicitly referred-to) storm

on the ground is actual attack, and the water stands for tears of sadness in which such hateful ideas can terminate.

### *War/Crusade*

In this implicit stanza, the glamour of war and warriors appears as the purity of the white grain, but it is formed in chaos and violence. And it ends in tears of sorrow and terror, if not also of guilt and regret. The turmoil that creates this superficially beautiful substance is on high -- it is the whirling storms of hostile rulers.

The creation is tempestuous, and forces that hail cannot control hurl it about, revolving it and sending it in no steady direction until it becomes heavy. In the end, something useful does develop from the promising and dramatic start. In contrast to hail's beginning, the result is calm and mundane. It is wet dirt and puddles; it amounts to a little more water in the soil, streams, ponds, and lakes.

So the rulers and their staffs and allies might pester the people -- or even lay waste to croplands -- in their wars and religious persecutions. But at least in the end, they always calm down. Peace and prosperity return.

This is a modern concern; we see this sort of thing going on nowadays. But it was formerly even worse. During the Early Middle Ages, European Christians waged "jihad" against Pagans and against other Christians on a chronic basis. In addition, wars were often waged between petty English kingdoms over personal issues, and "devastation" and "laying waste" were frequent strategies. If you burn a family's seed crop and kill their draft animal, they are going to starve next year. They might have to resort to relatively minor banditry. And if that were not enough, large organized gangs would rob, rape, extort, and wantonly destroy large areas. In many cases, the raiders were organized by nobles and/or kings of faraway lands or nearby realms (Stenton, 1971).

***Malformed Intentions***

The metaphors in this implicit stanza point out that hard, cold intentions that look attractive are formed by turbulent and violent thinking. But such intentions are weaker than they seem, for they must melt into a calm and beneficial attitude.

***Chaotic Revolution Causes Violence, but It Does Not Last***

You can see from the chief staves that every now and then nature's chaotic, repetitious tumbling things about in the heavens causes violence down where people live. Extremist ideas are sometimes formed in the mists far from normal human lives. But in the end things return to normal.

Most attempts at revolution are not violent attacks on a government. Some are implementations of technological change, some are intellectual persuasion, and some are not quiet but well disciplined. But the attempts at revolt and replacement of persons aloft do tend to be violent storms that eventually melt away after creating hardship for those trying to lead mundane lives. However, revolution was not a major factor in Europe during the Early Middle Ages.

***Burnout***

“Burnout” is a warning that glorious beginnings are not always followed by glorious endings. It is a reminder that sometimes events may not turn out as energetically as they start. Starting with great promise and plenty of energy — but little organization — we had best be ready for some disappointment. Fortunately, important and useful results can be attained from projects whose glory cannot endure.

***Be Patient and Take Shelter***

Trouble that starts somewhere else and comes to you is inevitable, but the storms are temporary.

***Trouble from Heaven is Not Permanent***

It is only natural that the whitest of grains would symbolize deities, and the storms aloft would symbolize internecine struggles and chaos in their community. Their problems occur out of ordinary sight -- as if they were physically hidden in heavy mists and far away. In Greek and Roman myths, disputes among the deities cause trouble among humans. In Abrahamic ideology, a dispute breaks out between Yahweh and Satan. A more common theme in Jewish and Christian ideology is that their deity punishes His chosen people or Europeans of the Dark Ages with pestilence, drought, and other sources of misery as Yahweh struggles against Baal.

In Germanic Pagan religions, there is no trace of divine dissent or struggle between Good and Evil as causes of human misery on a large scale, nor on a personal scale. Conflicts between deities in Germanic myth involve human-dispute resolution rather than human-disaster causation. In Pagan times, Germanic peoples often practiced heightened piety during hard times, but there is no evidence that this was done to quell divine fights, but merely to get things right between the people and their deities. During the period of mixed religion, folks would change their religion if times were hard -- because they were looking for something other than inner development or personal growth in their religion (Fletcher, 1997; Russell, 1994; Stenton, 1971).

***Myths Are Not Enough***

The glamour of the glistening rains -- created by heavenly storms -- can represent the fine art of religious myths. These myths are mostly adventure stories of exploitative trickery, emotional abuse, and/or physical combat among mythical beings -- storms aloft. Such ideas can be an important part of a religion; indeed they seem to be inevitable. But mundane life is irresistible. Most religious practice and thinking has to be like the water that comes after hail.

Finding the moral to the story transforms a fancy ice ball into something more helpful in the long run. This is also where wisdom poetry -- such as the *OERP* -- comes into the picture.

### ***Caution Against Being Controlled by a Storm***

Enlightenment helps prevent trouble and embarrassment. This implicit stanza is supported by “Malformed Intentions”, “War/Crusade”, “Burnout”, “Hate Cannot Endure”, and “From Attack to Regret”. It is wise to avoid letting one’s thoughts be dominated by lofty but turbulent ideals. This especially the case if one is in charge of major equipment or leading some organization, and certainly if you are counseling another seeker.

Guilt and self-hatred can be storms in your head. Fear of the unknown or superstition can distract one from rational self-control.

### ***Inner Development***

“Inner Development” is supported by all the previous implicit stanzas, but most directly by “Caution Against Being Controlled by a Storm”. Religious (or other philosophical) motivation based on forceful and turbulent thoughts and events will end up quite differently than it begins. It is not that a system based on stormy attitudes works to a conclusion based on its own inner logic. The change comes from forces outside itself.

Thus, a person who seems quite troubled or perhaps even harmful might eventually mature into a calmer individual without any direct intervention on your part.

### ***Metamorphosis***

“Metamorphosis” -- supported by all implicit stanzas spoken of so far in this chapter -- speaks of a change of form from the dramatic but useless (and possibly dangerous) to the calm but necessary. “Metamorphosis” also points out that a change in the form of something is not always apparent from the process. The process might be stormy and threatening; the result is calm and benign.

A change can be much less dramatic than its beginnings imply. A religious system that seems to be based on force, intimidation, and violence can transform

in ways not readily apparent. Just as merely observing a hailstorm would not lead one to expect moist soil, the glamorous and exciting ideology of an extremist movement is not to be taken as a clue to its destiny. A movement cannot overcome wyrd.

A movement that sinks into the soil and lasts is not violent, but it is down-to-earth practical. It is suited to the environment into which it shall plunge.

By the time this poem was written, English Pagan religion had been greatly reduced, but Christianity was also due for massive changes much later on. The principle way it had come to dominate Germanic cultures was by conquest and government imposition. Hatred of heretics was also a problem. But a few hundred years later, Christianity mellowed out substantially.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Less apparent causes of change
- Non-apparent important events about to occur
- Radical change in form
- Lack of choice/lack of consciousness
- Peace
- Storming
- Violence
- Turmoil
- Creativeness, creativity
- Beauty
- Mystery, empirical and mystical
- Nature's awesome power
- Disappointment conditioned by a benign outcome
- Burnout
- Beneficial outcome of a violent surprise

- Adaptability/flexibility
- Inner sophistication
- Inner or hidden capability
- Potential

***Contrasts***

- Storming versus calmness
- Violence versus peace
- Turbulence versus stability
- High elevation versus low
- Ice/hardness versus water/flexibility
- Useless versus useful
- Processes versus forms
- Excitement, action, drama, glory, and glitter versus prosaic, mundane usefulness
- Cause versus effect
- Superficial versus profound
- Adaptability versus inability to exploit possibilities
- Seeds versus ice-stones

***Advice for Living***

That which is commonly regarded as disastrous can be seen as a wonder and bringer of benefits. But one can be carried away by passion. High levels of uncontrolled emotion can produce glittering ideas that have disappointing consequences.

Glittering, glorious promise is not necessarily followed by corresponding results — an inner sophistication that allows one to take advantage of opportunities is necessary. It is to your advantage to look beyond the surface when evaluating the potential of a person or thing, for inner development can be very important for the future.

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	Hypermetric A	6
1b	Hypermetric A	8
2a	Hypermetric A	7
2b	Hypermetric A	9

Line	Syllables
1	14
2	16
Total	30

## Tenth Stanza: Adjustment, Awareness, and Perspicacity<sup>12</sup>

Nyd byþ nearu on bréostan, weorþeþ hí ðeah oft niþa bearnum  
to helpe and to hæle gehwæþre, gif hi his hlystaþ æror.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{“nið” or “niðð” occurs only in poetry and is usually plural) need, lack;  
necessity, compulsion, duty; emergency, distress, hardship, difficulty,  
trouble, pain; force, violence; fetters, constraints; inevitableness } {is,  
becomes} (a) {(Noun): strain, danger, distress, difficulty} on (the) {(this  
word is plural and dative) breasts; stomach, womb; mind, thoughts,  
disposition}

{becomes, happens, gets, settles} {she/they} {although, even if, however,  
nonetheless, yet/still} often men’s {(pl, dat) offspring, descendants,  
sons}

{(prep.) to, into} help and {(prep.) to, into} {healing, cure; health;  
prosperity; safety, salvation} nevertheless

{if, whether, though, provided that} they (to) it {listens, hears, attends to;  
obeys} {earlier, before}

#### *(B)*

Hardship disheartens greatly. • Oft though becomes, to humans’ offspring  
some helping and some healing anyhow • -- if disheart’ning they heed in time.

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<sup>12</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997e).

**(C)**

Hardship is a burden on one's morale. Nonetheless, it often also becomes help and salvation to people if they avoid being surprised by their reactions to it.

**(D) *Modernized Meter***

Hardship can be depressing.

But it often becomes to the sons of men a helping and a healing  
-- if they heed the disheart'ning in time.

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The major issue here is in the translation of one word: "it" in the last half line. It is clear that the stanzas of this poem are not "about" their title words. Rather, the topic is always some aspect of humanity, and the discussion eventually leads to the poem's philosophy of religion. In this case, the correct translation of "it" in the last half line shows that this strophe is not about hardship or restrictions, but about emotional self-control. The other issues in edition and translation are minor.

#### ***The Title Word***

There is not a one-word translation for the title word. In full range of meanings, it is close to the Modern English "need", but the modern word has drifted slightly closer to "want". Maureen Halsall (1997: 121-122) points out that in Old English literature, *nýd* denotes a condition that is constraining and difficult to endure. She adds that this is the same as *nauð* in the two Old Norse rune poems.

In this context, *nyd* conveys the general idea of unpleasantly channeled behavior, of a restriction that is somehow disadvantageous. These situations are not necessarily emergencies; they can be enduring circumstances.

***Gehwæpre***

In Hickeys' copy, "ge hwæpre" is two words, which most editors of this poem redact to one word. The two words would mean "also however" and would not appear to affect the meaning of the sentence in question, since the word as usually edited means "nevertheless". Either way, the sentence says that in addition to restriction, there may be opportunity. Also either ge hwæðre or gehwæðre would be redundant with ðeah in the line above.

***His (It) Refers to Nearu***

As Translation C shows in plain prose, the topic here is people paying attention to, and hence coping with, their own emotional state. In other words, the strophe says that hardship could turn to success if people are aware of their psychological stress ahead of time.

But most scholars misread this strophe because they misunderstand the noun referent of "it" in the second line. Previous students of this poem usually translate "his" in the last line as referring to the condition of hardship. Moreover, most students of the *OERP* regard this interpretation as beneath comment or justification. Therefore, they think this strophe talks about persons' awareness of their externally-imposed difficulties. For example, this is Kemble's (1840) translation:

Need is narrow in the breast  
for the sons of men,  
yet doth it become  
often a help  
and safety for any one  
if they the sooner attend to it.

I made the same mistake until the summer of 2011 (for example see Stanfield 1997e). The best justification for this interpretation is offered by Grienberger (1921), who goes on to interpret the strophe as amounting to the relatively shallow and not-so-religious "necessity makes one inventive". But he has to

explain how two grammatical genders are used for the same word in this short passage; I find such explanation unnecessary.

The rationale for the present interpretation is pretty clear. In the last verse, “it” refers to *nearu*, which is neuter singular, for the original word “his” is masculine or neuter singular. Hence, the pronoun must refer to a masculine or neuter singular noun. But in the first line *nyd* is referenced by the pronoun *hi*, which is feminine singular (*nyd* can be either feminine or neuter).

Incidentally, we are rejecting the possessive aspect of “his” as noninformative. The reason for this is that the verb for “pay attention to” (*hlystan*) requires that its direct object be in the genitive case. This is simply one of the oddities or idioms of a highly inflected language.

Translation C, in simple prose, is offered to make the original statement as clear as it would have been to an audience in ancient times.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The alliteration of Translation B matches that of the original perfectly but the rhythm of the translation deviates in places, and some of the deviations are subtly significant. Translation D, which does not make any attempt to mimic the original’s structure, is probably a more efficient representation of the original intent.

The “perfect” translation exactly matches the original hypermetric verses in first half of each line, but deviates in the second half of each line while still conforming to the rules of Old English versification. In particular, by paraphrasing line 2b, the translation is made as clearly psychological as the original would have been to native speakers of Old English, but at the expense of a different emotional impact.

In the original, verse 1a is type A with an extra foot of Type A added. The translation matches the structure of the original’s 1a perfectly.

Half-line 1b combines a whole E verse followed by a whole Type A verse for a total of 9 syllables. The corresponding verse in Translation B is also a 9-syllable combination of type E followed by A, but the unstressed syllables are distributed differently in the translation.

The difference in rhythm for half-line 1b is insignificant, but the order in which ideas are presented has been altered. In many cases in this poem where I transposed the order of ideas the result is not significantly different from the original. In this case “often” gets more stress than “becomes” in both versions, but the subtly different ways this is done might have a different emotional effect on the listener. Also, in the original, the clause ending in the idea “often” is musically separated from the idea “to humans offspring”, while in Translation B the two clauses flow more smoothly together.

Verse 2a has a normal A verse with a half of a type A at the end, but Translation B shows a D2 verse with a half of an A verse the beginning. However, “*gehwæðre*” is in the alliteration in the original but “*anyhow*” (in the translation) is not. The emotional effect of the two rhythms is quite distinct.

The original verse 2b has a type D1 rhythm (falling-by-stages with an extra half of a type A added to the end of the verse. But the translation of that verse is a hypermetric B with anacrusis and an extra half of a type A at the beginning. But what is more important for emotional impact is that the musicality of the translation is cruder than in the original. That is, the rhythm and pattern of lifts in the translation of 2b is easier for the modern listener to notice and is more compelling than the original’s pattern.

The translation of 2b affects the overall subtle emotional impact of the strophe. The original develops a more or less sing-song rhythm which is interrupted by the caesura in line 2 *and* by a striking change of rhythm from 2a to 2b. In the translation, the change in rhythm between these half-lines is not readily apparent.

Note also that the translation of 2b is syntactically clear to the modern ear. This is because Translation B does not rely on the gender of a pronoun (his) to indicate reference to a state of mind (disheartening) rather than to troubles.

A minor defect in both the original and the translation is in line 2b. For many speakers, “if” would get the main emphasis among the words in line 2, stressing the conditionality of the benefits of hardship. But “if” is not in the alliteration and was not intended to be the chief stave in that line. Instead, the last verse has two chief staves, “disheart’ning” and “heed”.

An alternate translation of half-line 2b would be “if it they it see coming.” While this would be a more literal translation from the Old English, it would not be hypermetric, and the pronoun reference would be deceptive to the modern audience. On the other hand, the music would be awkward in Modern English, and that would be consistent with the original intent.

For those who are not familiar with hypermetric verse, there is a brief discussion in *A Guide to Old English* (Mitchell and Robinson, 1994: 163-164). A more detailed and technical discussion of Old English versification in general is in *Old English Grammar and Reader* (Diamond, 1970: 46-67).

Translation D makes some things clearer to a modern audience than does the “perfect” rendition. Note how the layout on the page, the punctuation, and (most of all) the rhythms guide the speaker to divide the strophe into three ideas. Not restricted to the traditional rhythms, Translation D starts with a dactylic-and-iambic rhythm that hits with bad news, then shifts to a happier (almost singing) anapestic pattern to describe the idea of opportunity. And then after a pause the rhythm shifts back to strictly dactylic for the idea of warning.

## *Discussion*

This is an openly psychological stanza, which is unusual for this poem. For this strophe is concerned with persons' honest awareness of their own responses to constriction of opportunity.

### ***Adjustment***

The message at the lowest level of abstraction is that the emotional stress of pressure in our lives can help us if we pay attention to it before it dominates us. Often, we can sublimate or dampen our emotions, and the enhanced self-control can produce better-motivated action.

### ***Introspective Perspicacity***

The second half of the first line emphasizes a major quality of humanity, for it stresses that people differ from lower animals in degrees of self-understanding, self-control, and conscious planning. Not that lower animals never perceive problems in advance, but humans are better at such perception and more flexible in response. "Humanity" is equally supported by all the translations.

### ***Endogenously Generated Fetters***

In the second level of abstraction, "hardship" is a metaphor for inhibitions that come from within. Such inhibitions could be social shyness, unreasonable fear of failure, laziness, fear of being different, superstition, or neurotic obsession. In some cases, the disheartening itself is comfortable because it is familiar, or because it seems a more excusable form of failure than trying and failing.

If we are aware of a drain on our own spirit which can be caused by our own negativity, then we can use that awareness to become stronger and more whole. Of course, it helps to be aware of this inhibition prior to a crisis.

### ***Composure by Self-Knowledge***

At the highest level of abstraction, "Composure by Self-Knowledge" refers to the potential for self-control in seeing ourselves as we are. If one knows that

under duress he or she has a tendency to become angry, confused, fearful, or otherwise partially disabled by an emotional reaction to severe restriction, then it is possible to make mental preparation for a more rational and self-disciplined response. Sometimes one gains control by merely knowing the existence of a crippling emotion, and sometimes merely by explaining its etiology, but sometimes one has to play little tricks of self-persuasion on one's subconscious mind.

In addition to reducing (or on rare occasion reversing) the effect of severe restriction of options, act of self-will, self-knowledge, and self-control can contribute to more success in relatively mundane circumstances.

This implicit stanza is built on the two stanzas at the lowest level of meaning plus "Endogenously Generated Fetters".

### ***Purification of Consciousness***

How does one gain this knowledge of oneself, bypassing or overcoming the psychological defenses that make loss of composure possible? How can one cope with society's tendency to make us artibrarily emotionally stress ourselves? For the answer, consider that to attain such self-knowledge is to become smaller on the animal side of human nature and larger on the divine side.

Thus, a common way of achieving this calmness and control is religious meditation or prayer. To atheists, these methods might look irrational, but they can be irrational means used to communicate with one's subconscious to achieve rationality.

In short, there is a practical value to routine purification of consciousness.

This implicit stanza is built on all the othere stanzas implied by the original verses.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Adjustment
- Timeliness
- Self-knowledge
- Simultaneous opposites
- Emotional stress
- Emotional relief
- Thinking ahead
- Composure
- Mental focus
- Turning difficulty into advantage
- Help
- Healing

### *Contrasts*

- Threat versus salvation
- Passivity versus activity
- Self-knowledge versus ignorance

### *Advice for Living*

One key to adjusting profitably is mental focus and another is reaction timeliness. Perceiving well and applying good judgment is a divine practice in that it sets us off from lower animals. Minor and major religious rituals performed routinely can help one avoid making restrictions worse than need be. And the practice of religious enlightenment can be a help and a strength for anyone.

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	Hypermetric A	7
1b	Hyper. E + A	9
2a	Hypermetric A	10
2b	Hyper. D1 + A	7

Line	Syllables
1	16
2	17
Total	33

## Eleventh Stanza: Beauty, Cold, Slipperiness, and the Uniting of Extremes<sup>13</sup>

Ís byþ oferceald, ungemetum slidor,  
glisnaþ glæs-hlúttur, gimum gelicost,  
flór forste geworuht, fæger ansýne.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

Ice is {excessively cold, beyond cold, very chilled, very cold}

{excessively, immeasurably, immoderately, extremely, limitlessly; improperly}  
{slippery, slick}

{glitters, gleams} {glass-bright, glass-pure, glass-clear}

{gem, precious stone, (in poetry only:) sun, star} {most like}

{floor, pavement, ground} (of) frost {prepared, made, wrought}

{beautiful, fair, pleasant, agreeable} {face, form, aspect; view, spectacle; thing  
seen, sight; surface}

#### *(B)*

Ice is ultracold, • and overly slipp'ry.

Glistens, glass-lusters • — gemstones resembles.

Floor frosted all-o'er; • fair the view seemeth!

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<sup>13</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997f).

**(C)**

Ice is very cold and extremely slick. But it glitters as brightly as glass -- very much like worked gemstones. Hence ground that is completely covered with sheet ice (or at least heavily frosted) is a beautiful sight.

**(D) *Modernized Meter***

Ice is very cold and slippery in excess.  
But it glistens and gleams just like precious gems,  
and frost-covered ground a fair scene makes!

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

There are no issues in translation regarding this strophe, although it requires a lot of editing. Perhaps the lack of verbal ambiguity contributed to unusual success in making a “perfect” translation.

### ***Editing***

Among other students of this poem there is no controversy over editing the original, which clearly shows several typos. That is, the original (or rather the printed copy that we have to work from) has whole syllables misplaced. The typos are shown in Appendix H, which is on editing. Details follow.

In the first line, someone wrote “overcealdunge metum”, which is nonsense. All editors of this stanza agree that “unǵe” belongs with “metum”, making the negation of “ǵemetum” (proper, fitting, moderate).

The second line shows “ǵelícust” instead of the more usual “ǵelícost”. Most editors leave that word as it is, but the word is easier to read aloud with the more usual spelling.

The third line in the original says “ge worulit”. This is clearly a medieval copyist or a typesetter misreading “geworuht” (wrought). Every editor of “Ís” makes this expression into one word and converts the “li” into an “h”.

However, there is one additional change needed in the word for “wrought”. That “u” has to go. The verse starts with two stressed syllables, and has two unstressed syllables just before the last stressed syllable. For this to be up to traditional metrical standards, the second syllable has to have secondary stress and the final stressed syllable has to have a primary stress, and an unstressed syllable cannot end the half-line. That makes a good type E verse. And the spelling “geworht” is at least as correct as “geworuht” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921).

In some strophes in this poem, odd punctuation seems to give clues to underlying meanings. In this stanza, the odd punctuation appears to simply be an error. In the original, the only internal punctuation is a period separating the second line from the third. But the contrast we see is between the complaints in line 1 and the praise in lines 2 and 3, with line 2 partially explaining what is so beautiful about the “floor” in line 3. So if there were internal punctuation indicating a clue to the sense of the strophe, that punctuation would be a period between lines 1 and 2.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The translation is practically perfect. Considering all three critical aspects: the patterns of rhythm, patterns of alliteration, and the senses of the words (especially the chief staves), the translation is an exact match to the original one very minor exception.

The minor exception is the second half-line. The original verse 1b is hypermetric, and A verse with an extra half of an A added on. The translations’ verse 1b is simply an A with anacrusis, because it lacks the starting strongly stressed syllable that the original shows.

Translation B of this stanza is analyzed further in Appendix H, in the section “Concluding Exercise”.

Translation C is included to show by contrast the nonverbal communication that we get from the poetic translation. Translation C seems to have all the verbal information that is in Translation B, but C is not lyrical. Hence, it does not beckon us with mystery, with the stark contrasts provided by omitting conjunctions, and with the subconscious emotional evocation that can be pulled out of us by rhythm. It does not have the poetry’s mystical potential carried by the overlaid patterns of rhythm, alliteration, lyrical expressions, and word meanings.

The modernized-meter Translation D, also saying exactly the same logical content as Translation C, goes even further in communicating emotion, because it is a poetic style to which we are more accustomed.

If you only get the words, you do not get the same poem. Experience of nonverbal messages can be idiosyncratic as well as impossible to describe in words. But the present author’s nonverbal experience of the mystery is more uplifting than the interpretations show below and has a feeling of being more penetrating. It is, however, in the same general direction.

## *Discussion*

“Ís” is an unusually complex stanza. The major simple themes of this stanza are appreciation of nature and accepting discomfort and difficulty, but there most important content is a set of contrasts. The first contrast here is between inconvenience and hazard on the one hand, and beauty on the other; other contrasts occur at higher levels of meaning.

“Ís” reminds us that reality can be messy, complex, disorderly, and contradictory. The prettiest of nature, the most emotionally gratifying experiences, the most enlightening exercises, the striving for highest goals -- are not necessarily pure phenomena.

The chief staves give a clue to this. The chief staves are: “extremely”, “gems”, and “beautiful”. This directs us to the consideration that extreme phenomena can be seen as precious and beautiful. This is a reconsideration of extreme-ness, which was first taken up in the second stanza, “Úr”. But for the time being, let us leave the comparison of stanzas aside. Trying to make this book too complete an analysis of the poem is a sure way to wear out the author without completing anything.

In studying this stanza, as we move from the literal level of meaning to the third level, the questions we ask ourselves lead us from a consideration of a mystery of nature to seeing a theological perspective. That theological perspective is quite different from the simpler Platonic view (“God is good”, or “God is love”) that has come to dominate Christian, Jewish, and Islamic views of deity.

Before going into the implicit stanzas, let us consider an aside on the main simile of this strophe. The stanza draws a parallel between ice and gems. Both are naturally-occurring crystalline substances. But the analogy breaks down if we examine it too closely, and the author(s) of the *OERP* did not intend to carry the analogy too far. When the poem was written -- in the 950's CE, little or no industrial use was made of gemstones, but ice had uses to reduce edema, to cross lakes or rivers, and so forth. But even today, the uses of ice are more important to us than are the uses of gems. Moreover, ice in the temperate zone is plentiful and not necessary to find when it is in season. Also, ice has its beauty without artifice. Gems are artificially created by skillfully cutting or polishing raw stones. But gems are more easily handled, since they do not melt easily, which makes ice — plentiful though it is — less subject to human control than gemstones. But all this is beside the point.

Indeed, any attempt to understand this strophe that depends on an extensive discussion of ice would be misleading. The chief staff in the first line is “extremely”, and to understand this strophe one must focus on extremity and on the principle contrast.

***Ice Can Be Unpleasant But Gives Magical Beauty***

This view is obvious from Translation B.

***Icy Beauty is Not for Sale, but Not Free***

The stanza spends one line describing what is uncomfortable or difficult about ice and two lines extolling its beauty. So the emphasis is on the beauty, but the beauty comes at a cost.

This implicit stanza is based on the opposite of the order in which the ideas are presented in the original. The original says: “it is extreme, but at least it is pretty”. The converse is: “it is pretty, but you have to put up with the extremity”.

***Mixed Blessings of Extremity***

The point is that it is the extreme nature of ice that makes it inconvenient or hazardous on the one hand but beautiful on the other. As heavy snow, it decorates outdoor scenes with curved surfaces of glistening and gleaming white. As rime it makes gem-like coverings of mundane object. And so on and so forth. But in the moderate form of gentle water, it does not do that magic.

Of course, not everything that is extreme is a mix of good and bad, but many extreme phenomena are.

***Relax and Enjoy***

This implicit stanza recognizes that getting around is difficult when ice in the form of heavy snow or glacier-like coating surrounds. This is the time to relax and enjoy the view instead of complaining.

***Self-Control***

What can ice metaphorically represent that has this property of being difficult but attractive in extreme form? There are many such things.

In this implicit stanza, ice is a metaphor for thorough and firm self-control, and its gem-like beauty is a metaphor for attraction to psychological or social growth. Like touching ice or standing in weather cooled by large amounts of sheet ice or packed snow, achieving and maintaining self-control can quite challenging. And yet, the goal is attractive, for when we see others who appear to have achieved this, they impress and inspire us.

### ***Advanced Skill***

Ice can also be a metaphor for advanced skill of any type, and the fascinating glitter can be a metaphor for admiration or constructive envy. Slickness is a metaphor for being difficult to master or understand. Such skills can require much dedication, effort and time; and they can slip away if not practiced.

### ***Meditative Peak***

Those moments of peak concentration one achieves during meditation exercises tend to be difficult to attain and brief — slippery, if you will. But due to the euphoria and insight that can come at such moments, they can provide a very attractive experience.

### ***Impractical Obsession***

This implicit stanza is about an obsession<sup>14</sup> with an unobtainable or impractical ideal, object, or practice: something socially or psychologically glamorous but difficult to control or tolerate. This would be something that turns out to be too extreme to be good for you. Whatever the outcome, deep in your mind and heart you have a love that you can never let go. Ice is the person, substance, or thing that is always “fæger ansnyne,” although with mixed emotions. Recovering tobacco addiction is an example. Wishing to live a personal life without greed or

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<sup>14</sup> I am indebted to Marilyn Evans for pointing out to me in 1997 that “Ís” has an implicit verse that is concerned with the themes of obsession and addiction.

fear, or trying to live in a society without any greed or fear would also be toxic obsessions.

We might envy a person who does not adjust to others (then again we might think that attitude to be not much fun). But such a person would be at least sometimes unpleasant and always difficult to control.

### ***Internecine Doctrinal Fighting***

Pagan religions of Europe did not have hair-splitting doctrinal political struggles and persecutions among themselves. But by the time this poem was written, well-informed Pagans would have been well aware of vigorous -- not to mention murderous -- political struggles between Christians, which began about 325 CE (Boer, 1976). Many people in ancient England might have regarded the points of dispute as slippery matters that left them cold. This would make the references to prettiness ironical.

### ***Religious Lore of Mysteries***

But more likely, what the author(s) meant to indicate was that the study of religious mystery depends heavily on symbolic discourse and circumlocution. It is difficult to guide a person or to channel his or her behavior to find that which is not subject to direct expression in words. Among other things, the student is confronted with metaphorical poetry. Thus, the art and meditation exercises merely make an obscure topic less obscure.

But although self-discipline is required and the realizations sought difficult to grasp, at least the poetry may be quite attractive and figuring it out may be fun.

This implicit stanza is supported by “Mixed Blessings of Extremity”, “Self-Control”, and “Advanced Skill”.

The verse we call “Ice” in the Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme is quite different from “Ice” in this poem: “Ice we call the broad bridge. / The blind need to be

led” (Thorsson, 1993). However, the reference to needing to be led is a common suggestion in both of these strophes.

### *Uniting of Extremes*

Religious enlightenment comes of realizing, not denying. Enlightenment is based on honest awareness of reality, not on making a “kiddie” version of the facts of life and believing in it.

But this implicit stanza is a reminder that the misery or severe hindrance that we perceive is often just one aspect of a complex reality. Maybe things are as bad as the seem, but maybe they are also wonderful.

What do we see when we contemplate nature and mankind? Do we sometimes see things that are unpleasant or difficult to understand? We see extremes of nature, impractical obsessions, and other ambivalent things.

Typically, we realize only part of the focus of a meditation at a time. A few years ago, I performed a dance meditation during which I experienced a depressing awareness of hatred, unfair exploitation, technological disaster, war, hubris, and all other ways in which people have brought misery on other people throughout the life of our species. It was a difference between knowing of something and really knowing of it. It was one side of the extremes that are united in human life. Seeing all of that at once was depressing at first, but that is not all there is to life.

It is useful to be aware that although “Ís” emphasizes bivalued comparisons, almost anything important in human life is multifaceted. The author(s) remind us of this by using the analogy of gemstones, which are usually carved to have many facets (unless they are carved to present a rounded face).

This implicit stanza is supported by all of the implicit stanzas below, except for “Meditative Peak” and “Internecine Doctrinal Fighting”.

### ***The Holy***

Is the holy “simply divine”? Or might not the principle of divinity, Os, be a complex uniting of extremes. When we contemplate the holiness that lies in our souls, it is not simple and it is not pure, and it can be difficult to grasp. But nevertheless it attracts us as would a thing of physical beauty.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

- Ice
- Extreme cold
- Natural beauty
- Artifice
- Gems
- Glitter
- Obsession
- Addiction
- Recovering addiction
- Unrequited but undying love
- Superlative qualities, immoderation
- Peak of meditative concentration

### ***Contrasts***

- Usefulness verses beauty
- Moderate verses immoderate
- Attractive versus difficult characteristics

### ***Advice for Living***

Nature and human life can be quite complex and ambivalent. Even the most unpleasant of events, such as a heart-breaking breakup, can involve some elements of beauty and lasting value. Addiction and addiction recovery can involve particularly difficult emotional tendencies. The striving for

enlightenment can be similar to the struggles to recover from addiction because of the need for self-control and honest perception.

The Platonic notion of good as the ultimate cause and of an ultimate god who is simple and good (Burkert, 1985: 321-325) is based on partial perception. It is not consistent with what we experience in mundane lives or in the conduct of progressive mystical religion.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	Hypermetric A	6
2a	D1	5
2b	A	5
3a	E	5
3b	D1	5

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	10
3	10
Total	30

## Twelfth Stanza: Deity, Earth, and Mankind<sup>15</sup>

Gér byþ gumena hiht, • ðon god láteþ,  
Halig heofones cyning, • hrúsan syllan  
beorhte bléda • beornum and ðearfum

### *Translations*

#### **(F) Transliteration**

{Year; New Year's Day; growing season; the cycle of seasons} is {men's, lords', heroes' } {trust; hope, desire, expectation; joy, exultation}

{then, now, thence; inasmuch as; when, while} {God, god, image of a god, godlike person} {allows; causes to do; allows to escape, lets out, sets free}

{holy, sacred; venerated} {sky's, heaven's} {king, ruler}

{earth, soil, ground — could be singular or plural} {give, furnish, supply; surrender, give up}

{bright, shining; excellent, remarkable, magnificent, noble, glorious; beautiful} {new plant growth, growing parts of plants, shoots, especially edible new growth; fruits, things to harvest; blossoms, flowers}

(to) {nobles; chiefs, princes; warriors; rich men; heroes} and {poor men, paupers, beggars, needy persons}

#### **(B)**

To humans year-new brings hope • that Yahweh suffers  
— Sacred sky-above's sov'reign — • soil to give up  
choicest crops for • chieftains and poor folks.

<sup>15</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1997f).

**(C)**

The frostless season is to humans hope • that God will let  
-- holy heaven's king -- • dirt yield  
brightly-colored edible vegetation • (for) warrior chiefs and (for) beggars

**(D)**

New Years' Day sees mankind's hope that Yahweh – Holy Heaven's King –  
will suffer dirt to yield up bright fruits for noble and needy.

**(E)**

The advent of the frostless time of year brings hope to mankind that Yahweh -  
the king of sacred heaven - will let soil yield bright fruits for noble and needy  
alike.

**(F) *Modernized Meter***

The turning of the year brings mankind hope that God --  
the holy king of heaven -- lets soil bring forth  
its brightest blessings for barons and for peasants.

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

Three words have issues in translation: ġér, gumena, and l  teþ. The definitions of ġér and gumena are important if we are to be comfortable with this stanza at its lowest level of meaning, but they are not critical to understanding the poem at the higher levels of abstraction. On the other hand, our understanding of l  teþ in the context of this stanza is of fundamental importance. This is because l  teþ helps define the meaning of “god”, which in turn is the topic of this stanza at its higher levels.

***The Title Word***

In this context, the title word clearly refers to the turning of the year. There has been controversy over the title word, because it has multiple meanings and is the ancestor of the modern “year”, which is ambiguous in current times. The ancient Anglo-Saxons used *ġér* just as we use “year”, with three exceptions: they used it to denote a new year; they used it to denote the lunar cycle; and they used it to denote the frostless time of year. In translation B, the rendering was affected by prosodic considerations, as I used poetic license to make a word.

Other students of the OERP disagree among themselves as to how we should precisely translate *ġér*. Some students of this poem would have us translate *ġér* as “harvest” (Grienberger, 1921; Halsall, 1981; Thorsson, 1993; Pollington, 1996). Some feel that it denotes summertime or the growing season (Dickins, 1915; Osborn and Longland, 1982). Kemble (1840) simply rendered the word as “year”. Paul (1996) interprets the word as “new year”. However, the dictionaries are closer to the position taken by the present author. Hall (1960) only defines *ġér* as “year”. Bosworth and Toller (1898) defined the word as “year, annus”, and the Latin *annus* can denote a year’s crops or a calendar year (Traupman, 1995). But in 1921, Toller redefined *ġér* with several definitions and sub-definitions, including “spring season” and “a revolution (sic) of the moon” – but not including “harvest”. In the additions and corrections added by Alistair Campbell to the Bosworth-Toller dictionary, we find “thirteen lunar months” (Campbell, 1972).

We can easily reject “harvest” or “annus” based on context. In this stanza, “harvest” or “annus” (as a year’s crops) would be synonymous with *beorhta bleða*. We can also reject a single cycle of lunar phases because the series of days would be too short, at fewer than thirty days.

*Ġér* could be the main growing season or non-winter months. Checking the examples of *ġér* cited by dictionaries, I found no incidence of *ġér* as “growing season” outside the *OERP*. But Dickens cited a persuasive-looking use in the Finnsburg fragment of *Beowulf*. The fragment is in lines 1133-1136a, which says that Hengest had to remain with Finn because sea ice prevented passage home “until another frostless season came to the land, just as nowadays does

that which is continuously well regulated, (the) gloriously bright weather”. (“... oþðæt óþer cóm / géar in geardas, • swá nú gýt déð, / þá ðe syngáles • séle bewitiað, / wuldor-torhtan wedr”). (See Alexander, 1995; Dickens, 1915).

On the other hand, “turning of the year” is found in other OE contexts. A homily revealed that “the Hebrew people held their earliest year’s day (forman géares dæg) on the spring equinox”. Another homily remarked that “People call this day New Year’s Day (géares dæg) as if it were the first day in the year’s circuit”. A chronicle mentioned “tó géares dæg” – on New Year’s Day (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921).

Thus, “gér” can refer to a cycle of seasons starting at the end of the last hard frost or to the start of a calendar year. This is analogous to our use of “year” to denote to any period of about 360-365 days. Sometimes we use “year” in a seasonal-cycle sense, as when an athlete in a seasonal sport is said to have a good “year”. This is an apparent reference to activity only during the sport’s season. However, these “years” are vague enough to indicate a 12-month cycle that begins during rest or training prior to the playing season and ends with the conclusion of the playing season.

But in perspective, this is not a critical issue. The stanza is about how we conceive divine beings; it is not about gér. At the philosophically more interesting levels, the circumstance under which people are hopeful for attractive harvests is less important than is the role of a deity in our mental attitudes. The choice of term used in Translation B was guided more by prosodic than by literal-definition considerations.

### ***Gumena***

The original stanza is not politically correct in current contexts. Nonetheless, in a compromise between the original meaning and meter, I translated *gumena* as “human’s”. We get sonic alliteration if he pronounce “human’s” with the initial “h” silent, as some do.

The most important dictionaries seem ambivalent. The original is the plural possessive of sé guma, which Hall (1960) says denotes “man” rather than “human”. Bosworth and Toller (1898) define guma as “man”, but they also say that guma glosses the Latin word for “human”, and their all their examples all show the word denoting “human” in Old English usage. Toller’s 1921 examples show the word can denote male persons only.

Even if we were to translate guma as “man”, it would be foolish to infer that the stanza does not apply to women’s notions of divinity.

### *Láetep*

Just as in Modern English “to let” can imply a passive or an active role, in Old English láetan could indicate either lack of interference or active causation. The difference between the two has an implication for our view of the stanza’s attitude toward the main topic word, “god/God”. If the focal deity’s role is to cause or help cause fertility, then that deity is seen as helpful to mankind. On the other hand, if the deity’s role is to not get in the way of the natural tendency of soil to be fertile, then the attitude toward the deity is more anxious.

### *Critique of Translation B*

In this instance, the modernized-meter translation is a much more adequate representation of the original intent than is the “perfect” rendition. There are several compromises in Translation B. The net effect is a more pronounced rhythm, a slightly different pattern of ambiguities, and poetry that just does not sound as good as does the original or Translation F. This is despite the fact that on the whole the “perfect” translation satisfies reasonably well the three objective criteria of this book for mimicking the structure of the original.

For Line 1, word-sense and alliteration are good, but a syllable has been added to each half-line. The effect in the “on” verse is trivial, but in verse 1b the placement of the extra syllable means that a five-syllable type A verse is offered for a four-syllable type C verse. The effect is that the translation sounds a little happier than does the original.

For the sonic alliteration in line 1 of the translation to match the original's spelling alliteration, "human's" has to be pronounced with a silent "h", so that the word sounds like an alliteration with "Yahweh" and "year". However, the original has nonphonetic spelling alliteration, for not all three g's in the first line have the same sound. Traditional Old English alliteration is based on spelling, not sounds (Diamond, 1970: 46-48).

The original author(s) intended tense of "lǣteþ" is future tense. This shows in Translation C, which is a horrible approximation of the original poetry but is close to a literal translation of the words. Speakers of Old English typically used the present tense for the future tense verb forms that their language lacked. In Modern English, we commonly use a modal auxiliary to indicate future tense. But Translation B cannot have a modal auxiliary verb and approximate the rhythm of the original. Therefore, I used the present tense, just as in the original. (See Mitchell and Robinson, 1994:108, 115.)

I could not find a way to say "New Year's Day", "growing season", or "frostless time of the year" that would fit into the original's rhythm or alliteration. Therefore, I coined the neologism "year-new". Actually in the first half-line, the Translation B does match a six-syllable hypermetric type E rhythm with a six-syllable hypermetric type E, and the pattern is an exact match except for the trivial addition of an unstressed syllable at the beginning of verse 1a.

In line 2, the rhythm, alliteration, and word-sense perfectly match the original.

On the other hand, using "sky-above" instead of "heaven" reduces a significant ambiguity. In the Anglo-Saxon as in Modern English, "heaven" refers both to the sky above us and to the mythical realm where Yahweh, angels, and Jesus reside. The ambiguity is reduced because in Translation B you have to stop and think that the sky is also the mythical Heaven.

Half-line 3a has the preposition "for" separated from the nouns to which it refers (inflection combines the prepositions with the nouns in Old English). In Teutonic poetry, the caesura creates a tension as the listener has to wait for the

“b” verse. With the preposition before the pause in line 3, tension is slightly greater than would be the case in the original. This is a minor departure from the nonverbal messages of original. Also in verse 3a, only one syllable is in the alliteration pattern, although the original has two syllables in the alliteration.

### *Discussion*

The stanza is a discussion of our attitude toward “deity”; it is not about New Year’s Day. “Ĝér” reminds us of ambiguities in our conception of the divine. The overall mood is of joyous anticipation with an undercurrent of anxiety. We are hopeful but worried about divine intervention. ”Ĝér” expresses reverence mixed with anxiety, admiration mixed with an implicit acknowledgement that Yahweh (or some other god) might act arbitrarily against us.

Many students of *The Old English Rune Poem* think that it shows elements of Christianization, especially in verses like this, where the ancient word “god” appears. (For examples, see Halsall, 1981; Osborn and Longland, 1987: 70-71; Paul, 1996: 50; Shippey, 1976; S. Wódening, 1995a). Yes, this poem shows mixed religion. However, a simply Christianized poem would mention God in praise, supplication, or at least wonder. No deity is dealt with in that way in the *OERP*. What the nobles, beggars and those in between are hoping for is that their beneficent deity will stay out of the way. Of course, this stanza is ambiguous about the identity of the deity in question and about the pantheon in which that deity is classified. Therefore, this is a liberal criticism that can be applied to any religion. “Ĝér” is not saying we are wrong to regard a deity with anxiety; it just holds a mirror up to our minds.

The principle contrasts are between sky and ground, glory and dirt, heaven and earth, hope and anxiety. The divine being mentioned here is not contrasted to mankind so much as shown apart from mankind.

It is possible to make a case that “Ĝér” shows a descent of the visible mixed (or Teutonic Pagan) religion from an earlier sky-god/earth-mother religion.

However, that argument is for another publication.

***Anticipation of Good Harvest***

There is a time, at the start of the frostless seasons, when the people are implicitly hopeful of sensual pleasure and material abundance. At this time, before difficulties and complications have a chance to arise “hope springs eternal in the human breast”. The people tend to be confident they will do their part to turn natural abundance into prosperity. They cannot help but hope that no “act of God” will prevent the feral and agricultural resources from doing what they do naturally. This implicit stanza is plain enough in Translation B.

***If Yahweh Does Not Get in the Way***

The Creator set up this system to produce material and sensual abundance, and He can choke off the supply at His will. Therefore, people are dependent on Him.

The emphasis here is on alienation and separation between mankind and the divine. This attitude reflects an anxiety- or fear-emphasis concept of deity, for in this implicit stanza the Almighty is a possible saboteur only. What the nobles, beggars and those in between are hoping for is that their Almighty will stay out of the way and let nature run its course. This is clearest in Translation E, but it is also an aspect of “People Depend on Yahweh”.

This view can be seen in traditional lore of Abrahamic religion. In the Old Testament, Yahweh causes war, famine and pestilence, impoverishing his own chosen people or crushing whole nations arbitrarily. The traditional lore has affected legal terminology. In American jurisprudence, an “act of God” is a sudden, irreversible natural catastrophe that cannot be foreseen nor avoided.

Note, however, that neglect by Yahweh is not an issue in *The Bible*. Despite the common English phrase “God-forsaken”, no one is ever forsaken by Yahweh. Even Cain, driven into exile, is protected by a magical mark. The neglect of non-Jewish peoples implicit in *Genesis* may be more a matter of bad writing and witless ethnicism than of authors’ intentions. (We know that Adam and Eve

were not the first *people* because the sons of Adam and Eve found plenty of other people not descended from Adam and Eve.) The outright hostility against Canaanites found in various passages is not the same as neglect.

***People Depend on Yahweh for Physical Abundance and Beauty***

It is particularly easy to see the Abrahamic God in this stanza because we all know Him as a resident of Heaven. And with the adjective “sacred” attached to “heaven”, we see that the divine region is meant. This implicit stanza requires that we interpret “létan”/“suffer” as indicating active causation instead of mere toleration.

For an adherent of Abrahamic religion, this aspect of “Gér” would say that it is natural that humans should look to Yahweh for good harvests and therefore they ought to give thanks to Him when abundance and pleasure come to celebrate the relationship between mankind and God. And not only give thanks when harvest is in, but also for the hope deriving from their faith that He will provide.

***People Depend on Deities for Physical Abundance and Beauty***

This implicit stanza has us see the pantheon or ultimate godhead in a polytheist system as the “god” whose mercy or forbearance is useful for nature to support mankind. This is similar to the Abrahamic implicit stanza, “People Depend on Yahweh”.

But this stanza is unlike “People Depend on Yahweh” in one important inference. In the Teutonic Pagan system, it is not the case that humans owe thanks to deities for creating rich ecosystems, nor for constantly making the systems work. In Teutonic Polytheism, various deities are to be appealed to for agricultural or natural productivity, but they do not have to intervene for abundance to occur. Therefore, their neglect is not as great a cause of concern. In the Teutonic polytheist system, routine events of nature and weird disasters are “personified” or caused by giants — or simply lack anthropomorphic representation. (See Appendix E of this book; also Faulkes, 1987; Hreinsson et al, 1997e; Larrington, 1996; Stanfield, 2003).

Therefore, the dependence indicated is much weaker than is the dependence implied in Abrahamic-religion views of the stanza. This implicit stanza is easier to see in Translation C than in the others.

***If a Pagan Deity Does Not Obstruct***

One could say that “(a) god” can have a Pagan referent if we examine at the second (metaphorical) level of meaning. Mention of a deity who is ruler of heaven does give a vague clue. For pagans, any of their weather deities, such as Wódan, Þunor, Tír, or Frea-Ing could be nominated. Since this ruler of heaven is a cyning rather than a cwen, we could rule out the possibility of a female deity if not an ungendered deity. Once we allow “god” to stand for the general idea of “deity”, then allowing “heaven” to stand for a lofty emotional experience of the divine brings in the possibility of Os as a referent.

This would be the fear-emphasis aspect of deity from the Pagan side of “Gér”.

The problem with this interpretation is that there is no surviving Pagan story of a Teutonic deity punishing His or Her own people with natural disasters. The Eddas and the legend of the Brisingamen Necklace tell us that Oðin, Tír, and Freya cause war, but natural disasters seem to be the business of other wights. Moreover, the deities are not responsible for setting up nor for operating nature, and the cast of characters is more complicated than is the case with Abrahamic religions. Therefore, the Teutonic Pagan deities’ anger is out of the question, just as their neglect is no so important. (See Appendix E of this book; also Faulkes, 1987; Larrington, 1996; Hreinsson et al, 1997e).

But if the Pagan deities have the power to bless, surely they have the power to deny. And cataclysmic troubles like wars can involve destruction of seed grains and breeding stock as well as burning of cultivated fields.

***Glory and Dirt Combine***

This implicit stanza is as easy to see in Translation B as in any other, for it is made clearer by chief stave analysis. The chief staves are: God, soil (hrusan) and nobles (beornum). The chief staves are in the words God, hrusan and beornum: (a) God/god, soil, and nobles. This implies that “Ĝér” is mainly concerned with the relation among these three.

This implicit stanza is a metaphorical version of “People Depend on Yahweh”. This view of “Ĝér” uses the King of Heaven as a metaphor for weather. By calling heaven “sacred” but not the earth, the stanza sets up a double contrast: the high and (usually) shining versus the low and (mostly) dark. The bright fruits are a metaphor for pleasure and sustenance.

Therefore, power from the glorious sky allows lowly dirt to yield wonders needed to keep us all alive and happy. And unless unusually bad weather prevails, natural beauty and material abundance will be ours on a routine basis. Of course, we know that the metaphor is imperfect, because the dichotomy is too simple. Earth-born events (volcanic eruptions, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, etc.) cause weather phenomena. But the point is well taken, nonetheless.

***Life Is Not a Sure Thing***

People must by their nature hope for pleasure, comfort, and the necessities of life. Otherwise, we would go mad. But one can never be completely sure that our most routinely-satisfied and important hopes will be realized. This implicit stanza is based on all the stanzas at the metaphorical level of meaning.

***Gird Against Grievous Outcome***

What if our hopes are dashed? Hope alone is not good enough; we must have a little anxiety. Although Earth, with its beauty and abundance, is the pleasure planet of the Universe — the wise lay up stores to protect against disaster. This implicit stanza is based on “Life Is Not a Sure Thing”.

***The Glorious and Mundane Exist for All***

This is the metaphorical version of Glory and Dirt Combine. The King of Heaven and His sacred realm represent the concept of deity and of a the mythical realm, while the beautiful fruits represent the joyful and psychologically strengthening aspects of religion. The nobles are the enlightened seekers and the needy are the rest.

The glorious and powerful above combines with the dirt below us to produce the more and the less noble among mankind. We are all supported — psychologically and physically — by this combination. Both the enlightened and those in need of enlightenment are between the two extremes, and even the enlightened have to live as down-to-earth people, to be aware of where we really are. The noble seekers and the religiously poor are not different orders of beings. We are together in the realm; we make different uses of what it offers.

Moreover, we all experience a certain hope on a cyclical basis. This is a hope that the joyful and psychologically strengthening benefits will be available to all. And we have this hope even if our consciousness of religion has not developed fully enough that we know what those fruits are.

***“Deity” Is a Rounded Concept***

This implicit stanza is based on the all those below it that refer directly to a deity. On the one hand, we have the concept of a ruler of the glorious sky above and of the divine abode called Heaven. On the other hand, we are looking at the possibility of a disaster caused by that being. This is a criticism of an oversimplified view of the nature of divinity. It is a criticism of our concept of how we really view “deity”.

Therefore, this stanza says that every deity — or at least every pantheon — has an unpleasant as well as a “simply divine” aspect; every deity has a dark side. The fear-emphasis concept of deity emphasizes that we must propitiate to avoid His/Her wrath, neglect, or fun-loving destructiveness. However, it does not take much research discover Teutonic deities having dark aspects. Examples have already been cited in this chapter. Wódan and Freya cause war without apparent

reason. Yahweh has whole cities of people exterminated. Greek deities cause people various sufferings. The Fates cause disasters. Taiowa (the Hopi Creator) and Sotuknang (Taiowa's principle assistant) decide to repeatedly destroy most of Earth and send what few people are pure on lengthy wanderings. Yes, in the surviving evidence we do not see a dark side of Easter, and Frey is practically blameless. There may be other individual deities in complex pantheons who never show an unpleasant face. But on the whole, each of the pantheons known to this author has unpleasant aspects. (For examples, see Elton, 1905; Faulkes, 1987; Graves, 1960: 48-49; Hultkrantz, 1987; Larrington, 1996; Waters, 1963).

Following Plato, the rounded concept of deity has fallen out of sight for many religious people. Plato's profound and extensive influence on religious philosophy includes the notion that God is Love, and that considerations of beauty lead to religious fulfillment. Plato has "no definite answer" as to how evil came to be, since God is simply good (Burkert, 1985: 321-325).

But "Gér" reminds us that our own concepts of "deity" are not that simple. This is based on "If Yahweh Does Not Get in the Way", "If a Pagan Deity Does Not Obstruct", "Glorious and Dirty Combine"

### ***The Sacred Can Harm the Mundane***

"Gér" is one of the stanzas that warns us against over-valuing the glorious, the high and mighty, the sacred. This implicit stanza is based on all the implicit stanzas below it at all three levels.

We must not let religion make a storm that cruelly affects mundane life nor let it make us arrogant about how holy we are. Both the non-sacred and sacred are necessary for a rounded life. The sacred has no meaning except in contrast to the profane. The profane is more fun and fulfilling and tolerable for us if taken with a dose of religion. Religion is more meaningful if taken with a dose of practicality and humaneness. We need to be in touch with the supersoul, but that means being practical in mundane life as well as setting aside times, places, and objects for worshipful activities.

***A Less Naïve View of Religion***

Based on all the other stanzas in the poem, we find an implicit stanza directing our attention to the range of complexities and subtleties that people can easily miss. Some of the Buddhists, remind us that life, including religion, is both yin and yang inseparable and that the seeker is different but not completely separate. This implicit stanza differs from some other religious philosophies in showing trichotomies instead of dichotomies: sacred heaven, lowly earth, bright fruits; or noble seekers, enlightenment-impooverished persons, and the attractive facets of progressive mysticism. The importance of this message is underscored by “The Sacred Can Harm the Mundane”, and the hopefulness of it is underscored by “The Glorious and Mundane Exist for All”.

This implicit stanza is like the insight one can get from the meditation of broader awareness, in that it is difficult to put in words. It is a not-completely-verbal undercurrent in “Gér” that only becomes apparent in contemplation near the end of the chains of implicit stanzas.

***Themes******Simple Themes***

Deity  
Sacred  
Awareness of what we believe  
Hope  
Universal availability

***Contrasts***

Sky versus earth  
Sacred versus mundane  
God versus mankind  
Noble seekers versus enlightenment-impooverished  
Certainty versus uncertainty

Naivete versus self-consciousness

***Advice for Living***

The concept of deity does not allow for succinct description. It is more complex than can be expressed in the most motivating and beautiful art. It is more complex than can be expressed in single book. It is something that you can know and yet only distort by verbal description. When a person says that a mono-deity or pantheon or whole religion lacks a dark side, this is not to be taken literally as an expression of more than one facet.

Religion is not for small children. It requires strength of will, good judgment, and ability to perceive complexity. Otherwise, it can lead you astray.

It is up to you to have the strength to balance your religion. Fanaticism is a bad idea. Accept contradictions and contrasts. Do not try to hard to be pure, for life is not a pure thing and we cannot be sure of fine outcomes no matter what we do. Although it is better to be an enlightened seeker than not, the difference is merely that the nobler make different use of resources than do the others. We naturally hope that the bright fruits of enlightened awareness will be available to all, but we are not to cram enlightenment down others' throats.

*Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	Hypermetric. E	6
1b	C	4
2a	Hypermetric. A	7
2b	A	4
3a	A	4
3b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	11
3	9
Total	30

## Thirteenth Stanza: Ugliness, Usefulness, Happy Adjustment<sup>16</sup>

Eoh byþ útan unsméþe treow,  
heard, hrusan fæst, hyrde fýres,  
wyrtrumun underwreþyd, wynan on éþle.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

is {from outside; on the outside, without}  
 {unsmooth, uneven; rough, scabby (smeþe means smooth, polished, or soft)}  
 {tree; wood, timber; beam, log, stake, stick; tree of the cross, cross, rood}  
 {hard, harsh, severe, stern, cruel; strong, intense, vigorous, violent; hardy, bold;  
 resistant} {earth, soil} {fast, fixed, secure; constant, steadfast; stiff, heavy,  
 dense; strong,}  
 {shepherd, herdsman; guardian, keeper} (of) {fire; a fire}  
 (by) {roots, root-stock; origins, beginnings; (literally) root-space}  
 {supported, upheld — not to nourish, but to buttress (“wreath” comes from  
 Old English wriþa, a strap, bridle; band, collar or other circular or coiled  
 object)}  
 {joyfully, beautifully} {on, in, upon, among, within} {country, native land,  
 ancestral homeland; lair}

#### *(B)*

Yew is outside • unsmooth of bark;  
 strong, soil-secure, • flame’s sustainer.  
 Root-work upholds the tree, • happy in homeland.

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<sup>16</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998a).

**(C)**

Outwardly, the yew is a visually and tactilely ugly tree. On the other hand it is hardy, firmly fastened in the earth (very unlikely to blow over in a strong wind), and lasting and energetic as a fuel. And -- well sustained by its origins -- it fits joyfully in its native ecosystem.

**(D) *Modernized Meter***

On outside the yew is an unsmooth tree.  
 But hardy it is, secure in the soil,  
 and sustainer of flame in the hearth.  
 By root-work upheld, it's happy at home.

### ***Issues Regarding Edition and Translation***

All the issues in edition and translation of “Eoh” involve the last line. There are two issues in edition of this stanza, and they focus on the inflectional endings of *wyrtumun* and *wynan*. The translation issue involves the meaning of *éþle*. I have decided to resolve those issues in a ways that some scholarly translators have not, and this affects the interpretation of “Eoh”.

***Wyrtrumun***

This word is a dative form used as an adverb, as if we were to say in Modern English, “rootedly”. The original has a dative inflectional ending of “-un” instead of the more usual “-um”. I tried this with both endings and decided the author(s) had good reason for this “error” -- the word is easier to say the way it is in the original.

This word is an idiom. Although the transliteration gives “root-space”, there is also a (non-idiomatic) word “*wyrt-truma*”, which is literally “root-support”. It is possible that Grienberger (1921:211) is right and the word should be “root-support”, but the ancient author(s) just omitted the second “t”, that would not make a significant difference at any level of interpretation.

***Wynan***

This is another word in dative adverbial form, but is it often edited into a noun or simply misunderstood. The emphasis in verse 3b is that the yew thrives. This interpretation is quite different from the way most students of the poem view this word.

Some editors of this poem take the position that, in Dobbie's (1942) words, *wynan* is a "dittographic error". They infer that the medieval original must have read "*wyn*", which is a noun for joy. This leads to translations which say that the yew is a joy for humans. As an example, these are the words Dan Bray uses to translate verse 3b: "a delight to have on one's land." Many scholars — following Grienberger (1921) — accept that *wynan* is the adverbial dative and was intended in the medieval original. But their translations do not take this interpretation into account. This includes both academic scholars and people working directly in Teutonic religious reconstruction. (See Albertsson, 2011; Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Paul, 1996; Osborn and Longland, 1987; Plowright, 2002: 62; Pollington, 1995; Shippey, 1973; Thorsson, 1993; Wódening, 1995a).

Halsall's (1981: 128) case for leaving the original "*wynan*" depends on rhythm. I have listened to some pretty competent performances of "Eoh" in Old English and experimented with it myself. Performance is subtly affected by one's choice of *wyn* or *wynan*. However, the rhythm seems to be not harmed by simply holding *wyn* a count longer to take the same time as you would take to pronounce *wynan*<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, one cannot choose *wynan* over *wyn* on strictly metrical grounds, although the stanza does sound more natural with *wynan*.

The decision to accept "*wynan*" as correct is justified on substantive grounds. The phrases of the stanza are clearly grammatically parallel, parallel. The strophe is filled with predicates for the subject "*yew*". At the literal level of meaning, it is the yew that does things or has characteristics in every expression other than the last verse. So it is reasonable to infer that the yew is doing

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<sup>17</sup> The performances I studied were on these tapes: Hodge, 1996; Lord, 1993; Thorsson, 1993. Hodge does hold *wyn* a count extra, demonstrating that you do not need *wynan* for metrics.

something in the last verse also, not that people are doing something or have some characteristic. The verse therefore says that the yew is delightedly in its éple. It is not that people have joy, but that the yew has joy.

It might seem odd to think of a tree being joyful, but we are considering poetry here, not a scientific paper.

### *Éple*

One's translation of éple (the last word in the stanza) also depends in part on whether one feels that the yew is the focus of every half-line in the stanza. Nothing in the poem would have us believe that it makes a difference to the tree whether it is inside or outside anyone's property line. On the other hand, éple could mean "native land" or "homeland". In the literal sense, this would make sense as a reference to natural habitat or ecosystem. Also, "native land" or "homeland" can refer to community metaphorically.

A more decisive consideration is that the dictionaries cited in this book do not offer "estate" as a definition. Moreover, I have never found support for translating épel as "estate" or "home" (as in house-and-yard) in Old English elsewhere.

If you misunderstand verse 3b as saying that a yew tree is "a pleasure to have on one's land", then one's understanding of the strophe's higher levels of meaning is hindered. At metaphorical levels of meaning, the strophe is not saying that social acceptability necessarily or normally occurs. Instead, the strophe implicitly recommends accepting certain behaviors or personalities. That is in the sermons you give yourself as you meditate on the strophe.

### *Critique of Translation B*

The "perfect" translation is a very close match to the original. It might seem too close a match in that it sounds awkward in Modern English. However, judging by written materials, the ancient Anglo-Saxons also did not talk the way this

stanza is written; it would sound just as staccato and abbreviated to them. The imperfections of the translation are mainly in verse 3b.

Line 1 is an exact match for the original except for the very minor substitution of “bark” for “tree”.

Line 2 moves the chief stave to a later position in its verse than in the original -- and a later position than is normal in the traditional format. Normally, in a Type A verse in the “off” side of a line, the syllable with the alliteration letter is the first syllable in the verse. (For example, see Line 1). However, the translator was unable to keep the Type B rhythm and alliterate properly without using “sustainer” as the second word in the verse.

The original has “herder/keeper/guardian” as the chief stave word in verse 2b, but the translation says “sustainer”. As Grienberger has observed (1921: 211), yew would be the kind of “guardian” who gets thrown into the fire in the kitchen stove or fireplace to burn. The original generally means “herder” with emphasis on leading livestock to pasture. Hence, “sustainer” is a better translation than is “guardian”.

The alliteration in line 3 is defective. The Old English has words for “(by) roots” and “supported” in the “on” verse alliterating with the word for “joyfully” in the “off” verse. But the translation has only one word in the first verse fitting into the alliteration. Line 3 differs from the original in grammatical details, but not so as to differ from the original in the sense of what is said.

Line 3 maintains the original’s pattern of rhythm. The original verse 3a (falsely) appears to have an excess unstressed syllable at the end -- which does not appear in the translation. The original is a Type E hypermetric verse; it has half of a Type B verse added at the end. That half of a Type B verse has to end on a stressed syllable to sound right in the traditional system, so the reciter would have needed to pronounce the last word in the verse “underwrep’d” -- without an “e” sound making a separate syllable. Scholars call this practice “resolved stress”. The translation does not need resolved stress. (See sidebar, “Resolved Stress”).

### *A Note on Performance*

As in the other three-line stanzas of this poem, the last half-line benefits from a slower, lower-toned recitation than the other lines in “Eoh”. This would be done to help communicate contentment and to emphasize that this verse represents a consequence of the preceding three verses.

All the three-line stanzas are best sung or recited with the last half line emphasized by a lower tone of voice, slower enunciation (or holding of notes), or lower volume.

**Resolved Stress.** I omitted resolved stress from Appendix H. The basic idea is that an unstressed syllable is merged into a stressed syllable to make one stressed syllable. For example in this stanza, “underwreþed” is pronounced “underwreþ’d”. Diamond’s presentation (1970: 62-64) goes into depth on the subject, but he does not explain what he says about short and long syllables. Short and long syllables are discussed on this web page: “<http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/resources/IOE/>”. Go to Chapter Two, Pronunciation.

### *Discussion*

The most basic theme of “Eoh” is a depiction of something that is superficially unattractive but well-adjusted and useful to mankind. The most basic contrast is between an illusion of ugliness and an underlying reality.

In “Eoh” we are told that superficial ugliness is not demonic, not necessarily a sign of underlying evil nor of simple worthlessness. As we transition from the lowest level of meaning to the highest, the content shifts from description to recommendation. It starts speaking of the existence of certain paradoxes, distractions, or illusions; then it moves to making us think of how to treat other persons.

“Eoh” is not a biological dissertation on yew trees and their uses. Hence, certain features of the species are beside the point, although they get extensive discussion in other studies of the *OERP*. Yew leaves are poisonous to human and beast. The tree provides a hard but resilient wood which is excellent for making bows, among other things. Shippey claims that it was customary to plant yews as windbreaks in ancient England. These trees would have outlasted most Anglo-Saxon buildings but did not grow as fast as some trees of less longevity. Yew trees can live for a thousand years (Osborn and Longland, 1987: 67; Shippey, 1973: 135; Welch, 1992: 29).

### ***The Desirable Ugly Tree***

The idea is that although the yew is ugly, it has important practical benefits, and it thrives in its homeland. These benefits are not readily apparent at a glance, but they are well known to those who are familiar with yews.

### ***The Unrefined But Good Person***

This implicit stanza uses the yew as a metaphor for a certain type of person. This person seems not very appealing at a glance or on first acquaintance. This could be due to unattractive appearance, inarticulate speech, poor clothing, poor social skills, or other relatively superficial criteria.

### ***Desirable Superficials***

The OERP repeatedly cautions us against looking only at the superficial aspects of persons, things, and circumstances. However, nowhere does the poem say that beauty is demonic, that ugliness is sincere, that wealth is bad for you, etc. This very poem is a refined example of the Old English poetic style. Making this poem likely required much effort. The author(s) certainly placed a high value on beauty, professionalism, and polished work or behavior.

On deeper acquaintance, this person’s lack of outward polish is more than made up for by more fundamental characteristics. There is an inner strength — a courage, decisiveness, or firm sense of purpose. This is complemented by a high level of reliability. This person is also productive, a sustainer if not an initiator of flame, which stands for goods and services all people need to have good lives. This type of person is well integrated into his or her surroundings, physically

and culturally. This integration provides appreciative support from others with similar backgrounds.

All this makes for a subtle beauty in the person's life and helps the person thrive psychologically. Many medieval peasants, and probably a lot of ordinary contemporary people would fit into this category.

Of course, it is not necessarily a good sign that a person does not care to be refined, has not had a good chance to become polished, or does not have an aptitude for things like good manners. "The Unrefined but Good Person" is just reminding us that sometimes the deeper reality is better than the outward appearance. Therefore, looking more deeply into a person can be worthwhile. (See also the sidebar, "Desirable Superficials".)

### ***The Well Adjusted Person***

It is not necessary to be glamorous or socially refined on the outside to be well adjusted in one's home community. One needs good character; one needs to give good energy and get good support. Such a person is psychologically durable, tending to resist emotional stress. He or she is secure, not buffeted this way and that by the turbulent weather of a variable environment. This person would also not be bothered by his or her own imperfections. However, a healthy person is emotionally alive and seeks the excitement of passion from time to time. Most of all, a well-adjusted person lives happily in his or her own community.

Most Pagans and neoPagans know that cultural roots are important, and this implicit stanza reinforces that impression. That is an important criterion of being well-adjusted.

The stanza shows that this is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and his/her community : the person gives and gets, the community gives and gets.

***The Plain Oath***

In this implicit stanza, the tree is a metaphor for an oath. The plain oath is neither poetic nor flowery; it is not ambiguous and is not phrased in legalese. It is backed by stable intention and passionate commitment. Its sincerity is rooted in firm commitment to the community.

Of course, just as “Eoh” does not say that ugliness is desirable, it does not say that an inarticulate oath is superior to a well-stated oath. This implicit stanza cautions us to not be fooled by superficials when decided where to place our trust.

***The Stubborn Churl***

It is possible for the metaphorical characteristics of the metaphorical person so be viewed in a less positive aspect. Underneath a gruff exterior, the stubborn churl is hard hearted, unwilling to change, hyperemotional, and firmly dug in. Just about everyone has *some* friends, including people who belong in jail. So this is the character most people would want to go away, but who can difficult to get rid of. Some specimens of this type might be clever or as smart as a block of wood, but they can be hampered by failure to perceive how badly behaved they are. Any large group or community can be a native land for some of these people at least for awhile. This is the converse of “The Well Adjusted Person”, and is therefore at the third level of meaning.

***Character Is Inside***

Now we arrive at the third level of meaning. The poem says “firmly in the earth” to imply stability and separately mentions the root system to imply that the person is happy in his/her homeland because he/she accepts support. This implicit stanza is derived from “The Well Adjusted Person”.

***Community Solidarity***

All this talk of adjustment of the person and community to each other and of the meaning of oaths implies another stanza. This implicit stanza says a solid

community accepts people if even if they are outwardly not refined or glamorous, but if they are of good character and accept that they are interdependent with the people around them and accept their cultural heritage.

### ***Religion Should Reinforce Solidarity***

Considering all the implicit stanzas below this, but especially “Community Solidarity”, we come to another implicit stanza. A religion that denies the value of good character or that leads to rejecting persons of good character and commitment to their community is defective, if not toxic. People must be willing to overlook issues of dress, liturgical language, and other outward aspects that are not necessarily manifestations of the good (or bad) character inside a person. A religion that is alien to toleration and insistent on minor issues in doctrine and strict uniformity in practice can disrupt and undercut community values.

Beginning in about 325 CE, Christians had made this into a problem in Europe. They seemed unable to put a stop to it. However, they also realized that their basically urban religion would not be attractive to rural society. They succeeded because they emphasized the positive aspects of their religion, adjusted it to include aspects of various Pagan religions, and resorted to terror, governmental coercion, and extermination (Boer, 1976; Fletcher, 1997; Russell, 1994).

### ***Religious Misunderstanding Is a Problem***

There is no one religion that is best for everyone, not even for everyone in the a given neighborhood. But strangeness, sensual displeasure, alien liturgy, or other unappealing outer manifestations might mask a fine level of character development and social integration.

### ***The Proper Mystic***

This implicit stanza is based on some basic ideas about mysticism and on all of the other implicit stanzas below it, except for “The Plain Oath”. Let us move digress to a reconsideration of progressive mysticism.

The proper goal of mysticism is not retreatism, but self-improvement. These are mostly mental and character improvements, and they are only occasionally manifested. The avoidance of crises and problems is a product of the magician's growth, and the lack of crises and problems is not always readily apparent to an objective observer. Trouble is easier to see. Enlightened people do not usually openly boast of how enlightened they are.

“The Proper Mystic” tells us that among other things, the productive mystic must develop an awareness of social contexts. You do not want to be like the stubborn churl, who enjoys being in his community but is not fully welcome. The mystic does want to have an inner reality that is far more valuable than his or her more readily observable characteristics. Certainly, as a mystic you want to be a productive and emotionally healthy person, enjoying your community and being a joy to others.

But in addition, an enlightened person will recognize the value of others without being too distracted by outer flaws.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Ugliness
- Lack of refinement
- Hardness
- Inner strength
- Hard wood
- Stability
- Rootedness
- Fire
- Nurturing guardianship
- Social value to humans
- Adaptation to natural environment
- Good social adjustment

- Perception of one's effect upon others
- Connection with one's cultural heritage
- Emotional health
- Contributing to others' emotional health
- Natural habitat
- Homeland
- Inartistic sincerity

### ***Contrasts***

- Appearance versus usefulness
- Superficial versus deep
- Good versus poor social adjustment
- Retreatist versus socially useful mysticism

### ***Advice for Living***

It is not necessary to be a truly well-rounded person to be well adjusted. The good person resists being buffeted by the changing weather in the environment, and yet is firmly rooted in his or her origins and of value to his or her own community. There is nothing wrong with loving your native land, your adopted country, the neighborhood in which you grew up, etc. — you *should* love the community where you fit in; you should be in a community where you fit in; and somewhere, you should be a “native”.

It is important to place great value on deeper reality. Ugliness is not necessarily an indication of inherent evil. It is advantageous to look deeply at things and people. A fool might become averse based on a superficial impression when inner qualities are quite the opposite of superficialities. (Of course, this is not to deny that some people and things are as bad as they look.)

The other side of this is that it would be tragic to let a lack of refinement turn others off to one's fundamental strengths. But that is a matter for another time.

An oath backed by firm and honest intentions can be more impressive than a more prettily-worded statement.

The proper mystic has hidden strengths and a cryptic beauty, but fits well into society. The proper mystic is not a retreatist, but a socially committed person. And we should not let ourselves be alienated by superficial characteristics.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	E	5
2a	D2	4
2b	B	4
3a	Hyperm. E	7
3b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	8
3	12
Total	29

## Fourteenth Stanza: Play, Companions, and Happiness<sup>18</sup>

Peorð byþ symble • plega and hlehter  
wlancum [winum] • ðar wigan sittap  
on beorsele • bliþe ætsomne

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{an indoor game of chance or of words and/or the main equipment in such a game.} {is, becomes} {ever, always, constantly, continually, continuously / banqueting, feasting}

{play, festivity, game, sport; gear for games; applause} and {laughter, jubilation, derision}

(Among, on the part of, for, by) {stately, splendid, lofty, magnificent, rich; bold, brave; boastful, arrogant, insolent; elated, proud} [*inferred word: {friends/protectors/lords/retainers}*]

{where, then; when; if, so far as, whilst, provided that} {fighters, men} {sit; rest; remain, continue, be situated}

{on, upon, on to; up to, among; in, into, within} {(dat. -- this word requires no inflexional ending) beer-hall, banqueting hall} {blithe; joyous, cheerful, pleasant; friendly, kind, gracious, well-disposed, agreeable, willing; quiet, peaceful, gentle} {united, together}

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<sup>18</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998a).  
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**(B)**

Peorth is always • play and laughter  
for proud amici • where mercs are sitting  
In beer tavern • blithely in-gather'd.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

Enjoying of peorth is always laughter and play  
for contented comrades where gentlemen sit  
at tables in beer-halls, blithely together.

## ***Issues Regarding Edition and Translation***

There are two issues regarding “Peorð” that call for special discussion. (1) The title word appears only in lists of the futhorc and in the *Old English Rune Poem*. To translate “peorð”, it is necessary to decide what to do about (2) the missing clause in the second verse. In addition, the original shows some anomalies of punctuation and word-separation, but there is no controversy regarding them.

There has been a lot of speculation and progress regarding the title word and the missing clause since Hicke published the *OERP* in 1705. (See Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Larrington, 1993; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page 1973; Shippey, 1973). We are ready for solutions.

### ***The Title Word***

With regard to the title word, we are looking for a meaning that fits a noun and goes with the stanza. However, the meaning cannot go too well with the stanza — none of the other *OERP* stanzas defines its title word.

There are two possibilities. (1) A peorð is likely an indoor recreational activity in which all players could participate as equals, and in which cheating is either nearly impossible or is considered part of the comedy of the game. (2) Another

possibility is that a peorð is a piece of equipment used in such a game. One thing for sure: this is not like poker in cowboy wild-west stories, where drunks and high-strung fools fight each other with deadly weapons over issues that arise in the game. The game certainly was social, played indoors, very relaxed, hilarious, and incredible fun.

I decided to follow Swain Wódening (1995a) and not to translate the word. The game or game piece probably does not have a corresponding word in Modern English. Therefore, translating peorð would be at least as misleading as trying to translate “polka” into Modern English. Just “polka” has been imported, we had best import this word (at least for this stanza) into Modern English.

Besides, the stanzas of this poem are not about their title words. This is more about play than about some specific game or equipment.

### ***The Missing Part of Verse 2a***

It is quite common that ancient manuscripts are damaged. Sometimes their edges are burned back, bookworms have eaten holes in them, or liquid drops blur their words. Sometimes a book is torn apart to make packing material. Sometimes there is no damage to the pages, but a copyist missed a detail here and there or arbitrarily decided to make a revision. Lots of things can happen over a period of several centuries. In the present case, it is possible that a typesetter erred in modern times.

We know that there is something missing from verse 2a because the only word that shows is an adjective, which requires a noun that it is to modify. We know the noun mostly likely comes right after the adjective, because that would be syntactically normal location. We also know that at least two syllables are missing because each verse in Old English poetry has at least four syllables. (See the discussion of rhythm in Appendix H.) To go with the case-ending on “wlancum”, the noun has to be in the plural dative case.

Surveying the speculation on the missing syllables, one might infer that there are no solid clues for a systematic analysis and that there are too many possibilities

to list. Certainly, that was Dobbie's conclusion in 1942 and Halsall's in 1982. But we can apply some detective work to greatly narrow the alternatives.

Metrical and grammatical rules and common sense regarding the substantive meanings of the stanza give us certain criteria. (See Appendix H for rules of prosody). The missing verbiage is most likely a noun which has a "w" at the start of its most stressed syllable. The adjective's inflection implies that the noun must be plural dative, and we know based on prosody that it must have at least two syllables — a stem and a dative ending. The noun must fit into a phrase that makes sense following "play and laughter on the part of...". The emended half-line must be congruent with the upbeat tone of the stanza, yet contribute to implying a contrast. The noun has to make sense when modified by *wlancum*.

The best choice to complete verse 2a is "friends" (*winum*). This makes a perfect Type A verse. Grienberger (1921: 211) suggests "*werum*" ("men"), which would also fit the meter, grammar, and sense of the words. However, this verse and verse 1b are describing contentment, joy, and pride, which implies that not just any random people are together in the ale-hall. These folks are a group of buddies.

Also, I searched the Hall dictionary (1960) for words with stressed syllable beginning with "w". I found nothing other than Grienberger's suggested word and the one chosen here that fit the sense of the stanza and made a good verse according to the traditional metrical rules.

### ***Punctuation and Word Separation***

In the original, there is a period in the first line after "play" but not anywhere else in the stanza. A period to show the division between half-lines would be helpful in a Dark Age manuscript, but this point looks like a mistake. Of course, it is possible that an ancient writer wanted to use odd punctuation to help people some generations later see what the strophe is about. But in this instance the odd punctuation appears to be a random error.

In the original, “beor sele” (ale-hall) is separated into two words, and “æt somne” (together) is also separated into two words. Every editor of this poem agrees that those separations are errors.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is a pretty close match to the original as regards the overlapping layers of rhythm, word sense, and alliteration. However, the translation requires the audience to comprehend pronounce an obscure Latin loan-word.

Line 1 is a perfect match for the original. Conveniently, all the words used to translate derive or directly descend from Old English, and except for “always” (which derives from “ealnegweg” with unchanged meaning), they are direct descendants of the words they translate. “Is” is a form of the Old English “beon” (meaning “to be”), as is “byþ”; some forms of this word were discarded as it evolved into a part of the modern language. This line is almost a paraphrase instead of a translation.

Line 2 is where the translation shows minor flaws. It is necessary to add a preposition to convey the meaning shown by the dative (or instrumental) case in the original of verse 2a. Hence 2a has an unstressed leading syllable, which is acceptable practice. But this anacrusis is not in the original. Also, 2a requires the audience to know the obscure Latin loan-word “amici” (which means “friends” and is pronounced “a-MEE-chee”). The singular form “Amicus” is familiar to people who know legal practices, but is not well known elsewhere. The original 2a sticks with familiar vocabulary. Verse 2b substitutes “merc” for “warriors” to achieve alliteration, rhythm, and a certain contrast. However, although the Anglo-Saxon culture did have mercenary platoon- and company-sized units attached to lords, the authors did not intend to specifically denote this type of warrior. Also, many speakers of Modern English do not know that “merc” denotes a mercenary warrior.

An alternative for line 2 would have been “for proud companions • with people sitting”, and this would have almost exactly matched the original except that it

would have eliminated the contrast between joyful comradeship in the foreground and the possibility of deadly business in the background.

In the original, line 3 breaks a steady diet of Type A verses. Verse 3a of the translation matches the original exactly except that “tavern” is a more specific type of building that “sele”. Verse 3b matches the original’s D1 (falling-by-stages). But although “in-gather’d” has the same pattern of stress-and-unstress as “ætsomme”, the Modern English word subtly adds emphasis on physical closeness and being indoors that is not in the original.

An alternative translation that exactly reproduces the connotations of the original would be “blithely together”, but this is a Type B verse. The subtle emotional impact of a Type B verse is quite different than the effect of falling by stages.

## *Discussion*

The main themes of “Peorð” are fun and social cohesion. At the most primitive level of meaning, the implicit stanzas describe the social psychological meaning of the game of peorth . At the second level of meaning, the stanza discusses the importance and uses of partying and playing, and how we can optimize our enjoyment and social exploitation of games and socializing. At the highest level of meaning, the stanza suggests that the esoteric religious or magical person to sometimes let down that long hair and get out of that ivory tower.

### *Play and Comradeship*

This game, peorth, is one of the finest ways to achieve joyful bonding -- and some of the best fun known to mankind. Whenever people in a happy frame of mind have some beer together, this game never fails to lift spirits high.

### **Play**

All the translations tell us of a certain predictability in human behavior. Given the right circumstances, people will have a lively good time. Like dogs, otters, and many other lower animals, people seem to need to play. “Play” alludes to a human need to have active fun. This implicit verse is saying that people are not just creatures of (divine) free will. People also have much of the lower animal in them, and this animal side of humanity is not always bestial in an unpleasant sense. “Play” is advising us that we have to accept the part of us that needs to play. We can often just accept the lower animal or the immature person in ourselves and enjoy it.

The importance of play in culture is dealt with philosophically in *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1955). Although Huizinga seems to make too much of the pervasiveness of play in culture, especially in religion, his discussion does help elucidate this implicit stanza.

### **Partying**

The game takes place at a party. “Partying” also tells us something about the circumstances under which these good times occurred. One element is the right people. The right people for the game, people who are attractive to themselves and each other, people who have things in common. Another element is an appropriate location. Not just anywhere is peorth played so happily, but in a tavern or banquet hall. The game is also an important element, contributing significantly to an appropriate atmosphere.

“Partying” does not say that the partiers are doing drugs, but alcohol use is quite likely given the location. Alcoholic drinks in Europe in the early middle ages were often not alcoholic enough to be very effective as drugs. The stanza also does not say that the partiers were gambling, although that possibility is open. There is no mention of sexual activities. Eating might have hindered playing the game in question, as it distracts players of many modern games. Otherwise, what the partiers are doing is typical at any good party: joking, playing, doing some casual games, and just enjoying each other’s company.

### ***Carefree Joy Alternates with Serious Purpose***

At the first level of meaning, the major emphasis is on good times and fun, but the noun in verse 2b refers to war-fighters. Fighting men do not work all the time. In this implicit stanza there is the possibility of serious -- and quite destructive -- business lurking in the background. This contrast reminds us that wholesome fun alternates with desperate struggle, light with dark, heavy with light.

### ***Recreational Common Ground***

The primitive human needs for play and social nexus are important bases for finding common ground. Peorth is a game that is especially good as a means of social bonding.

Military training and combat can also be socially bonding, and the training often specifically emphasizes social bonding. However, such considerations are beyond the scope of “Peorð”.

### ***Lighten Up***

An ale-hall is a house of emotional elevation. Suppose we let the ale-house stand for some other house of emotional elevation, namely a temple. Put aside a fear of cynicism for a moment, and ask what the game would represent. Of course, we do not like to think of liturgy as silly play, and liturgical activities are typically done in a very serious atmosphere. But all of us who have substantial experience with temples, churches, etc have noticed these buildings also house square dances, music jam sessions, movies, and other very playful activity. This suggests that “everyone” at least implicitly recognizes that carefree fun is compatible with very serious purpose, for it can be quite helpful in gluing a group together.

### ***Joyful Bonding in Religion***

This implicit stanza is supported by all the implicit stanzas at lower levels of meaning. We are reminded us that people need to play and to party with others, and that groups need for their members to bond joyfully.

Mental concentration can be especially demanding of one's energy. The poem has been advising us to spend effort on deep thinking and on emotional self control. Now we are also advised that responsible recreation and socializing are necessary and beneficial.

Why not put this kind of fun in the liturgy? Why not feed this kind of positive emotional energy into one's meditation? Those seem like pretty good ideas.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

- Fun
- Sociability
- War
- Relaxation
- Partying
- Social recreation
- Fellowship
- Uncertainty
- Play
- Playing games
- Laughter
- Merriment
- Pride
- Proper circumstances
- Appropriate location

- Tavern
- Putting cares aside
- Common ground
- Building cohesion
- Social attraction

### *Contrasts*

- Blitheness in the negative sense versus responsibility
- Certainty versus uncertainty
- Grimness versus fun
- Unlike versus like social roles

### *Advice for Living*

People have a need to have fun; it is in their nature and not to be denied. Not all the good things in life are divine, and not all the lower aspects of humanity are bad.

The play of opposites here is recreational. The contrast of play with grim cares produces joy and strengthened fellowship. Relaxation and joy can be enhanced by finding others with whom you share common ground. On the other hand, casual games can help build a sense of common ground among diverse persons. The most satisfying social relations are based in part on high and realistic self-esteem. There is benefit to be had from incorporating all this in liturgy.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	5
1b	A	5
2a	A	4
2b	A	5
3a	C	4
3b	D1	5

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	9
3	9
Total	28

## Fifteenth Stanza: Lowly but Highly Resistant<sup>19</sup>

eolhxsecg eard hæfþ • oftust on fenne  
 waxeð on wature, • wundap grimme,  
 blóde breneð • beorna gehwylcne  
 ðe him ænigne • onfeng gedéð

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{sedge or some kind of sedge (cut grass?); eolhx-man, elk-warrior, elk-hero;  
 elk-sword; elk-sea} {native soil; residence, dwelling, home; earth; estate}  
 {has, possesses, holds, keeps; obtains}

{most often, most frequently} {in, at} {mud, mire, dirt; moor, marsh}

{grows, is fruitful, flourishes; grows up, is produced; prospers; is productive;  
 grows in honor} {on, in, at, up to} {water}

{wounds, injures} {savagely, cruelly; direly, painfully, severely; grimly,  
 uncompromisingly}

{bloodily, gorily} {stings, burns with pain, causes burning pain}

{(this word is plural dative) men; princes, nobles; warriors; rich persons}  
 {each, every}

whoever (to/on) it {any}

{seizing, receiving, taking; attack, assault} {make, perform, act, do; cause;  
 put, place}

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<sup>19</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998b).

**(B)**

Elx-sedge earth has • oftest in marshland,  
 waxing in water. • Wounds it grimly,  
 bloody burneth • ev'ry last body  
 who'd on it any • on-holding try.

**(C)**

Cutting Sedge usually has its home in marshy land, for it thrives in water. But it wounds uncompromisingly, with blood and stinging pain for any man who in any way attempts to grasp it.

**(D) *Modernized Meter***

Has elx-sedge its home usually in marshland,  
 where it waxes in water. Grimly it wounds,  
 makes pain and blood, whenever a person  
 on this plant attempts to make a grab.

## ***Issues in Translation***

There are two issues in translation of this stanza. The title word and the verb breneþ in the fourth half-line each have presented scholars with difficulties, and each has been subjected to extensive analysis. I have chosen to only partly translate the eolhxsecg. I decided that breneþ means “stings or causes burning pain”.

***The Title Word***

The title word needs some editing, but translating it into the modern name of a specific species would be pointless. All we really know is that eolhxsecg is some kind of sedge native to Northern Europe that grows in bodies of water, and that has sharp-edged leaves, and that usually -- but not always -- lives in marshes. A wiser rendition is to simplify the spelling. The following shows how this conclusion came to be.

The original shows this as the first verse: “eohlx seccard hæfþ”, which is clearly a typo, possibly by the medieval copyist. The stanza’s content makes clear that the title word is eolhxsecg and that this refers to a plant. Halsall (1981) has the most recent discussion of this, but experts show general consensus.

There is more debate about translating “eolhxsecg”. The usual name of the rune in medieval rune lists is not the title word of this stanza. The usual name of the rune is eolhx, ilix, elix, ilcs, or some other variant (Kemble, 1840; Page, 1973; Healey et al, 1996). Scholars have often mistakenly translated the usual name as “elk” — which means “wapiti” to Americans and Canadians. The translators mean “moose”, a word that means the same in all English-speaking countries. This stanza is not related to moose. It is true that moose tend to like plants that grow in shallow water, and might therefore be said to “have earth” in marshland. But the typical moose defense is not to cause bleeding skin lesions when grasped. Their typical combat defense uses hooves or antlers; they normally flee or crash their enemies.

The scholarly evidence and opinion tells us that eolhxsecg, spelled variously, denotes “papyrus; bulrush; sedge” or perhaps *Cladium marsicus*. In this context eolhxsecg denotes some kind of sedge, although it may have other implications. (For example, see Bessinger, 1960; Bosworth and Toller: 1989, 1921; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Healey et al, 1996; Kemble, 1840; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page, 1973).

The description of “eolhxsecg” in this stanza fits more than one plant. Sedges form the family *Cyperaceae*, which has about 4,000 species in 90 genera and is represented throughout the temperate and tropical zones. Adult heights generally range from about six inches to about five feet. Some require submersion, shallow water, mud, or moderately dry soil; and some grow in two or all of those conditions. Some sedges are floating plants. In general, sedges prefer relatively acidic and water-saturated soil, and most sedges are emergents (rooted in soil but growing -- emerging -- into air out of a body of water). Sedges resemble grasses, but there are several differences. For example: grass leaves grow on opposite sides of the stem and the leaf base usually does not wrap all

the way around the stem; sedge leaves grow at three angles outward from the stem and the leaf base wraps all the way around the stem. A slogan relating to the differences between sedges and grasses is: “sedges have edges and rushes are round, grasses are hollow and rush all round” (author unknown).

A remarkable trait of many (but not all) sedges is long leaves with saw-like edges. Some plant names give clues to the ferocity that sedges can show. *Scleria bergius* and *Scleria bracteata* are both commonly known as Cut Grass. *Cladium marsicus* is known both as Eel Grass and by the more intimidating name of Razor Grass. *Scirpus paludosus* is also known as Bayonet Grass. *Carex elata* is commonly known by the gentle-sounding epithet of Bowles’ Golden Sedge, but the genus name (*carex*) is derived from the Greek *kerios*, meaning “to cut”. The tendency to wound is exaggerated by species’ names, since skin cuts are mentioned in the medical literature but severe injuries such as severed tendons are not. Some sedges are more likely to irritate than lacerate, and some varieties are harmless enough to be woven into baskets or furniture. (See Britannica Online; 1998 a, b, & c; Caduto, 1985; Francis, 1912; Finlayson and Moser, 1991; Harrington, 1977; Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, 1998; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Oxford University Press, 1933; Rezendes and Roy, 1996; San Marcos County Growers, 1998; Schmidt, 1994).

For purposes of this stanza, the title word is elx-sedge. It is not likely that moose, red deer, or wapiti would eat a lacerating plant, so it is unlikely that the original author(s) intended to reference a plant noted as food for grazing vegetarians. With so many types of sedges, it is possible that there is more than one species growing in Northern Europe that fits the description in this stanza.

But as regards understanding this strophe, there is no point going further in research on sedge. For the higher levels of meaning of this stanza, it makes little difference which, if any, specific species is referred to. No more precise identification is required, since the stanza is not really a discussion of the plant. The chief staves of this stanza provide a better clue to its topic than does the title word.

In Translation A, you see references to people and equipment. “Secg” is almost always a metaphor. In surviving OE poetry, secg per se is used to refer to sedge once only. It refers to “man, warrior, or hero” 100 times. It refers to “sword” 23 times and to “sea” 5 times (Bessinger, 1960).

### ***Breneþ***

Three translations appear to make sense in this context: burns (stings), covers, and stains. They have somewhat different consequences for interpreting the stanza. The best choice is a word that describes pain (a burning sting), because this fits the context, which requires emphasizing how aversive it is to get wounded by this plant. “Stains” and “covers” imply shame on the part of the wounded person, and they would add interesting moral implications. But interpreting “breneþ” as denoting staining or covering with blood requires assumptions that do not apply well. Details follow.

The expression “breneþ” appears only in this poem. There is not an infinitive brenan that has survived in Old English manuscripts. This has led to speculation that breneþ derives from various infinitives. These include the verb bærnian (to burn, be afire) or biernan (to burn, give light). These alternatives imply “sting”, which is quite appropriate for a clause that is supposed to describe an aversive experience. Another alternative is byrnian (to make brown or stain). The idea behind “make brown” is that it implies “stain” or “make brown” — but blood is not brown until it dries. Another proposal is “beiernan”, supposedly meaning “to cover” — as in “cover with blood”. However, Hall’s dictionary shows that beiernan denotes “run up to, run over, or run into”. A cut on your hand does not usually cover a person with blood, although it might cover part of one’s hand. (See Bosworth and Toller; 1898 and 1921; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Page, 1973; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1973; Thorsson, 1987 and 1993; S. Wódening, 1995a).

We can also use clues in modern languages. We can look to Modern German for a clue, since breneþ is clearly etymologically akin to Modern German brennen. Modern German’s brennen means to burn, sting, or be hot. In Modern English, we also use our word “burn” to indicate an intense, stinging, or hot pain. It is

plausible that a verb meaning “to burn” in Old English would also mean “to sting” in a transitive sense.

A puzzle remains. The original could have said “blóde bíteþ” -- bloodily bites -- which would have fit quite well into the meter and the sense of the other words in the stanza. Instead the stanza shows us this odd word “breneþ”. What was the purpose of that choice by the author(s)? As of the date of this book, we do not yet know.

Hence, one can reasonably define breneþ in this context as “stings”, “burns with pain”, or “pains”.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is almost a paraphrase rather than a translation.

The six 4- and 5-syllable Type A verses in half-lines 1a through 3a and in 4b are all matched exactly in word sense, rhythm, and alliteration. In verse 3a, “bites” could be substituted for “burns” out of concern about confusing listeners who would imagine a mild poison on the plant’s leaves burning bare skin. But that same concern would apply to native speakers of Old English.

The translation of verse 3b differs from the original in word placement. The translation moves the chief stave (beorna) from the first word in the verse to the last, and it changes the sense of the word from “masculine person” to anybody. The change of word-sense is probably consistent with the intentions of the original author(s), and the alteration in structure of the verse is a rather minor change. Some ambiguity might seem to have been lost because “beorn” is sometimes intended to denote a rich or aristocratic person. (“Rich” and “aristocratic” were almost synonymous during the Dark Age and medieval times). But in this context, the original intention is clearly not to specify a relatively narrow class of humans.

Line 4a is more of a departure from the original. Depending on how one reads verse 4a in the original, it is either a Type D1 (falling by stages) or a defective

Type C (rise-and-fall). The defect it would have as a Type C verse is too many unstressed syllables at the end. The translation has a perfect Type A verse, which might be too much of the same rhythm for the original intent. Fortunately, verse 4b is another exact match.

## ***Discussion***

The chief staves of this stanza add up to this: ofttest-wounds-anyone-grasping. This theme is wound through all three levels of meaning. At the lowest level of meaning, “Eolhxsecg” shows just one implicit stanza, which constitutes a bullet list of the characteristics of the focal plant. At the second level of meaning the title word is taken as metaphors for types of persons. At the third level of meaning, the stanza offers advice on handling other persons and oneself.

### ***Cutting Sedge***

This implicit stanza is an a-theoretical botanical description of some kind of sedge.

### ***The Uncooperative And Deterring Conservative***

In this implicit stanza, elx-sedge is a metaphor for a type of person. The image presented by “The Uncooperative and Deterring Conservative” is wight who has a home in undesirable territory — a fetid marsh — but who nonetheless resists being removed or otherwise used by anyone. This resistance does not take into consideration the grasper’s intentions or needs. Nor does the Cutting Sedge consider its prospects of successful resistance. This sedge is mindlessly uncompromising and harsh, and it likes its circumstances as they are.

### ***Lowly But Not Docile***

In “Lowly but Not Docile” the elx-person represents a person lives in a low-status lifestyle but he (or she) ferociously deters manipulation.

Elx-sedge does not have a self-esteem problem. This kind of person does not facilely take a place directly lower in the food chain than any person. This type of person is not impressed with how enlightened, good-looking, important, influential, rich, or physically powerful you are. This type of person is not full of bluster and braggadocio, and they are not bullying, truculent, hateful, nor abusive. Nonetheless, they resist forcibly and without hesitation.

Warrior or not, elx-sedge is not an easy victim. He or she is not even an easy beneficiary. You mess with them, they make you sorry.

### ***The Calm and Productive Can Be Fierce***

Based on “The Uncooperative and Detering Conservative” and on “Lowly But Not Docile”, the message that “The Calm and Productive Can Be Fierce” is a warning that people can be surprisingly resistant. However, it is also a reminder of the distinction between masculinity and manhood (see sidebar). In this sense, Cutting Sedge is held up as an example to men.

The elx-sedge person holds a place in the world and helps hold the world together. Although such a person’s place may be unglamorous, he does quite well for himself and others. The elx-man does not go out campaigning or just looking for a fight. This man is not aggressive. The quality that lies behind this plant’s resistance is not necessarily that it is proud. Although the eolhx-man’s role is to provide cover and sustenance for others and to prosper and multiply, he is not necessarily a wimp. The elx-man has

#### ***Manhood and Masculinity***

Manhood is masculinity plus maturity. Masculinity must be dominated by responsibility, self-discipline, and some skills, including social skills. It is masculine, but not manly, to be pugnacious. Many people do not recognize a difference between manhood and masculinity, and this can cause a problem.

The implicit stanza “The Calm and Productive Can Be Masculine” (see main text) relates to timeless issues of basic values and sex roles.

the tenacity, fearlessness, and remorselessness to resist savagely regardless of the odds.

### ***Avoid Predatory Exploitation***

This implicit stanza is suggested by “Lowly But Not Docile” and “The Calm and Productive Can Be Fierce”. Here, we are cautioned to beware of the productive but passive, of those who calmly mind their own business and offend no one. Like the elx-sedge, many people tend to “instinctively” want to be themselves for themselves. Hence, this implicit stanza is a warning against unnecessary aggressiveness or manipulation. You need to have a good reason to be messing with people because there can be a cost. There can be a cost even if the grasper means well.

### ***Enlightenment In Place Might Be Easier***

In this implicit stanza, the “body” can be someone trying to help another start or continue on a more enlightened life path. This implicit stanza is suggested by the implicit stanzas “The Uncooperative Conservative”, “Lowly but Not Docile”, and “The Calm and Productive Can Be Fierce”, and “Avoid Predatory Exploitation”. Sometimes if you try to help a good, solid person to lead a more enlightened life by uprooting him or her, that person will make you regret the attempt.

There are people who are happy and well-adjusted where they are, yet who could be happier and better adjusted. But for reasons that are internal to them, they grimly resist any threat to uproot or tear them.

So -- if another person is ready to start on a spiritually progressive course of life -- it is often a safer bet to encourage them to live a more enlightened version of whatever lifestyle they are already in. With a few exceptions, a person can achieve a better balance of conscious and nonconscious control -- a radical internal change -- if we avoid the hostility and rebellion that can accompany a radical change in circumstances.

Indeed, it is normally much more practical for an individual to live a progressively spiritual life in a lifestyle that is conventional for his or her host culture than to try to revolutionize society, live in a special community, or emigrate to a utopia.

### ***Beware Of Those Unready For Enlightenment***

If you are willing to help others find progressive mysticism, it is best to avoid being too pushy about it. So this implicit stanza -- which is built on “The Uncooperative and Detering Conservative” and “Lowly But Not Docile” -- reminds us that people can be quite unpleasant if you too directly try to help them out of their wilderness.

Conscious will plays a greater part in our lives -- or has a greater potential -- than we sometimes realize. For example, a genetic predisposition for a certain type of hair can be overcome by coloring or bleaching, or by straightening, curling, or waving — although the genetic predisposition remains. Likewise, a substance addiction might never go away, but it can be overcome by psychological self-discipline. The inner quality stays, and the effort to overcome it is an adaptation that must be renewed periodically or continuously. So each of us does have characteristics which are of obscure origin, and which strongly influence our lives. But to struggle against or exploit those characteristics is a choice.

Some folks just do not want to hear about this. Not everyone wants to make conscious choices.

This is why the best method of teaching enlightenment is often to ask leading questions and set an example. This is more of an issue with men (sedge) than with women (elm). However, another reason to not rely on lecturing is that the progressive mystic must discover truths that are accessed through introspection.

***Warning Of One's Own Rebellion***

This implicit stanza, based on “The Uncooperative Conservative”, makes us aware of our own tendency to resist moving out of our own comfort zones.

***Persistence and Independence in Two Realms***

Elx-sedge can flourish as an emergent. That means that it survives in two worlds on the edge of an ecosystem. This makes the plant analogous to the religious mystic or magician, who functions in two realms. In this sense, the elx-sedge metaphor makes possible an implicit stanza giving advice specifically to the esoteric practitioner.

This implicit stanza is suggested by “The Uncooperative and Detering Conservative”, and “Lowly, but Not Docile”. These implicit stanzas present an image of a determined defense that is honorable in purpose and does not get in the way of growth and prosperity for the elx-sedge person. You should be your own person in both realms. You should not slavishly allow your life to be ruled by a deity (nor any other “supernatural” wight) or a person. It is acceptable (if not always practical to shame, embarrass, sue, or otherwise deter those who would remove us from progressive mysticism.

“Independence in Two Realms” presents an attitude that is not typical of all Abrahamic or Pagan religions. A great many people in the modern world gain important strength by surrendering to a deity. However, it is possible to gain inner strength without surrender. But at least we should all beware of toxic religion (She-Wolf, 1997).

## ***Themes***

***Simple Themes***

- Sedge or some kind of sedge
- Resistance, especially mindless resistance
- Conservatism

- Boldness
- Tenacity
- Unwillingness to compromise
- Humble surroundings or home
- Home
- Native soil
- Individuality
- Strength in less divine qualities
- Functioning in two realms
- Wounding
- Frequency
- Grasping

### ***Contrasts***

- Taking control over a person versus defense against being controlled
- Submission versus independence
- Taking control over a person versus defense against being controlled
- Manhood versus masculinity

### ***Advice for Living***

Individuality is important to people and a valid value. Apparently docile and meek individuals can be quite prickly when one attempts to control them. This resistance can be with or without justification, and it is not necessarily a sign of bad character. Indeed, it is well to keep in mind that a truculent, aggressive manner is not necessary to the achievement of good manhood.

Individuals vary in their need tolerance for guidance and other control external to themselves. Often, it is better to let other persons decide on their own what changes to make. Sometimes, we have to be on guard against our own unwillingness to depart from our comfort zones.

***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	A	5
2a	A	5
2b	A	4
3a	A	4
3b	A	5
4a	D1	5
4b	D2	4

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	9
3	9
4	9
Total	36

## Sixteenth Stanza: Faith, Inspiration, and Progress<sup>20</sup>

sigel semannum • symble biþ on hihte  
ðonn hí hine feriaþ • ofer fisces beþ  
oþ hí brimhengest • bringeþ tó lande

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

(a) {sail; sun; jewel} (to) {those who travel by sea; seamen, sailors}

{always; continuously, constantly} is {on, upon; towards; about; in accordance with} {trust, hope, joyous expectation, joy — “on hyhte” is an idiom for “based on hope, joy, or trust”, “in accordance with hope, joy, or trust”, or “(towards) causing a condition of hope, joy, or trust” or simply, “hope”}

{When, inasmuch as; while; when } they it {bear, carry, convey, bring}

over “fish’s bath” (the sea)

Until they (the) “sea horse” (ship)

{brings, bears, carries, transports} to {land; earth, soil; land as opposed to water or air}

#### *(B)*

Sail, to seafarers, • is ceaseless hoping,  
while it they ferry • over fishes’ bath,  
‘til their brine-stallion • brings them to shoreline

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<sup>20</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998b).

**(C) Modernized Meter**

A sail is to seamen ceaselessly hope,  
 while they bring it along on their briny path,  
 until by their boat they're brought to land.

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The only issue in translation is the title word, but there are some problems with the original that have to be edited, and the first line presents an idiom to be discussed.

***The Title Word***

The title word means “sail”, not “sun” nor “jewel”, and what the crew members are hoping for is (A) not to have to row all the way and/or (B) to make good time. And in this case, unlike some other stanzas, it makes a very significant difference how this word is translated: whether sigel is an advanced propulsion device, or equipment for magic or superstition. The notion of a propulsion device provides more interesting metaphors.

Most translators of the *OERP* render sigel as “sun”. In 1840, John Kemble, one of the pioneers of Old English philology pointed out that “sail” does fit the substance of the stanza and “sun” does not. Kemble did not spell out his reasoning, so perhaps that is why controversy developed afterwards. (See Dickens, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Nicholson, 1982; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page, 1973; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1995; Shippey, 1976; Thorsson, 1987; S. Wódening, 1995a.)

Verse 2a “while they it ferry” makes it clear that a sigel is something (grammatically masculine) that sailors can carry in their boat; this rules out “sun”. This leaves us with two possibilities. Either sigel here denotes a piece of jewelry, or Kemble is right that the word means sail.

A piece of jewelry could be carried as good luck charm or navigational device. We can eliminate “navigational device”, because any navigational device carried by the ancient Teutonic sailors (namely, a feldspar “sunstone”) would have not been of much technical value and therefore would have offered little hope and would have been useless most of the time (Osborn and Longland, 1982: Bill, 1997). Hence, any piece of jewelry would have been a hopeful thing only as a talisman. But because magic is otherwise left out of this poem entirely -- not merely because “jewel” does not alliterate properly in translation -- the title word should not be translated as “jewel” in the sense of talisman.

There is more justification for Kemble’s conclusion. The verb for sail is spelled sigel in the preterite form “sigelede” (sailed) in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, in an entry for the year 877. This implies that sigel is a spelling variant of the noun for sail (seġl). In addition, Osborn and Longland claim that sigel was repeatedly used to gloss a Latin word for sail (see the sidebar, “Glosses”). (See also Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; Hall, 1960; Nicholson, 1982; Osborn and Longland, 1982).

#### ***Glosses***

You often see “glosses” referred to in philological works, Old English dictionaries and Old English grammars. These glosses are notes written in the margins of ancient manuscripts to help readers with translation — commonly, to help them translate from Latin. Modern scholars infer from the Latin the meaning of words in medieval vernacular languages. Glosses are touched upon in the section “The Title Word”.

Moreover, sails became important in maritime Nordic cultures during the 500’s-700’s CE (Skov, 1965; Bill, 1997), and could easily have found a place in a poem that was a major philosophical statement of the time.

“Sail” is not necessarily the normal name of this rune -- or is it? Halsall (1981) claims that the rune appears at the end of the riddle number six as an answer, “sun”, and Dobbie (1942:157) is of the same opinion, although Dobbie says the rune appears both at the beginning and the end of the riddle. But I checked Mackie’s edition of the riddle (1978: 96). Mackie says that the rune appears near

the beginning (just over the word for “Christ”) and then again after the final punctuation in the riddle. Over “Crist” an abbreviation for “sun” would be a pun on “son”, but “Son of Yahweh” would not make a plausible answer to a riddle that includes His name. To the present author, Mackie’s drawing looks more like a yogh than an “s” rune, but let us assume that the “s” rune does appear in the riddle and see where that takes us.

The “s” rune also appears as an abbreviation in *Solomon and Saturn*, where it seems to stand for the leader of the angels. In Christian theology, the sun is not the leader of the angels, but in Dark Age theology, Jesus would be in character as leader of a combat party of angels.

Now let us try out “sail” in the sixth riddle and in *Solomon and Saturn*. If the sail is that which catches the inspiration of Yahwey’s love to motivate the ship of Christian religion, then it is a metaphor for the high principle of sincere commitment or for simple faith. Therefore, the “s” rune appears just over Christ’s name to imply that He is the sail of the Christian religion. It appears again near the end of the riddle not as an answer but as a clue. This is because a powerful faith, or a powerfully sincere commitment to a Christianity is an answer to the riddle -- and a much better answer than “sun”.

The corresponding “s” letter in the Old Norse rune row is named “sun”. But “sun” simply does not fit this stanza. In Riddle 64 it is also used as part of an abbreviation for a word starting in “sp”, but there the rune simply carries its sound, not its name, into the riddle.

### ***On Hihte***

This is a common expression. The expression “on hihte” is an idiom, for “on hope” or “on expectation” is not what is meant. The “on” appears to be superfluous in every context. In verse 1b, the preposition provides a means of making “hiht” need a dative inflection, so that the verse could end with an unaccented syllable, as a good Type A should.

The full ambiguity of the alternate meaning “joy” is missing from the translation here, but this is not a problem. Looking through the examples in the Bosworth-Toller dictionary, it appears that “joyful expectation” is really what is meant by this “joy” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; examined at this URL: “bosworth.ff.cuni.cz”).

### *Donn*

The usual form of this word is “*donne*”, but this verse is slightly better prosody as written. Some editors emend *donn* to *donne*, based on use of *donn* as a contraction of *donne* and alleged requirements of traditional meter. I do not think it makes much difference whether we make this emendation, since neither the meaning nor the rhythm of the stanza is much affected. Pronouncing the full word means that there are two unstressed syllables instead of just one in anacrusis in front of an otherwise normal Type A verse. Anacrusis involves just one syllable much more often than it involves two (Diamond, 1970: 61). (See also editions shown in Kemble, 1840; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Shippey, 1973; Halsall, 1981; Thorsson, 1993; S. Wódening, 1995a; Pollington, 1996).

### *Hine*

In her discussion of translating this word, Halsall says that it refers to the ship, not to “*sigel*”. But a pronoun must refer to an antecedent or understood noun, so the subsequent noun “*sea-steed*” is out of the question. When actually writing her Modern English translation, she avoided “*hine*”. Otherwise, she could have easily seen that she mistranslated the title word.

Indeed, most scholarly and religious-reconstructionist translators ignore this word because they insist on mistranslating the title word as “*sun*”. You cannot say “they ferry it”, if you mean the sailors have the sun on board. What if Page’s translation were “The sun is a continual joy to seamen when they take it with them” -- would that make sense? If you do not believe me, read these translations: hippey, 1973; Page, 1973; Halsall, 1981; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Thorsson, 1987; Pollington, 1995; S. Wódening, 1995a; Paul, 1996; Albertsson, 2011.

Dickens (1915: 17) translates this word as “away”, saying that it is a variant of “heonan”. But only Jones (1967) agrees with him. There is no such form of “heonan” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921.)

### ***Hí Brimhengest***

The original requires some editing in verse 3a. It says “hibrim hengest” -- the word division is misplaced.

“Brimhengest” -- literally “sea-horse” -- was a commonly-used nickname for “ship”. Of course, it is not efficient to translate this literally, because modern English speakers think of fish of the genus *Hippocampus* by that name.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The “perfect” presents an extremely close match to the original’s rhythm, alliteration, placement of words, and word sense. The departures from the original are pretty subtle. However, the stanza is more understandable in the more modern style of Translation C, which flows more smoothly than the original.

In line 1, the first half-line is matched exactly for rhythm, word-sense, and alliteration. Verse 1b is a subtle departure from the original’s six-syllable type A verse. The original has two optional syllables in the middle of the line, while the translation has only one optional syllable, and that is at the beginning. In addition, there is a variance from the original noun “hope” to the gerund “hoping”. The original intent in this line was to say that the sail represents the seamen’s hope that they can be sailors instead of rowers, and the translation expresses that intent just as well as the original. However, the rhythm in the translation’s five-syllable Type A verse is more pronounced than in the original.

In the original, verse 2a has resolved stress. This means that the last two syllables in “feriap” are pronounced as one. The way the two syllables are combined is simply by not pronouncing the “i”. Without resolves stress, verse 2a

has too many syllables at the end of the half-line to sound like poetry to a native speaker of Old English. The original intent is for verse 2a to be pronounced as a six-syllable Type A line with stress on “they” (hí) and none on “it” (hine). This sets up a poetic contrast between the idea that the seamen bring the sail and the idea that the boat brings them.

The translation “corrects” the grammar in the original, where the ancient poetic diction was fish’s bath -- with “fish” in the singular possessive. The translation has “fish” in plural possessive. The plural possessive not only makes more sense to a modern audience, it also has the same number of syllables as does the Old English singular possessive, making possible a practically perfect translation of the nickname and the whole verse.

In the translation of verse 3a, it is necessary to use resolved stress in “stallion” -- pronouncing the word as if it had only two syllables. This is done by pronouncing the “io” as a vowel diphthong. This gives an exact match to the alliteration, rhythm, and word-sense in the original’s five-syllable Type C line.

## *Discussion*

Unlike most stanzas of this poem, “Sigel” is not a bullet list of predicatives. Instead, it is almost a narrative.

The second level of meaning is supported by several metaphors. The sail, an advanced propulsion device for its time, is a method for catching favorable wind. This is where it makes a difference how the title word is interpreted, for the favorable wind in turn is a common metaphor for favorable circumstances. For example, economic recession is often referred to as “doldrums”. Thus, the sail refers indirectly to favorable external circumstance, individual or group motivation, and inspiration. The fish’s bath is the natural habitat of fish, so the nickname emphasizes that people are literally a little out of their element while at sea. Ferrying can represent progress or the course of an individual’s or group’s life. The boat can represent any system for moving, or for making other

forms of progress. Hence, it can stand for any major enterprise, any organized religion, or any intellectual and ritual system of progressive mysticism.

Other interesting second-level material comes from the following set of metaphors. The boat crew is the soul, the boat is a human body, the land is the location of one's grave (hence death), and the sail is (any) religion. This view of "Sigel" is suggested by Maureen Halsall's (1981) opinion of the stanza's esoteric meaning.

Incidentally, Halsall sees this stanza in a radically different light than I. In *The Old English Rune Poem: A Critical Analysis*, Maureen Halsall (1981: 134, 144-145) suggests that sea voyage refers to the "fallen man" trying to return to Paradise. However, the start of the journey is not specified as a fallen state and the destination is not paradisaical nor specified at all in this stanza. In Christian doctrine, the emphasis is on a goal — an end to alienation from their deity, attainment of eternal salvation, or escape from the hostility of their deity. However, she is quite perceptive to see the sea voyage as a metaphor for a spiritual struggle. But the emphasis here is on the trip -- or process -- not on reaching land (the goal). The growth process is common to progressive mysticism in all religions, and the idea of life as a journey is not particularly religious at all. Thus, there is not anything clearly Christian about this stanza.

However, she is quite perceptive to see the ship as a metaphor for organized religion or for a body of religious practice and ideas. It is true that for any religion -- organized or not -- a hope for propulsion or motivation is common. Otherwise, the boat can be boring and the trip can be tedious. But there is no guarantee that religion will work for any person.

It is not surprising that in runic poetry the technology of sea travel is used as a metaphor for advanced technology in general. In the age when the *OERP* was produced and for centuries later, sailing vessels were in the forefront of technological advance. Commerce, art, literature, learning, politics, love affairs, diet, etc. — many aspects of life in Europe were affected by the sea travel and

by improvements in sea travel during the period from the end of the Roman Empire to the writing of the *OERP* (in the 900's).

A brief discussion of Teutonic sea travel in early medieval times may make more vivid the implicit stanzas of "Sigel". During the 400's-1000's CE, there was (slow) progress in ship design and ship building. Despite this progress, the average size of Teutonic ships throughout this period was somewhat smaller than the larger transport and warships of the Bronze Age in the Mediterranean. The sailing ships roughly resembled the famous Viking longships, being long and narrow, with a single mast and using a single sail. Most of the ships had 24-48 oars, although some ships did not have enough oars to make a long trip by rowing. Rowing a twenty-four-oared boat on the open sea would take skill and social coordination. Merely rowing across the English Channel could be hard work and would require two shifts of oarsmen. Under sail, most of the ships could not be tacked upwind. There were no compasses, astrolabes, nor sextants. Thirty to sixty persons on board would be crowded. If a boat carried livestock or working animals, there might not be enough room to work at least some of the oars. Although jetties and wharves were sometimes used, the boats were small enough to be beached upon arrival. Nonetheless, sea travel was more efficient than moving overland. (See Bill, 1992; Howarth, 1977: 82, 92-93, 117-129; Manyon, 1961a: 59-71; Welch, 1992: 118, Color Plate 7; Wormald, 1982a: 102-103).

### ***Favorable Winds***

Not mentioned directly, but strongly implied at the lowest level of meaning is the hope for favorable wind. And what could be better than favorable wind? Having it all the way.

### ***The Sail is Brought as a Convenience***

The key notion here is hope on the part of the seamen — hope that at least part of the way they will not have to row, and hope for the joys and business advantages of a speedy passage. A ship's crewpersons bring the sail along because it is a thing of hope — not necessarily a bringer of for-certain results.

***A Psychological Lift***

The sail is a psychological benefit during sea travel. Just having a sail on board lends an atmosphere of hope or provides a basis for looking forward to a fast trip.

The psychological lift from use of a sail is in addition to the sense of adventure that accompanies sea travel, especially in a relatively small boat. The sense of adventure is alluded to by the traditional nickname “fish’s bath”, used for ocean or sea. Likewise, the traditional nickname “sea steed” conveys a sense of adventure and play.

***The Promise of Technology Is in Its Use***

Coming to the second level of meaning, the sail can be a metaphor for advanced technology in general. The psychological upside of technology is praised in “The Promise of Technology”. Technology is used with the expectation of achieving high levels of efficacy and efficiency. It brings joy of accomplishment and enjoyment of the exercise of power. It is not just to be beheld or sung about. It has its value when and while we use it.

An interesting feature of this implicit stanza is its focus on process as opposed to preparation or goal attainment. “The Promise of Technology Is in Its Use” refers to fun in doing constructive things as opposed to play. This fun is mentioned as available to the sailors, those who bring along the equipment and know how to use it. We are definitely being told that there is an advantage to being able to use the modern technology of the times in which we live, and that that advantage is not just in goal attainment. Work can be fun.

***Results of Technology Depend on Nature***

This implicit stanza depends on the irony that the sailors bring their sail because it is unfailingly a thing of hope. That is, the “sure thing” is not the results. In other words, the sailors are not expecting to have good winds on every voyage,

nor all the way on any particular voyage. All they can really count on is a having the equipment to exploit a good wind.

“Results of Technology Depend on Nature” reminds us that technology only gives us possibilities. Our results depend in part on nature. Just as sailors depend on the occurrence of wind, modern industry depends on availability of fossil fuels, metals, etc. Obviously, the results of our efforts are not random occurrences. This is a reminder from the ancients that predictability in these matters is not perfect.

### ***Psychological Motivation***

As a propulsion device, the sail refers directly to motive power, which is analogous to the psychological concept of motivation. Looking at the stanza this way, the boat can become a metaphor for any system that is intended to travel or ferry -- and “ferian” becomes a metaphor for making progress.

This metaphorical stanza is based on the explicit view of “The Sail is Brought as a Convenience”.

This generic idea is that the collective endeavor in question will not become tedious. This applies to many types of endeavors which are subject to emotional doldrums, such as: classroom education, picking cotton, or manufacturing. This also applies to endeavors where interest can become misdirected, for example, professional sports teams sometimes suffer from player incentives for individual achievement at the expense of team achievement.

### ***Temple’s Motivation***

This view of the “Sigel” is based on the explicit stanzas, “Favorable Winds” and “A Psychological Lift”.

In this implicit stanza, the boat is a metaphor for a temple, an organization whose social boundaries set the members apart and whose tasks organize them into a set of roles. Some people participate only passively in temple life, so the

boat's crew symbolizes those who keep the temple existing and moving in the right direction. This implicit stanza suggests that for the active participants, the inspiration of the religion is brought to animate the temple, to keep it active without them having to artificially make things to happen.

The sail is thus the theoretical or mythical justification for religious rites. A temple's theology or a mythical story can provide the basis for ceremonies that participants find transforming. For example, a myth can explain how it is that life is not always, nor even on the whole, fair. Even a myth that or philosophy that does not deny the unfairness of life can help a person turn from rage or despair to a calmer feeling that the whole thing is at least tolerable - and possibly fun despite the problems. Geertz (1966) and Stanner (1979) give examples of how this works through ritual drama in certain polytheistic religions.

### ***The Core of the Pantheon***

In this metaphorical stanza, the boat is the community called in Old Norse language "Asgarð" and the crew represents the deities. Therefore the sail explains the principle of divinity or supersoul of the deities. This is something that animates the community and gives it more than just literary or superstitious value for us. That is, whatever homiletic or enlightening meaning the pantheon has for us is greatly enhanced by the deities' sail.

### ***Enhanced Life Journey***

This implicit stanza is a critique of exoteric religion. Here, the boat crew is the multifaceted psyche or soul, and the inner person is hoping for an easier trip by means of the sail, which stands for (any) religion. This hope endures until the body stops the soul's experience of life by arriving at land (the grave). The emphasis here is that this is *always* what the psyche is hoping for, despite any talk of afterlife. The sail is not brought along in hopes of finding a good market or delightful taverns at the end of the voyage.

This is a more pre-Christian than Abrahamic view of religion. When Christianity was presented to Germanic heathens during the Early Middle Age, the religion was not presented as we think of it now. Missionaries tried to emphasize that if they converted, how much better the people's harvests would be, how more efficacious their magical remedies would be, how much more victorious their armed forces would be, etc. In addition, the Christians threatened to commercially isolate, ethnically cleanse, prosecute as criminals, enslave, or slaughter en masse. The first Crusades were against Germanic and Slavic heathens. Naturally, when droughts or epidemic diseases struck predominately Christian communities during this era, the people often reverted to Heathen religions instead of making more sacrifices for Yahweh. They figured, if one religion does not work, instead of fixing it just use another (Fletcher, 1997; Russell, 1994).

Sometimes it is difficult to convince people that sincere religious practice can result from a motivation to have more and better social connections or more and better magic. A lot of people think that the orientation described in this implicit stanza surely would only apply to religionism. There really are people who "fear God" and/or honestly believe in salvation from hell because of factors they can directly observe.

### ***Enhanced Personal Progress***

This is similar to "Enhanced Life Journey", but here what is hoped for is more expeditious personal growth throughout one's adult life. The ultimate objective is to have a physically comfortable and more delightful life, but this is to be achieved through "spiritual" growth as a primary means.

This view of the stanza describes progressive mysticism as it is practiced in all religions. When coaching a student, the sage should try to get the student to listen to the supersoul within telling him or her this, and try to avoid saying it outright. That way, you get a more profound realization and less resistance. However this is a fundamental lesson.

***Catching the Wind of Inspiration***

In this implicit stanza, the sail represents a sincere commitment or profound faith, the hoped-for wind is inspiration or an intuitive understanding, the ship is an organized religious system, the crew is a metaphor for members of that organized religion, the trip is their spiritual journey taken in common. The land is the solid grounding in reality and higher enlightenment that the crew seeks.

***A Spiritual Reason for Religion***

Did you ever get the feeling that something profound is missing from groups you have joined? Would that be formal rituals, a consensual role structure a sense of mission or an objective? Or do you have all those things and still find something missing from those particular groups?

There is plenty that the members do have. In this implicit stanza, the boat is that which gives social structure -- technology and/or formal rules. The seamen are organized by this, they have their roles and social cohesiveness, for they must work as a team. They have a goal. They have an identity as a group -- being in the boat sets them apart. The fact that they are going somewhere symbolizes work or play that they have to do. The people are protected from their environment -- the fishes' bath -- by their technology. In modern times, there are many such groups, which seem to have something missing. Even in the Early Medieval Age, there were secular groups.

So people bring religion along because it helps them find hope. They are hoping to catch the breath of spirit. In Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, words referring to breath or wind also denote spirit. In Old English likewise, "gást" was used to denote "spirit" or "soul" but also "breath". Our modern lyrical expression "to give up the ghost" has the same meaning as "to breathe one's last". (See also Axinia, 2008; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921)

***Mystical Practice***

If we change the metaphorical function of “sail” in the previous implicit stanza from “sincere commitment” or “profound faith” to “mystical meditative practice”, we get this implicit stanza.

This involves the entire range of techniques of mystical practice, not all of which would be used by any particular religion or subset of a religion. Yoga can be used as part of one’s mystical practice. For the peyote cult, ceremonial use of peyote would be the sail in “Mystical Practice”. Contemplation of the wonders of nature is a more common technique. One-pointing meditation is another example of a sail.

***Latest Prophet / Jesus Christ / Mohammed / a Pantheon***

It cannot be denied that in Christianity, Jesus Christ can take the place of the sail mentioned in “Catching the Wind of Inspiration”. Of course, a profound and sincere faith is required of Christians, but Jesus can be said to be the motive force that drives the religion. A similar observation applies to Islam. Judaic history shows a succession of prophets who would fill this role. Each of them came to refresh and redirect the adherents of their religion (actually, their nationality). Quanah Parker would have filled this role for the peyote cult.

There is no such hero or single “sail” in Germanic Pagan religion, except for the Odinists, who regard Odin as the supreme deity, but we cannot deny the presence of a non-Pagan implicit stanza in “Sigel”.

***Favorable Circumstances***

Here the seamen -- who can stand for any group of persons making a collective effort -- are prepared to take advantage of a specific favorable circumstance, which might or might not appear. They leave their comfort zone for the fishes’ bath, where things must be done competently. But not even competence assures a crew of safety nor success. They prepare in advance and remain ready to exploit the opportunity any time it should appear. This metaphor has application to many fields of ongoing human endeavor.

Note that the favorable circumstance is not favorable for a specific destination. It is favorable for the process.

Some readers might be surprised that a message this modern would appear in a poem from the mid-900's. In the economies of Europe's Early Middle Ages, major commercial, manufacturing, religious, and civic enterprises did not amount to as much as in later times. But there were such enterprises even though they were riskier than similar phenomena in modern times.

At this point, it will be useful for some readers to see a paragraph on commerce during the Dark Age. Historians call the period from the fall of the Roman Empire to a time well into the High Middle Ages "dark" because of a lack of written evidence, but we are sure that there was a general economic decline and that it was partly due to lack of law and order. A person who would transport cargo over a long distance would have to be able to defend himself and his property. He (or she) would have to select companions for the trip and know the way or hire a good guide. The merchant would also have to endure travel under difficult and uncomfortable conditions. There were enterprising people who came by their property-for-sale honestly. They probably outnumbered the pirates, land thieves, and lords -- but not the farmers. They took chances on not just the transportation and safety issues but also finding a market on arrival. They could be surprised by a town destroyed by accidental fire, plague, or attack, or by a market already glutted by other merchants. As in modern times, people gamble like that because of their own greed, lust for adventure, and preference to be the boss. So when you see a movie scene showing an intelligent wanderer with a large, health body and advanced weapons skills saving a fat, cowardly merchant from brigands, be skeptical. (See Bloch, 1961a and b; Pirenne, 1936; Welch 1992: Chapter 9.)

### ***Technology Does Not Give Certainty***

"Technology Does Not Give Certainty" reminds us that even the most powerfully leveraged deeds that we do, even the most impressive state of our arts, do not provide us with results that we can absolutely count on in advance.

The uncertainty is not just a matter of natural events, for there are flaws in the things people create. This implicit stanza is best supported by the implicit stanza, “Results of Technology Depend on Nature”.

### ***Inspiration***

This implicit stanza is suggested by “Psychological Motivation”, “Enhanced Personal Progress”, “Psychological Lift”, “Temple’s Motivation”, “Core of the Pantheon”, “Catching the Wind of Inspiration”, “Spiritual Reason for Religion”, “Mystical Practice”, “Favorable Circumstances”, and “Technology Does Not Give Certainty”. The people who join a church or take part in a religious ritual are hoping to find inspiration that will carry all the way through their work on a specific occasion. But they are also hoping to experience strong motivation in the right direction as they progress through a whole life.

This implicit stanza applies generically to any religious system or community that a person would stick with over a lifetime. Artifacts ritually dedicated to catch sacred inspiration are brought on board in hopes that they will make meditations easier. The “sail” then would include altar goods, costumes, jewelry, monuments, and other materials.

This view of “Sigel” seems well suited to Abrahamic religions, for each Abrahamic system is intended to bring its Christian, Jews, or Moslems to reconciliation with Yahweh. However, the land in question appears simply as an end of the travel, not as a specific goal. The “land” could be back home or it could be a far-from-home destination. “Inspiration” fits Abrahamic religion if the adherent rejects the idea of reunion with Yahweh in paradise or in the achievement of divine character as attainable perfection. That is, if one decides that the purpose of Abrahamic religion is to live the best one can, not to achieve perfect and final salvation, then progressive mysticism is possible.

### ***Critique of Artifice***

This implicit stanza is suggested by “The Sail Is Brought As A Convenience”, “Psychological Lift”, and “Technology Does Not Give Certainty”. Here, we are

cautioned to be prepared emotionally and technically, but to expect the unexpected. If we accept the notion that divinity includes creativity, high levels of consciousness, and standards of decent behavior, then technology is a manifestation of the divine side of human nature, of that which makes us higher than the lower animals. But technology does not give us absolute certainty of the satisfaction for which we hope any more than the deities' powers give them omniscience or omnipotence.

Yet, we are drawn to technology and to technological advancement because we like the odds; we like the results we get with the methods and equipment we have, we like our prospects, and we are not willing to go back. Debates over the directions of modern scientific and engineering developments concern directions forward, not whether to go back. We place our hopes on technology, and we have become dependent on it to achieve our goals, just as the ancient sailors depended on the sea-steed and its advanced propulsion to bring them to land.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- Sailing
- Boats
- Travel
- Technology
- Hope
- Leveraged work
- Fun at work
- Convenience
- Progress
- Faith
- Wind
- Inspiration
- Crew
- Multi-faceted psyche

- A prophet, saint, or deity
- Lack of control over nature
- Dependence on nature
- Imperfection of artifice
- Imperfect predictability
- Possession of technology
- Ability to use technology

### ***Contrasts***

- Certainty versus uncertainty
- Travel versus arrival
- Hard physical work versus technologically leveraged physical work
- Achievement with versus without personal growth
- Inspired versus uninspired work
- Progress with versus without a religious system

### ***Advice for Living***

Use of highly efficient and efficacious methods and materials reflects the divine in mankind. If you can, it is well to be prepared and willing to use advanced methods. It not only can give good results, it can be fun! However, it is possible to be overly enthusiastic — even the most advanced technical means of the time will not free us from wyrd, from nature, nor from ourselves.

People commonly expect from their religions improvements in their lives other than enlightenment and the adaptations that enlightenment facilitates. These benefits are good for morale, so make sure that you and your companions have such benefits.

But people also hope that they can find something else added to an organized religion that is not an inherent part of any organized religion. And that is a sail that comes from within each person.

*Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D1	5
1b	A	6
2a	A	6
2b	B	5
3a	C	5
3b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	11
2	11
3	10
Total	32

## Seventeenth Stanza: Character and Reliability<sup>21</sup>

tír biþ tacna sum • healdeð trywa wel  
 wiþ æþelingas • a biþ on færylde,  
 ofer nihta genipu • næfre swiceþ

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{fame, glory, honor; ornament; unidentified constellation or star} is (one of the) {indications, symptoms; suggestions; marvels, wonders, miracles; evidences, proofs; emblems, standards, banners}

{holds, grasps, retains, possesses, keeps} {fidelity, faith, trust; pledge, promise, covenant, agreement} {well, abundantly; fully; nearly}

{taking the accusative: with, by, through} {persons of royal blood; noblemen; chiefs, princes; ; (poetry only) heroes, saints (poetry and plural only) men, people; those who are good quality in mind, those who are famous or excellent}

{always, ever, forever, constantly, continuously} is {on, in, upon} {motion, journey, course, progress; course of life}

{across; (location) above, beyond, over; upon, in, through} {night's; darkness's} {mists, clouds; darkneses; obscurities}

never {(poetry only) wanders, moves about; deceives, turns away from, is treacherous, turns traitor, withdraws allegiance (from), abandons, deserts; (poetry only) departs, moves away; fails}

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<sup>21</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998c).

**(B)**

Tir's a token-sign • holdeth troth so well  
 with ones who're noble. • Always progressing on  
 over nimbuses of night-times • -- never swindles.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

Tir's a token that keeps trust well  
 with ones who're noble. Always it is on course  
 over many nights' darknesses -- never deceiving us!

## ***Issues in Translation***

This is another strophe where the structure is narrative rather than bullet-list, with the last half of the stanza explaining a statement made in the first three verses.

***The Title Word***

The title word clearly refers to a constellation or star, although there is a built-in ambiguity. "Tir" is commonly taken to be the name of a specific Nordic deity. In Old English prose that god is usually referred to as "Tiw" (as in Tiw's Day -- Tuesday), but the rune is always named "Tac", "Ti", or "Tir" in rune lists. Dobbie implies out that tir and Tiw come from different etymological roots. There is no etymological root for Tiw nor tir in the list of Indo-European root words in *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993; Page, 1973; Kemble, 1840).

Since this is the name of a constellation or star, I chose not to translate it into a Modern English equivalent. The title word means "glory" (among other things) in Old English. It is possible that a shiny object or set of objects in the night sky was called "Glory" by the ancient Anglo-Saxons. But it is also possible that a constellation, star, or planet was named for a deity whose name in turn derives from an Indo-European word for "male deity".

Regardless of etymological considerations, we can tell that the reference to the god Tiw is at the second level of meaning, not at the literal level. This is because He is not referred to as a god, but as a distinction, symbol, or marvel. However, the indirect reference to Tiw would have been quite evident to anyone competent in the ancient Teutonic religion, for the reference is easily drawn from the content of this stanza. (See also Appendix C, which reviews all the evidence regarding this deity.)

### *Færylde*

The word “færelde” has several meanings, but in this context it has to denote “defined course of travel”. It usually indicates movement or action without the implication of a track or road defining direction, but in this strophe the emphasis is on predictability and stability instead of mere motion. It certainly cannot denote “vehicle” or “travel companion” in this context; moreover those ideas are found elsewhere (attached to other words) in this poem. Of the dictionaries cited here, only Bosworth-Toller defines the word spelled with a “y” instead of an “e” in the second syllable (see Dictionary of Old English Project 2008; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Hall, 1960). But the “y” seems to be merely a spelling variation that some dictionaries missed.

### *Nihta Genipu*

It seems to be difficult to fully translate this expression, perhaps because a full, literal translation sounds too awkward in Modern English: nights’ clouds/shadows. But apparently most translators do not believe their eyes.

Most translators interpret the phrase nihta genipu as something like “dark of night”, “night’s darkness” or “night’s clouds”. In other words, they interpret night as singular, and they often interpret the word it modifies (cloud, mist, darkness, obscurity) as singular (Albertsson, 2011; Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981: 90; Kemble, 1840; Thorsson, 1993; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1995; Wódening, 1995a).

By interpreting both these words as singular, you miss part of the meaning of the strophe. Inflectional endings and grammatical situations tell us that *nihta* is plural genitive and *genipu* is plural accusative. In this way, the stanza mentions very numerous situations.

It is clear that one of the goals of the artist(s) was to depict something that is very dependable. Thus, the stanza mentions something that occurs above or within more than one (especially) dark place during more than one generally dark time.

A verification of the artistic intent to emphasize constancy across many situations comes from analyzing the chief staves of this stanza. As you may recall, the chief stave in each line is the first stressed syllable in the second half-line. Often this syllable is a clue to the most important idea in a line. The chief staves here are in the words *trywa*, *a*, and *næfre* – “fidelity”, “always”, and “never”. The fidelity consists of being always in motion & on course, and it never deviating.

Therefore, a translation that does not show the plurality of both the words in question misses the contrast between motion and multiplicity of circumstances on the one hand, and perfect fidelity on the other.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The “perfect” translation shows some minor imperfections, but overall it is a remarkably close match to the original. Among other things, the translation preserves the genitive plural of “night” and the plural of “cloud/darkness” from the original, a feat which has not been achieved by previous translators. Where there are variances in the translation, they tend to involve the less important content of each half-line.

The five-syllable D2 (broken-fall) Verse 1a is matched by the translation as regards alliteration and rhythm, but the order of ideas has been slightly re-arranged to make the translation into Modern English. The original has the idea for “a” at the end of the verse, but the translation combines the verb “to be” into

a contraction for the first syllable in that verse and puts “a” in as the second syllable. Then the redundant “-sign” is added to “token” to get a proper D2 verse.

Verse 1b is matched exactly by the translation.

In the original, verse 2a is not metrical unless we put a secondary emphasis on the second syllable in the word for “noble”. That is, to make a type B verse, we have to say “ATH-e -LING-as”. The resulting rhythm is exactly matched in Translation B.

For verse 2b, the translation substitutes a type D2 (broken fall) rhythm for the original’s D1 (falling-by-stages). An exact rhythmic match could have been achieved with “always on track it is”, but this would introduce an explicit pronoun and verb that are implied in the original.

The translation of half-line 3a deviates from the original structure in two ways. The order of “nights” and “clouds” has been reversed to get an unaccented syllable at the end of the verse, and an extra syllable has been added (a preposition to express the genitive idea for “nights”). Both the original and the translation are hypermetric, with an extra half of a type A verse added to a regular type A. And the occurrence of the alliterating “n’s” is preserved and in almost exactly the same positions as in the original.

The Early Medieval authors apparently intended the emotional impact of a very terse style. The purpose of the terseness might have been to introduce a sense of empirical mystery (making you infer implicit grammatical elements) to lead the listener (or reader) into religious mystery. This terseness is preserved in the translation.

Translation C’s iambic pentameter and less terse phraseology makes for a smoother flow than the original shows. Translation C also has punctuation that was not available to the Early Medieval author(s). This contrast helps us achieve more awareness of the emotional background to the logical content of the words in the original. The double alliteration that ties together the two clauses in Line 3

seems more pleasant than the traditional pattern in the original. The present author reluctantly admits that the to a modern ear, the beat and alliteration of Translation C are “catchier” than those in Translation B; hence it is possible that the modernized translation is more faithful to the original than is the “perfect” version. It is possible that going with the cultural changes in poetic taste brings audience attention and enjoyment that the author(s) wanted.

## *Discussion*

At the lowest level of meaning for “Tir” are four implicit stanzas concerning stellar navigation and practical advice about honor and reputation. At the second level of meaning, all three implicit stanzas deal with the lore of Tiw. At the most hidden level of meaning, two implicit stanzas advise us that some of our informal and formal social circles are necessarily exclusive.

The implicit stanzas regarding Tiw and social discriminations are consistent with other things known about Teutonic Pagan philosophy. This reinforces the notions that (1) this stanza refers to a specific deity and (2) the *OERP* is part of a broad religious lore, as opposed to being merely a minor poem.

### *Night-Time Navigational Aid*

When traversing the trackless plains or wending over the open water, one wants to have a sign to be sure of. That important point does not have to hold still, if it is highly predictable, that is good enough. Light like that can be a life-saver; you will be glad to have it there.

Implicit at the literal level is the emotional security that comes from knowing of Tír.

One thing to add, one important point, remains to be emphasized: this object is a navigational aid only to those who recognize it. The noble have been clued in; the others will have to do without.

***Dependable Ally of the Noble***

Here, “Tir” is an indirect reference to the Pagan god Tiw. That god is described in surviving myth as very loyal to his friends, but not to their enemies. Tiw selects his friends according to their conduct and their own nature, not according to their ancestry. This deity selects his friends consciously and rationally, then he is very partial to them. (See also Osborn and Longland, 1982: 80).

The phrase “above night’s obscurities” refers not only to consistency across many situations and occurrences. It also refers to Tiw’s mental abilities. He is not confused nor disoriented by obfuscations nor uncertainties. He is not distracted by hopelessness nor by unproductive worry. His shrewdness and knowledge guide his choice of friends and his choice of life-course. This stanza comes across clearly as speaking of a conscious life-style choice. The choice is to be very disciplined, shrewd, and noble, and to be quite selective but loyal to one’s friends.

This is consistent with evidence from several cultures describing the God known as Tiw, Týr, or Tiu. That evidence is reviewed in Appendix C. The lore of this god tempers the advice given in this stanza, for Tiw can be caring and considerate to those who do not rate the full measure of his troth. He is pretty responsible all the way around. He provides an appealing if rather demanding example for our conduct in our own færyldas (life ways).

Tiw’s connection with the word “responsibility” points our attention to a major underlying theme of this stanza, which will be more apparent at the third level of meaning. Like Tiw, we are supposed to have standards. For ourselves, we should accept responsibility to fulfill explicit and implicit commitments. We are also supposed to hold others responsible for keeping their commitments. Association of these principles with Tiw implies that there is something holy in such right action. This theme will become even more apparent at the higher level of abstraction in this stanza.

By referring to Tiw as a tacn (signification), this stanza endorses a view of deities as metaphors for parts of our psyches or for qualities that are very human

if somewhat idealized. As a metaphor, Tíw is always there as a guide for those who know to (and know how to) seek and perceive Him.

Tíw is also implicitly referred to as a wight. As a wight, He is always on færyld (life course) with His followers. He is true to them because they follow His path – because they are His kind of people. They are persons of good mind and noble intention.

The contradiction between the “metaphor” and “wight” views of deity is itself a religious mystery embraced by many. The contradiction between these views is not as complete as it might seem. Many Pagans and Neopagans simultaneously hold the view that deities are metaphors and that they are real, disincarnate beings. We can tolerate both paradigms as part of divine mystery and as part of our own understanding.

### ***Exalted Principal In The Heavens***

In this implicit stanza, Tír is a metaphor for a high deity -- the reference is not directly to a certain high god. The shadows under clouds of many nights symbolize the times when we are not sure of our surroundings or our way. The high deity is always faithful to the faithful. He or She is always available as an example of whatever that particular deity stands for.

### ***Fidelity***

Anyone who is always faithful is not so because of always being exactly the same. Progress, not regress nor deviation helps one be a true friend, a shining example, a reassurance, and/or an inspiring leader. It is this consistency, not eternal sameness, that is the test of sincerity, and sincerity per se is mark of trustworthiness.

### ***The Tír-Person***

Here, the shining thing in the night sky represents a certain kind of person; a person in whom one can have faith. The nobles represent those sincerely

committed to growth by means of progressive enlightenment. The course of travel is personal growth. The cloud-shadows of many nights represent the uncertain or depressing times of one's life.

The Tír-person would seem to be a model or goal, not a flesh-and-blood human one could actually meet. However, it the case that for limited purposes many people achieve practically (although not literally) 100% reliability. Sometimes, we are aware that another person has confusion and discouragement, and we know we cannot rely on that individual absolutely, still we admire the odds that individual has created.

### ***Exclusion of the Unknowing***

At the third level of meaning, the notion of exclusion stands out. “Exclusion of the Unknowing” is implied by “Night-Time Navigational Aid” and “Dependable Ally of The Noble”. If the stellar sign is useful to those who have the technical knowledge and common sense to use it, then there are people who are to ignorant or foolish to make use of it. Likewise, “Religious Lore is Important” implies that there are people who are too ill-informed, too uninformed, or too foolish to get much out of Tiw.

Perhaps one reason for putting this topic at a relatively cryptic level is that it is invidious. Another reason is that the exclusion requires mature judgment to be applied properly. This implicit stanza says that we are not required to treat very reliably people who are incapable of being very reliable.

### ***Exclusion on the Basis of Character***

Translation B has obverse meanings which imply that a person can be of insufficient character to be eligible for highly reliable treatment. Likewise, the implicit stanza “Religious Lore Is Important” suggests that a person can be too lacking in self-discipline.

The exclusion here is from a category of treatment. Of course what this says about categories of treatment applies to formal and informal groups. The exclusion in question can refer to workgroups, circles of the holy (such as temples), study groups, even families. Certainly, the thresholds of performance or attitude demanded would not be the same in all types of groups. Temples, magical circles, or police departments would have much higher standards than would families.

From the point of view of this poem as a Pagan religious philosophy, the groups in question are probably religious or magical. Being selective can be painful, but it is necessary. There are people who are likeable in many contexts, but just not holy enough for highly successful religion or magic. Highly effective or efficient religion or magic is inherently esoteric.

Discrimination in honor is analogous to the sentence of outlawry in that it is a matter of self-defense and social control at the individual level. Of course, you do not need to treat people any better than they deserve. Moreover, if we are honest, dependable, etc. with those of predatory character, they may victimize us. Moreover, discrimination in treatment of people provides reasons to adhere to ethical rules.

Another Teutonic Pagan wisdom poem, the *Havamal*, contains this related advice (Hollander, 1962):

“With is friend a man • should be friends ever  
 And pay back gift for gift  
 Laughter for laughter • he learn to give  
 And eke lesing for lies.

With his friend a man • should be friends ever  
 With him and the friend of his friend  
 But foeman’s friend • befriend thou never  
 (and keep aloof from his kin).

In plainer English, the phrase “And eke lesing:” is: “And also lies”.

***Greatness is Consistent And Transcendent***

It appears that the navigation aid stands for something exalted. This is suggested by physical elevation -- above the clouds in the sky -- and by absolute reliability. Two things seem to define the greatness mentioned here. One is that seekers of a noble life-style can rely on the Tir-person to never stray nor reverse course, and the other is that the Tir-person stays beyond the largest sources of night-time shadows.

This appears to further imply that only deities and person who hide some of their behavior can seem to be great.

***Give Me Something to Count on***

Why all this talk of reliability, transcendence, and greatness? Why all the concern with “always” and “never”? Consider that people tend to want such things and come to religion to get them. Such are not available at home, on the job, or at play. They are available on an inconsistent basis in sports, musical, and theatrical spectacles. So how about bringing the thirst for appealing absolutes to religion? This implicit stanza raises that question, but we must introspect to get an answer.

***The High Principle***

Here we are looking at the lower-level implicit stanzas and taking “The Exalted Principal in the Heavens” as a metaphor for any high principle or for any philosophical system of high principles.

Like a thirst drive, an inner impulse attracts many people to sacred ethical content. Holding such a system as exalted -- having reverence for it -- puts it above one’s own nights’ darkneses.

Part of what motivates the Tír-person to be faithful is that drive to find and keep a sacred system of principle. And that sacred ethical system includes fitting in with, and setting an example specifically for, other persons of right intentions.

This is a religious universal. Indeed, it applies also to any non-religious system of ethics that requires a profound commitment.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

- The stellar guide “Tír”
- Knowledge of religious lore
- Knowledge of Tiw
- Dependability
- Consistency across many situations
- Consistency over time
- A stellar sign or guide
- Knowledge
- Judgment (or common sense)
- Being relied upon
- Always
- Never
- Self-discipline
- Value placed on honor
- Reputation
- Reputation is not a perfect indicator
- Obscurity
- Darkness
- Positive social selectivity
- Social Exclusion
- Sacredness

***Contrasts***

- Motion versus consistency
- Always versus never
- Faithful versus unfaithful

***Advice for Living***

Certain of the signs of nature are valid and reliable indicators to those who know what to look for and how to interpret the signs. Likewise, the god Tiw is available to those who are prepared to find and relate to Him.

One of the qualities that Tiw represents is honor. Not only the honor of rare heroism, but an analogous, everyday sort of honor also. The more common type of honor is also a holy characteristic to which one can aspire. This sort of honor places a heavy emphasis on reliability, on being dependable on many occasions and despite difficulties. Holy or perfectly honorable treatment should not be given to all without regard for the other person's honorability. You should have standards and hold yourself and others to them.

If high honor leads to a fine reputation, you will find that reputation pleasant in itself and useful. Although the more superficial persons have to rely on reputation, more advanced persons also must recognize fame. Accept that you will sometimes have to alter the way you treat people after you get to know them.

A sign that identifies one genuine seeker to other noble seekers is faithfulness to the noble course of development and ways of behaving. Tir is a token of identity that can be trusted by noble ones; that is, a devotee of Tir who is faithful to His ways is a genuine seeker. This is another way of saying that being on course is the sign by which noble ones are known to each other (and to themselves). Simply worshipping Tir, or being in any given religion, or wearing a token is not the sign that holds troth well; it is how we act.

Choose your friends on the basis of good character. Be very loyal to them. Of course, this does not require that you be inhumane. It does put you in a position of consciously choosing your life course (færeld).

The implicit stanzas of “Tír” definitely set it apart from “religious” practice based mainly on magic, superstition, costuming and equipment, and other relatively superficial or misleading aspects of religion.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D2	5
1b	B	5
2a	B	5
2b	D1	6
3a	Hyperm. A	7
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	11
3	11
Total	32

## Eighteenth Stanza: Bearing, Soul, and Productivity<sup>22</sup>

Beorc byþ bleða leas.    Bereþ efne swa ðeah  
 tanas butan tudder.    Biþ on telgum wlitig,  
 heah on helme.    Hrysted fægere  
 geloden leafum.    Lyfte getenge.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

(The) {poplar, black poplar, grey poplar, white poplar}    is    {flower, fruit;  
 harvest; shoot; something produced by an action}    {without, -less}

{bears, supports, sustains; produces}    {even so}    {nonetheless, however,  
 though}

{sprouts, shoots, suckers; rods of divination}    without    (dat.){that which  
 grows from another - offspring, progeny, descendants, fruits}

is    {on, in, in respect to, in regards to, as regards}    (dat.){twigs, branches,  
 boughs; shoots}    {fair, comely, beautiful, radiant}

high    in/on    (its)    (dat.){crown, summit, tree-top}

{decorated, adorned}    {beautifully; pleasantly}

(with/by) grown    leaves

(dat.){heavens, (the) sky}    {almost touching, near to; touching, pressing upon;  
 oppressing}

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<sup>22</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998d).

**(B)**

Poplar is pome-less. • It supports nonetheless  
 sproutings without seedlings. • On its spans ‘tis lovely.  
 Soars its summit, • spruced up lovely  
 — with waxing fol’age. • Welkin it touches!

**(C) Modernized Meter**

The poplar is pome-less.  
 Produces it though its sprouts without seedlings.  
 Lovely its branches; tow’ring its top is.  
 Its trimming is fair with leaves it has grown.  
 The heavens it touches!

**(D)**

White poplar is devoid of flowers. However, (it) produces sprouts without  
 (means of) seeds. Also, it is comely in its branches; is toweringly tall; and is  
 beautifully adorned by the leaves it grows. And it touches the sky!

### ***Issues in Translation***

There are two issues in translation: the title word and the meaning of the last half-line. The title word is something of a speed bump, a distraction that needs to be disposed of. The issue regarding the last half-line (geloden leafum) is more significant for the meaning of the poem.

There are issues concerning editing the original, but they are handled quite well by Maureen Halsall (1981: 138-139). Those issues include grammatical variations in a couple of the words and the appearance of ðeah in Line 3 of the “original”, where heah makes more sense. In editing, I simply followed Ms. Halsall’s lead.

***The Title Word***

Despite confusion among published students of this poem, the tree in question is

definitely poplar, probably specifically white poplar. This is, however, not a stanza about a tree -- it is about productivity and bearing.

Disagreement has arisen partly because in ancient times, “beorc” referred to both poplar and birch (Amos et al, 1991; Dickins, 1915; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Bosworth and Toller, 1921). In addition, beorc sounds like “birch” and is the direct etymological ancestor of our modern “birch”. (See sidebar, “Pronunciation of Beorc”.) Thus, several competent translators of the *Old English Rune Poem* have rendered beorc into Modern English as “birch” (for examples, see Albertsson, 2011: 105; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1996; Thorsson, 1993; Wódening, 1995a; Hall, 1960).

A smaller number of translators have rendered the focal word as “poplar” due to the content of the stanza (Dickins, 1915; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Shippey, 1972).

One famous runologist did not translate beorc in his rendering of the stanza, then said in his discussion that the tree could not be birch, but nevertheless insisted that the name of the rune must be “birch” (Page, 1993).

The first attribute of beorc presented in this stanza is flowerless or seedless reproduction. Birch can be grown from cuttings or shoots, but commonly reproduces by means of flowers and seeds. (Swain Wódening’s 1995a argument

### **Pronunciation of Beorc**

Linguists have developed a fairly consensual theory of how Old English would have sounded. Under this theory, the b in this stanza’s title would be spoken as a b in Modern English. The “eo” is two sounds combined in a diphthong. An example in MnE is in “sound”. The “eo” here combines the “e” Edward with an “uh”, and in the combination the second sound takes less than half the energy of the total diphthong. The last consonants are the same as the “rch” sound in Modern British upper class or Modern American pronunciation of “birch”. Thus beorc sounds akin to “birch”. This matter is referred to in the main text under “The Title Word”. (See Diamond, 1970; Kispert, 1971; Mitchell and Robinson, 1992; Quirk and Wrenn, 1958).

that birch trees cannot reproduce from shoots is botanically incorrect.) Poplar trees are much more often reproduced from cuttings or shoots, and some types of poplar in some areas show almost one hundred percent male specimens. This condition has been produced by mankind because the flowers and seeds are nuisances. Fallen catkin flowers can form a fuzzy carpet in the vicinity of mother trees. Silken fibers that sail the seeds afar can bombard ponds or ditches or clog drains and swimming pool filters. More than one source advises that poplars should not be planted near buildings nor open drains. At least some poplars may have difficulty seeding in cold climates.

The second attribute mentioned here is that beorc is lovely or radiant in its branches or boughs. There is no specific mention of the characteristic bark of birch, the lovely white bark of younger specimens of some varieties of poplar, nor the silvery white on the undersides of the leaves of some adult poplars. Although neither poplar nor birch is an inherently ugly tree, poplars are more often used as ornamental trees than are birches. In general, birches are more remarkable for their uses in leather tanning and medicine, the bark's value as a recording medium or construction material, and for the tree's aroma.

The third attribute mentioned is the tree's high summit. This could refer to the domed top of at least one variety of poplar or to the apex of an ornamental columnar poplar. There is nothing very distinctive about the summits of birch trees.

The fourth attribute is tallness. Poplars tend to attain a height of 90-100 feet, although a variety found in the American Far West grows to 300 feet. Birches are much less tall, tending to attain 50-66 feet, although at least one variety grows to just 30 feet. (See Dickins, 1915; Gomez, 1998; Grieve, 1931; Helicon, 1998a-f; Learning Company, 1997a and b; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Shippey, 1972; U-Net 1998a, b, and c; Wray, 1997 a, b, and c).

Dickins was the first to suggest that in this stanza, a beorc is a poplar tree. He suggested specifically Grey Poplar as a tree cultivated in England by means of cuttings. Osborn and Longland suggested Black Poplar on similar grounds. It is true that Black Poplar was the only poplar in England in early Medieval times

and that it is not common elsewhere (Francis, 1998; Helicon, 1998a). However, it is not necessary that a plant or animal mentioned in the *OERP* be native to England. Recall that in Stanza # 2, the Ur is a beast that did not appear in England during times of human habitation in that island, although it did inhabit much of Europe in early medieval and late medieval times.

The description of White Poplar is especially well suited to the stanza. White Poplar has its native range in Europe and Asia (it was imported to England centuries ago). It is typically reproduced from cuttings or shoots. The undersides of its leaves are a beautifully shimmering silvery white in the summer breezes. Its domed summit and tallness also fit the stanza. Thus, I have rendered the title word as "White Poplar" in most of my translations. However, the specific variety is not as important as how beorc is used as a metaphor. (Moreover, "white poplar" does not fit the poetic meters used for translations in this chapter.)

### ***Geloden Leafum***

The next-to-last verse is very important to understanding the stanza, but it is commonly mistranslated. The verse unambiguously means "by means of leaves (it has) grown".

All of the translators I usually cite have translated *geloden* in that verse as "loaded". This is an error. *Geloden* is the past participle of the verb *geleoden*, meaning to grow or grow from. The past participle of a roughly similar verb meaning to load (*hladan* or *ladan*) would be *gehladen* or *geladen*.

The noun *leafum* is in dative form, taking a role formerly played by the instrumental case in Teutonic languages, expressing the idea "by means of". Non-instrumental interpretations do not make sense. The tree does not really grow *from* its leaves, but it does grow *by means of* its leaves (and other resources). (See Bessinger, 1960; Bosworth and Toiler, 1898; Bosworth and Toiler, 1921; Goff, 1992: 27, 32; Hall, 1960).

Halsall (1981) points out that geloden is not related to the idea of loading down, but ignores this in her translation.

In sum, the usual translation of the next-to-last verse as indicating that there are lots of leaves on the poplar is to be rejected. Specifically, half-lines 3b and 4a are clearly saying that the tree is adorned by its (own-) grown leaves.

Not getting this right leads to a failure to understand the more abstract levels of meaning.

The poplar is made beautiful by means of the unfolding of its own inner tendencies. The poplar grows leaves on its own. They are not gifts nor wages. They are not accidents nor burdens.

The idea is that the poplar is made attractive by the showing of its “soul”, not that it is burdened by being cute.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The match-up between the “perfect” translation and the original is almost exactly perfect. This strophe is one in which the original author(s) created the pauses between half-lines and the enjambment between lines that strict adherence to traditional prosody requires; Translation B preserves this characteristic in addition to closely matching the overlay between word-sense, rhythm, and alliteration.

There is a notable deviation in the first half-line. The original’s verse 1a is of type D2 (broken fall), but the “perfect” translation has a type A line. And although the two half-lines have the same number of syllables and words, and the words are in the same order, Translation B has a different emotional impact in the first half-line than does the original. This is partly because the original has less of a halt between half-lines in the first line; the author(s) intended the lift at the end of 1a to make a softer contrast between the blaming tone of 1a and the praising tone that follows in the rest of the poem. Translation B is less subtle about this.

A subtle feature of the second half-line is also worth discussing. In the original, half-line 1b uses “beran” (bears) to express the idea that the poplar reproduces by means of suckers. The translation uses “parents”. Both terms present the ambiguity including both the idea of production and that of bringing forth a descendant. Both words are used to refer to the relation between a woman and a fetus/baby. It is clear from the context that the original authors wanted to make this connection in our heads. This is, in fact, a major thrust of the stanza.

In the original line 1b, the same ideas are presented in the same order as in the original and the pattern of alliteration falls on the same ideas. But the rhythm is quite different. The original has a type E (fall-and-rise) rhythm. The first syllable has the chief stave, so it gets a primary stress. It is natural to put secondary emphasis on “efne” and primary on “ðeah”. But the translation’s half-line 1b is of rhythmic type B with a two-syllable anacrusis.

Line 2 is a perfect match all the way through.

In the original, you have to pronounce resolved stress to get a metrical verse in half-line 3b. If “fæġer” is pronounced as written, there are too many unstressed syllables at the end of the half-line. But we can combine the first two syllables in the word -- this what is meant by “resolved stress” by not pronouncing the “ġe” or by slurring it into the preceding syllable, so that the original sounds like “fair-uh”. This makes a good type A line with 4 syllables, which is the configuration the translation is made to match. (For resolved stress, see Diamond 1970: 62-64.)

Line 4a also needs resolved stress, but it goes in the translation. To get a good type A line with 5 syllables (matching the original), you have to pronounce the “foal-age” for “foliage” -- omitting the second “i”. (Many people mispronounce the word this way all the time.) The difference in meaning between “waxing” and “grown” is not significant for the meaning of the stanza.

In line 4b of Translation B, “welkin” is modern poetic or high-literature diction, rarely used in ordinary prose. Modern English has a much smaller poetic diction

than does Old English, but we have one. Nowadays the word means “sky”, “heavens”, or “upper atmosphere”. Curiously, it derives from the Old English *wolcen*, which means “cloud”.

The other lines in Translation B are exact and sometimes obvious matches to the original.

A comparison with another translation might be helpful, since in some ways a modernized translation can be clearer to a modern ear. Translation C -- the translation into modernized meter -- is shown in the list of translations laid out on the page in a modern format. It sounds the same as it would if laid out like Translation B, but the modern layout fits the composition. I decided to lay out on the page the modernized translation in an alternative way to facilitate comparison. The modernized translation is sloppier than the “perfect” translation in alliteration and is strictly in trochic or iambic rhythms, but laid out on the page as below, it otherwise corresponds closely to the Translation B (and to the original). And laid out this way, you can compare it with the “perfect” translation to get a clearer idea of the intent behind the original. To facilitate the comparison, “branches” has been replaced by “spans” for alliteration.

The poplar is fruit-less. Produces it though its  
sprouts without seedlings. Lovely its spans are;  
tow’ring its top is. Its trimming is fair  
with leaves it has grown. The sky it touches!

## *Discussion*

This implicit stanza manifests the fairly positive attitude toward nature that characterizes the poem as a whole. This stanza also has more content related directly to Christianity than do most of its companions.

At the second level of meaning, the tree is used as a metaphor for a person, an organization, or a community. In this sense, some implicit stanzas coach us that we can be good persons without having to fulfill certain kinds commonly-sought roles. We are also advised that some kinds of personal development can occur

without much social value. We are reminded that human value comes in many forms. We are also reminded that spiritual growth is not an even, overall process.

Derived stanzas concern the value of formal organization and a balanced, inclusive movement.

### ***White Poplar Reproduces without Sex and Is Admirable***

The explicit stanza refers to a specific species of poplar tree, since only the poetry on which this is based needs to fit a prosodic scheme requiring a small number of syllables.

White poplar does not reproduce sexually, but it does reproduce anyway by sending out suckers. Moreover, it shows health as well as productivity by growing quite tall and by growing a beautiful covering of green leaves.

Left out of this appraisal is the vulnerability of such a large soft-wood tree. Large branches can be broken off by early snow -- the weight of heavy snow on the leaves can be too much for the branches. Severe storm winds sometimes break tall poplar trunks, bringing down whole trees (but leaving hardwood trees standing). Poplar wood is not much spoken of as fabrication material. But these characteristics do not help the poet(s) express the messages at the higher levels of meaning.

### ***A Woman's Value Does Not Require Giving Birth***

In this implicit stanza, the white poplar is a metaphor for "woman". The production of fruit refers to sexual reproduction. She can have beautiful limbs regardless of sexual reproduction or lack thereof. (Northern European women liked to show the skin on their arms in 950 CE; you know how things are in most countries nowadays). The reference to height of the summit is an allusion to the expression "to hold one's head high", thus referring to pride and self-respect. The leaves refer to material or intellectual production. The height of the tree -- reaching toward the sky -- refers to aspiration for, and achievement of,

progressive mysticism or holiness.

A clue to the metaphorical value of “white poplar” is the Teutonic (or Scandinavian) system of poetic nicknames. This system is described in the *Prose Edda*. Sturluson advises us that plants that are grammatically feminine -- this includes beorc -- give us nicknames for “woman” in Teutonic poetic diction. Likewise, grammatically masculine plant names such as “secg” or the tree “æsc” can represent men (Faulkes, 1987).

The shoots represent a sexless contribution to subsequent generations. The seedless white poplar survives from one generation into another. The plant reproduces because it produces shoots or because people take cuttings and plant them. The new trees are usually genetically identical to their ancestors. This kind of reproduction is analogous to leading by example or giving instructions. There can be less resemblance genetically between human parents and their offspring than between skills, knowledge, or attitudes that adults teach. For example, everyone who learns to do long division by hand or to drive a car does these things very similarly. However, offspring quite rarely appear to be physical clones of their parents. Thus, some spinster who teaches grade-school age people grammar will live into subsequent generations to the extent that she has taught well. And she is a valuable person.

Then there is the matter of dignity. The White Poplar may lack the dignity of meeting a commonly-valued condition, but it finds in itself the means of using its environment quite profitably and with its own quiet pride. It stands tall, grown by an unfolding of its own inner tendencies and from its own efforts and from resources that it tapped into. It does no harm to anyone.

The following deserves some emphasis: the tree is decorated beautifully with leaves it has grown. This implicit stanza suggests that merely letting one’s own soul express itself naturally is both a productive and beautiful thing.

The structure of the original stanza implies an argument or deduction. The reason this woman touches the sky is a combination of things. She is an example

or teacher, she shows pride and self-respect, and she allows the beauty of her own inner nature to decorate her life.

Thus we have an implicit stanza asserting that a woman can have value to those around her, to subsequent generations, and to herself without engaging in sexual reproduction. Of course teaching, setting a fine example, and exhibiting a quiet pride and self-respect are not the only ways to have value as a person. But they are so important that they do not require sex.

### ***Personal Value Does Not Require Sexual Reproduction***

This implicit stanza is the same as “A Woman’s Value...” except that the metaphor is generalized to include both genders of people. This implicit stanza emphasizes that a tree can be a remarkable achiever, although it is devoid of flowers fruits, nuts, or seeds.

### ***Personal Growth Is Multidimensional***

Sexual reproduction is important, but there are other dimensions in which a person can grow. This metaphorical stanza is closely related to “Personal Value Does Not Require Sexual Reproduction”. It emphasizes that there are many aspects of human life that can benefit from a concerted effort at post-adult progress.

Biological reproduction is certainly one of the most emotionally important and yet commonplace events in human life. It is used here as a symbol for any achievement or condition you or others might think you should attain.

If the poplar can stand for any person, then the shoots that project that person into the next generation can represent constructive productivity of all kinds. This would include teaching, but also draining swamps, building bridges and city walls, interpreting the *Old English Rune Poem*, hand-copying books, creating a computer operating system, et cetera. The height of the summit refers to ambition. The sprucing-up with natural-grown foliage is a metaphor for healthy, natural development of a beautiful body and/or selection of clothing. By

consciously self-directing one's development, one touches the divine aspect of human nature.

Thus, "Personal Growth Is Multidimensional" draws our attention to the fact that our lives can be satisfying, fun, and productive in the long run even if some important aspect of our lives is disappointing, humiliating, or sacrificed.

### ***Individual Growth Can Be Orthogonal to Productivity***

In this implicit stanza, the blede represent conventional and socially useful productivity. Hence, personal growth and social attractiveness are orthogonal to conventional and socially useful productivity.

One can attain a lofty dignity, prestige, or self-esteem without having any practical value. A high level of social usefulness is not necessary for a person to be lovely of body and beautifully adorned. Personal growth is often achieved apart from the achievement of socially useful results. For example, one-pointing meditation exercises or psychotherapy can produce personal growth. Of course, one can also grow from the experience of producing something of value (such as bread or car insurance).

Of course, this is not the personal growth for which we engage in progressive mysticism.

### ***A Celibate Person Can Be Holy***

This implicit stanza is derived in part from "A Woman's Value Does Not Require Giving Birth" and "Personal Value Does Not Require Sexual Reproduction". You can look at this as advice to Pagans to respect the Christians' monks, nuns, priests, or other celibate persons. You can look at this implicit stanza as cleric-recruitment propaganda for the Christians. This can be seen as an endorsement of a Christian reform movement. You can see this as some monkish scribe or as a secular scribe with pals in a convent or other commune who is trying to defend them. All of these views are equally valid.

Pagans might need this advice to respect intentionally celibate Christians. It is one thing to try to marry and reproduce and fail. But it might seem an un-natural lifestyle to consciously decide on permanent celibacy when one's own theology and mythology repeatedly and explicitly invoke the idea of a two-gendered world and of childbirth reproduction.

There is another difference between Teutonic Pagan and Teutonic Christian cultures, this one relating to shoots. In current times, monks and nuns often teach children or adults a wide variety of skills and knowledge. But in Europe in the Early Middle Ages, monks and nuns did practically all the school-teaching, and practically all the vocational instruction was one-on-one and secular. It seems very likely that in Pagan cultures, even the instruction in literacy, religion, and arithmetic was one-on-one and not monopolized by full-time priests or shaman types.

### ***The Intellectual in Human Life***

There is a sense in which an intellectual is a fruitless worker, yet good intellectuals are not completely worthless. Only if they share their work can they send up sprouts without producing physically instrumental or physically consumable products. Various branches of intellectual activity are good for a community to have. The intellectual herself or himself is a reminder to the community to place a high value on human intelligence ("heah on helme"). The leaves that decorate this type of work are at least in part the working out of the inner nature of sculptors, dancers, singers, historians, and others. Even this kind of creativity can touch the sky.

### ***How a Temple Can Touch the Sky***

Let the beorc stand for a human organization and the seed that it lacks represent fruit of economic productivity. What kind of organization would this be? A good example would be a temple. How can a temple project itself into future generations of mankind? How can it last; how can it produce shoots?

Does a temple make itself valuable and enduring by hanging Christians or burning Pagans? How about showing some positives to its members and the public?

Its branches are lovely if well organized. Its summit is high if it is well led, and its top leadership is well respected inside and outside the organization. It is decorated with leaves it has grown if it serves its members well by helping them develop in its context. Pretend excellence is not good enough -- it must reach for the real thing.

### ***Endurance by Growth***

This implicit stanza describes how Christianity prospers. It reproduces by sending out missionary shoots. It builds lovely structures -- monasteries, churches, and the like -- “spans”. It elevates a lord as its high summit (a pope, bishop, or king). It develops and displays technically and morally competent members, who make it look attractive. It openly and strenuously tries to touch the heavens, to be in touch with that which is divine.

The oppression, bigotry, and hatred that sometimes are carried on by the unenlightened in the name of Christianity hinder and can pervert this type of development.

A religion does not have to be Christian to apply this wisdom nor to operate like this. It also does not need to have an (unelected) lord in charge to operate like this.

### ***A Well-Ordered Community***

Let the tree metaphorically present an image of a well-ordered society, town, family, or formal organization. These groups reproduce themselves asexually -- settlers leave to start new communities. A well-ordered group is attractive to people, who instinctively crave human association. This means that simply working well can give a community the cohesion it needs to work well. The helm is a nickname for "lord", indicating leadership. Of course a well-ordered

community is well governed, even if it is headed by a board instead of a lord. The community can make itself attractive by growing good leaves in accordance with its own inner nature.

### ***Some Advantages of Having Formal Organization***

This implicit stanza is derived from “How a Temple Can Touch the Sky”, “Endurance by Growth”, and “A Well-Ordered Community”. It might appear that an organization that takes without giving back, that only consumes and redistributes material wealth is an impractical burden. People can achieve enlightenment without the expense and labor. But we can see from those metaphorical stanzas that a well-run formal organization can be a major advantage.

This applies to religious movements, dance collectives, and other areas of human endeavor.

### ***A Balanced Movement***

Is a balanced movement simply individual practice? No, a balanced movement has a social side. It is founded on well-ordered communities and is served by formal organizations. It has places for breeder and non-breeder people. It survives and satisfies by serving a variety of community and member needs. It succeeds in part because of its own growth. It knows how its temples can touch the sky. It provides a home for intellectual productivity.

This implicit stanza is supported by all the stanzas below it.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Poplar or white poplar  
Growth

Productivity/fertility  
Seeds  
Reaching for divinity  
Fruit, nuts  
Offspring  
Sexual reproduction  
Asexual reproduction  
Leaving a legacy  
Physical attractiveness  
Body, limbs  
Head  
Chieftain  
Summit  
Leaves  
Members  
Individual contributions to group strength  
Self-esteem, pride  
Dignity  
Quiet pride  
Tallness  
Approaching deities' levels of holiness  
Approaching one or more deities  
Multidimensionality of life  
Community  
Characteristics of a good community  
Balance

***Contrasts***

Sexual versus non-sexual reproduction  
Physical versus intellectual production

***Advice for Living***

Personal growth s not something that can be given to you; instead it is

something that you do. It is not a matter of one dimension only, so failures or disappointments of one sort need not discourage your ambitions for development – and certainly need not ruin your enjoyment of life.

Women who are not mothers can be well-adjusted and productive feminine persons. For both genders, there are other ways to contribute to the future than to bring forth new persons.

A well-balanced movement has formal organizations and knows how to make them thrive.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D2	5
1b	D2	6
2a	A	6
2b	A	6
3a	A	5
3b	A	4
4a	A	5
4b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	11
2	12
3	9
4	10
Total	42

## Nineteenth Stanza: Noble Persons, Conversation, Inner Comfort<sup>23</sup>

eh byþ for eorlum · æþelinga wyn  
hórs hófum wlanc · ðær him hæleþas ymb  
welege on wicgum · wrixlaþ spræce  
and biþ unstyllum · æfre frófur

### *Translations*

*(A) Transliteration*

is for {earls, nobles, warriors}

{noblemen's, princes', kings'; heroes'; men's; ennobled persons'} {delight, pleasure, joy}

horse (on) hooves {proud, high spirited; bold; exultant; stately, high, august; magnificent}

{where; whilst, in so far as, when} (referring to the horse) him {men; warriors; heroes} {around; near by}

{wealthy ones, rich ones, valuable ones} on {horses, steeds}

{exchange, trade, reciprocate} {talk, statements – “wrixlaþ spræce” is an idiom for “to converse”}

and is (to the) {restless; disturbed, troubled; those on the move}

{ever, always; under any circumstances, in any case} {solace, comfort; benefit}

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<sup>23</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998d).

**(B)**

Ride is for rulers • aristocrats' joy;  
 horse standing proud • while him spearmen surround,  
 moneyed ones mounted • commune by speaking;  
 for the uneasy • always comfort.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

For nobles a ride brings aristocrats' joy.  
 The steed standing proudly while soldiers surround --  
 wealthy warriors mounted, words exchanging.  
 And to restless ones, the horse is a comfort.

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

***The Title Word***

There are two points of view on the definition of the title word. (1) Most students of this poem has translated eh as “horse” (Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Halsall, 1981; Healy et al, 1996; Kemble, 1840; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page, 1972; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1996; Thorsson, 1987, 1993; Shippey, 1972). (2) However, the highly-regarded Bosworth-Toller and Hall dictionaries define the title word more narrowly as “war horse” or “charger” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Hall, 1960). It makes a subtle but significant difference for interpretation whether the eh is specifically a warrior’s horse or a generic horse.

The correct translation is “war horse”, or more precisely, “warrior’s horse”. The focal word has two spelling forms: eh and eoh. In addition, it is sometimes written as just the rune stave instead of being spelled out. I examined every use of eh, eoh, or the stave in surviving Old English literature. The focal word always clearly refers to a warrior’s horse. It is never a charger — the English did not make significant use of chargers before 1066 CE. English soldiers who could afford to use a horse in war rode to the battle site, got off their horses, and formed up for the fight. Eh is one of the less ambiguous title words in this poem.

It is important that the eh is a specialized kind of horse because the stanza talks about a fairly special type of person. This kind of horse indicates something in common among aristocratic soldiers.

### ***Hæleþas***

Most students of the *Old English Rune Poem* are uncomfortable with Line 2 in the “original”: “ðær him hæleþe ymb”. For one thing, some students of the poem want to add a syllable at the end of the verse (making “ymbē”). They also object to the grammatical error: hæleþe is singular dative. Certainly, the intent of the poet(s) was that the warriors are plural and that they are around the war horse.

To Halsall, the most conservative emendation of this line is to put a proper nominative plural ending in hæleþ without adding an “e” to “ymb”. This makes the verse “ðær him hæleþas ymb”. Her case for this is primarily grammatical, and I agree with her grammatical reasoning. Actually, it was common to leave off the inflexional ending when using hæleþ in the plural, so that an absence of an inflexional ending would also be grammatically correct. However, there are esthetic considerations as well. Speaking or singing the line with an inflexional ending on hæleþ is prettier than without. (See Bessinger, 1960; Dobbie, 1942; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981).

### ***Critique of Translation B***

In this case, the “perfect” translation is not as perfect as most of the attempts in this book. This chapter’s modernized-meter translation is more of a success in conveying the emotion as well as the logical sense of the original. However, the terseness of the original conveys a subtle undercurrent of mystery and “something beyond”, and this is better conveyed by Translation B than by the smoother-sounding Translation C.

In line 1 of Translation B, the “on” verse is a perfect match for rhythm and alliteration but not for word sense. This is because the ambiguity in “eh” is not the same as that in “ride”. What is missing in the translation is an explicit reference to war horse.

The translation of verse 1b alters the rhythm from the original to get an exact match of word-sense and alliteration. When we first look at 1b in the original, it appears to be unmetrical, per the following table.

/	x	x	x	/
æþ	el	ing	a	wyn

However, the Anglo-Saxons either did not usually pronounce “æþelinga” as implied in the table above, or the poet(s) intended to use a little license and mispronounce the word to achieve acceptable rhythm. Most likely, the pronunciation of this word for “noble” changed depending on the inflectional suffix, so that the normal pronunciation in the dative case put a secondary accent on “ling” as shown in the following table.

/	x	\	x	/
æþ	e	ling	a	wyn

This gives a Type E verse (fall-and-rise) with five syllables. However, this verse in Translation B is a type B verse with five syllables. The emotional effect of type B is not quite as musical as type E, but at least the translation ends with the positive emotional impact of the lift and stress on “joy”.

Verse 2a is also not a perfect match, but in this instance it is the alliteration that is not perfectly preserved. The patterns of word-sense and rhythm are perfectly reproduced. But in the original the words for horse and hooves alliterate with the word for soldiers (in the “off” verse). In the translation, there is only single alliteration in the “on” verse, where “standing” alliterates with “spearmen” in the “off” verse.

Like verse 1b, verse 2a in the original might look at first as if it were unmetrical.

/	/	x	/
hórs	hóf	um	wlanc

But the original author(s) intended a secondary emphasis on “hóf”, which makes this a four-syllable type E verse. Basically, the rhythm in the previous half-line is repeated in the start of line 2, achieving a lift and emphasis on “proud” -- matching the lift and emphasis on “joy” at the end of line 1. Again, this is for the positive emotional impact. This is the pattern that is matched in the translation.

/	\	x	/
hórs	hóf	um	wlanc

Half-lines 2b and 3a match the original perfectly, but 3b has an extra syllable in the translation -- an unstressed syllable at the beginning. That deviation is not significant, but there is also a word-sense deviation. Namely, the ambiguities of “exchange” in the original are not exactly not matched by the ambiguities of “commune” in the translation. But the “exchange” in the original is a set of actions that build a sense of community and not a generic exchange -- so the loss of ambiguity is not significant.

The translation of line 4 is a practically perfect match to the original except that the translation of 4a is asyndetic.

Translation C has all the ideas of the original’s explicit words, and one can derive from it all the implicit stanzas discussed below. However, it is deliberately written to achieve smoother-flowing phraseology and rhythm. For example, the punctuation in Translation C shows that “rich people on horses” modifies the idea of “heroes surround him”, but the original lacks this clarity.

Thus, Translation C lacks the sense of empirical mystery that was in the original for native speakers of Old English and that is in Translation B for us. A sense of empirical mystery is sometimes used by mystics to shift attention from mundane concerns to religious mystery (this is mentioned in Appendix F). This is main reason that one gets more out of a modernized-meter translation if one is familiar with the corresponding “perfect” (asyndetic) version. As noted elsewhere in this book, the *OERP* is characterized in part by extensive parataxis – which contributes to the nonverbal communication in the poem.

## *Discussion*

Students of rune lore tend to think of stanzas mentioning horses as referring to progress. However, in this stanza, the idea of a person going anywhere – literally or figuratively – is not a major topic in this strophe.

At the least abstract level of meaning, “The Warrior’s Horse” tells us a little about the nature of the warrior’s horse and its place early medieval Teutonic society. Although the discussion emphasizes warriors and their horses, the emphasis is clearly and ironically on non-martial values.

At the second level of meaning, the discussion is of the social psychology of attraction and integration. The chief staves give a general clue to the thrust of the metaphors: “nobles”, “heroes”, “exchange”, and “ever”. This implies an elite who have a lot in common, including something they can count on, a source of security. These ideas are discussed in “Social Pleasure”, “Social Integration is Useful for Social Mobility”, “Insecurity and Possessions”, and “Esoteric Practice Can Be Fun”.

Finally, at the most abstract level, we find a warning about the pitfalls of esoteric ways. “Distractions of Esoteric Practice” says that we can stop at the outside, satisfied to admire the exterior of the building, and not make it in.

### *The Warrior’s Horse*

For an earl, a war-horse is an aristocratic joy. It is a steed standing proudly while it is surrounded by wealthy men on their own mounts trading friendly talk. And for the ill-at-ease, a ride is a comfort.

Militarily, possessing a horse was not much of a tactical advantage in most instances. Since not every warrior had a mount to ride to the battlefield, the field army had to wait for the “straight-leg” infantry to arrive. So possession of an eh

would have been of value mostly as a convenience, a personal pleasure, and to allow membership in an elite fraternity.

What is different about a war horse, as opposed to say a dobbin or draft horse? Both physical and psychological characteristics would have been important in a war horse. Apparently, they were selected for good looks – perhaps in ancient as in modern times, pride was a relatively important value to soldiers. Although these animals were for transportation and were not prepared for direct use in combat, their traits would also reflect a fighter’s emphasis on physical vigor, courage, and high spirits.

Fighters with horses probably liked their mounts and enjoyed taking an interest in this type of animal, not to mention taking an interest in their friends’ proud possessions. The value of such a horse would be partly practical, partly social, and partly personal. Horses can enjoy this kind of attention along with their masters. You can observe this complex horse-ownership phenomenon among horse people nowadays. Except for the horse’s psychology, you can often see the same thing among car and motorcycle enthusiasts.

### ***Social Pleasure***

This implicit stanza is a nuance of “The Warrior’s Horse”. Here, the warrior’s horse is a focus of a kind of joy that is characteristic of mankind. There is something that is a focus for interaction and that passes for the reason for socializing. While the focal object or activity does provide an important attraction, people just like to get together and visit and play. We see a description of a happy gathering of people who have in common attractive social characteristics, similar status, and certain interests.

### ***Membership and Esteem (and Solidarity)***

In this implicit stanza, the horse is a metaphor for methods and equipment used in progressive mysticism -- a means of making progress. The earls, heroes, and other aristocrats represent seekers of enlightenment, with the earls being

leadership persons. The “unstyllum” are those not so comfortable with organizational ties.

Recall that the warrior’s horse was not commonly used in combat, as a charger, but as transportation to the battlefield. Thus, the eh is a good analogy for religion or for religious techniques, which are means for making progress along an exciting path.

Mounted nobles of the Early Middle Ages as depicted in “The Warrior’s Horse” are a metaphor for esoteric practitioners. Mystics can take pride from their practice and skills when their esteemed colleagues socialize together in that kind of interested and equalitarian interaction described in “Social Pleasure”. These colleagues are rich in numinous experience, but also rich in noble qualities that make them valuable to others.

The outward means and methods used by mystics vary greatly in physical size, design, and other aspects. Some of the means used are simple local-national vernacular chants, some are buildings, etc.

“Membership and Esteem”, suggests that people into esoteric mysticism seem to like to compare diets, favorite medication exercises, and other thing much as horse fancier and bikers like to share, to impress, and to be impressed. Just as horses sometimes enjoy getting praising attention, the means often work better for a person if she or he knows the are “cool” in the eyes of colleagues.

Most of us know from personal experience that this sort of sharing builds solidarity among colleagues. The stanza does not say that these extramural socializing sessions are necessary, but we all know they can be quite helpful.

Note that the expression “wrixlap spræce” – literally “exchange talk” – emphasizes the equality of intercourse between participants. In addition to meeting on the same social level, the notion of exchange implies that the participants take a genuine interest in what each other is doing. The pleasing of superiors implied is not boot-licking, and it is not insubordinate. It is just being a pleasant associate.

But this implicit stanza also refers to a person who is not satisfied with being tied to a formal group or who is not able to stay in one for other reasons. Such an individual can get comfort out of the means of progress anyway.

### ***Personality***

People have a natural tendency to reward those who help them feel comfortable and happy. This tends to produce that very common weakness we have for the socially appealing. The ability to integrate socially, especially in recreational circumstances, is often termed “personality”. This implicit stanza tells us that it is quite useful to have “personality” if you want others to allow or help you succeed.

### ***Breaking Down Internal Barriers***

In this implicit stanza, the horse represents the methods and tools used in the struggle for personal progress, and the nobles are metaphors for the multi-faceted human psyche. The conversation is a metaphor for breaking down subconscious barriers to self-knowledge and other awareness -- obstacles to controlling one’s own thoughts.

This implicit stanza therefore calls our attention to a prerequisite for making progress. It suggests that mysticism provides means and methods for achieving progress.

This implicit stanza adds that for a troubled person (which at some time or another is everyone), an increased self-awareness can bring comfort.

### ***Ultra-Healthy Body***

Consider the horse as a metaphor for the human body. Just as a proper war horse is not merely a horse, but a relatively athletic animal, the metaphor indicates a high level of physical capability.

A healthy and functional body is fun to have just for its functioning. But people with beautiful and capable bodies tend to be proud of them. And while just being free of disease or injury is a lot more comfortable than the alternative, most of us are not aware of good health as comfort. But a psychological comfort comes from knowing that one's body can perform demanding and unusual tasks.

Even if all one is actually doing is standing around with colleagues exchanging war or fishing stories or making jokes about the weather, a good body is a part of one's identity.

### ***Imagination and Intellect***

Just as the horse helps one get to the battlefield or marshalling area, imagination and intellect help one use stories, music, and poetry to get into a meditation or worship mode. But once you get there, the technique used to arrive becomes almost irrelevant. Conscious thought gets you there, subconscious thought and non-verbal information is what takes place during the height of the work.

### ***Insecurity and Possessions***

This implicit stanza is concerned with the notions of preventing or coping with emotional difficulty. This is a derived stanza, built on "Membership and Esteem (Solidarity)".

"Insecurity and Possessions" shows how a prized possession can help fulfill important social needs and even help a person find solace. The effect is build on (very common) emotional insecurity.

### ***Religious Advancement and Irrational Needs***

This derived stanza is based on all the metaphorical and derived stanzas below it except for "Breaking Down Internal Barriers". Even the more advanced practitioners of progressive mysticism, including the teachers and formal leaders, have their personal insecurities. And pretty common insecurities tend to remain after considerable practice. You will never get rid of some irrational

behavior because it is built into human nature. (If we take ourselves too seriously, we will all go nuts.)

### ***Peaceful Pursuits Are Paramount***

This stanza is derived from “The Warrior’s Horse”. Cogitate on the irony of the stanza “The Warrior’s Horse” being mostly about non-martial values. What does this irony suggest about the relative importance of each aspect of life?

Of course, when war occurs or is threatened, it is quite important. But mortal combat most of the time is not of prime importance, and people can duly conduct daily affairs with love for life and delight in companions. (And perhaps a little extra poetry just for fun.)

### ***Esoteric Practice Can Be Fun***

This implicit stanza is based on “Religious Advancement and Irrational Needs”. Religion functions well for a person to the extent that it is a means of living better, and living better involves both greater personal efficiency and higher levels of rectitude.

But the point here is that it helps a lot if the work has side benefits which are important. Religion is more fun in the long run, and easier for people to stick with, if they do not just do the straight religion without some interactive social life.

### ***Distractions of Esoteric Practice***

Yes, it can be fun, but might there not be a catch? This is the other side of the coin of “Esoteric Practice Can Be Fun”, for esoteric practices can be distracting. They can be too much fun. This is one of the reasons that many persons avoid Tantric practice – sexual intercourse can be more fun than religion. Less extreme fun can also be distracting. It is certainly the case that there are highs to be experienced in meditation, prayer, and magic. There are also elements of play involved in attempts to achieve an extraordinary state. Costuming (or ritual

nudity), use of paraphernalia, singing, dancing, and other aspects of religious ceremony can be fun in themselves. The fun can help a person relax and achieve higher levels of mental concentration.

But too much of this can be distracting instead of supplemental. Even the most dedicated and intense of us can occasionally be stopped at the door because the door is so desirable. It is just human nature that people will vary in the frequency to which they are distracted by ritual, but anyone can be subject to this distraction. (See also LeShan, 1974).

### *Achieving Concentration*

This stanza is derived from “Breaking Down Internal Barriers”, “Ultra-Healthy Body”, and “Imagination and Intellect”. This is a matter of calming and bypassing aspects of the subconscious and conscious aspects of the human psyche that keep us from being mentally comfortable and free.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Warrior’s horse  
 A fine possession  
 Traits in common  
 Elite persons  
 Elite friends  
 Joy  
 Socializing  
 Mankind’s need to socialize  
 Ostensible basis of socializing  
 The company of an animal partner  
 Prestige  
 Human social attraction  
 Physical health  
 Physical beauty  
 Pride

Imagination

Intellect

Fitting in socially with peers

Associating comfortably with persons of different ranks

Ambition

Recreation

Social recreation

Emotional insecurity

Coping with or reducing emotional insecurity

Social mobility

Physical mobility

Conversation

A prized possession

The challenge to concentrate mentally

The secondary benefits (support from others) of fitting in socially

Fun in religious or magical ritual

Social gratifications in religious or magical social groups

### ***Contrasts***

Normal versus neurotic insecurity

Using ritual effectively versus being distracted by it

Body versus mind

Comfort versus insecurity

### ***Advice for Living***

People have a need to socialize, but they also need ostensible excuses for socializing and some thing or activity around which to structure the interaction.

Material possessions may provide comfort, and convenience, and they may facilitate social access. Indeed, they may be valued as much for their social significance as for their direct uses.

In addition to satisfying normal emotional needs, successful recreational socializing can be therapeutic for those who have an usually distressed condition. And the benefits of socializing for nonrecreational ambitions are not

to be overlooked. So make an effort to fit in socially. Find some combination of activity, characteristic, or possession that will get you in with a group of friends.

Social and material wealth can be employed in unhealthy ways, to flee rather than to resolve causes of psychological unease. Likewise, the more pleasant ritual methods and accessories used by practitioners of religion or magic can become hindrances. You need a strong self-discipline to be the best you can.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	5
1b	unmetrical	5
2a	E	4
2b	C	6
3a	A	5
3b	A	4
4a	C	5
4b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	10
3	9
4	9
Total	38

## Twentieth Stanza: Friends, Cheer, Betrayal, Doom, and Death<sup>24</sup>

man byþ on myrgþe • his mágan leof.  
sceal þeah anra gehwylc • oðrum swican,  
for ðam dryhten wyle • dóme sine  
þæt earme flæsc • eorþan betæcan.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

(a) person is in {mirth, gaiety, joy, pleasure}

(to/by) his (to) {kin; kinswomen, kinsmen} {beloved, desirable,  
pleasant, dear}

{shall, must} {however, although} {"anra gehwylc" – lit. "of every one  
each" – each one}

(from the) {others} {stray, wander; deceive, betray; abandon, desert; depart;  
fail }

{for, because} The Lord {wills; determines; intends desires; commands}

(that is, according to, or by means of) {doom, judgment; judgment ordeal;  
justice; decree, law; command; power, authority, dominion; choice, option;  
glory, magnificence; honor, dignity} (of) his

{that, that (the)} {helpless; miserable, unhappy} {flesh; mankind's carnal  
nature or body as opposed to soul}

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<sup>24</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999a).

(to) {soil; land, cultivated ground} (be) {committed, handed over; entrusted;  
dedicated to a deity (as in sacrifice)}

**(B)**

Man when in mirth is • to mates so dear!  
Still, must every last one • all abandon,  
for the Lord decided • -- law from Yahweh --  
that humble flesh • to earth be given.

**(C) Modernized Meter**

A fellow in frolic is to friends quite dear.  
But each of them must the others betray  
because of the Lord, whose decision it is  
that humble flesh -- to earth return.

**(D) Modernized Meter**

A cheerful person (to comrades) is dear.  
But each of us must --  
the others depart, for The Lord has determined  
(He Himself has chosen)  
that lowly flesh --  
to dirt be given.

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The issues in translation here relate to one's ability to detect the intended irony that is in the original. This is not merely a matter of exact meanings of certain words. Also involved is finding the non-verbal communication in pacing and tone of voice in speaking or singing the stanza.

***Magan***

There is not a word in Modern English that is an exact match for *mága* and that fits into the required patterns of alliteration and rhythm. “*Mágan*: is the dative plural form of a noun for “relative”.

In Translation B, I have interpreted *magan* as “mates”, for this matches the intent of the author(s). Their intent was obviously to indicate people who would be glad that one is happy -- and it is not only one’s relatives would enjoy a cheerful companion. The important notions conveyed by “*magan*” in this context are: (1) people who mutually familiar, and (2) expectation of friendship and allegiance. Ideas of intimacy and permanence of the relationship found in “kinsperson” are missing from “mate” but are not critical to correct interpretation of the stanza.

What is critical to understanding the stanza is the contrast between kin/friends on the one hand and The Lord on the other.

***Earne Flæsc***

The main idea is not necessarily that the flesh is financially impoverished or somehow physically miserable. Obviously, all the *mágas* will eventually die and rot away regardless of their social status or current health.

The main idea is that in contrast to The Lord’s majesty, a human is very lowly. Thus, other expert translators have rendered the focal phrase as “wretched flesh”, “wretched human body”, or “vile carrion” (for examples: Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Osborn and Longland, 1982).

The focus is doctrinal or ideological. Exoteric Abrahamic doctrine -- like any deity-worshipping religion -- stresses the stark difference in status between people and deity.

But this is more than just a matter of deity worship in general. “*Ēarne flæsc*” represents one of the authentic views from European Christianity in the Early Middle Ages. The Christian Irish missionary Columbanus described the course

of human line thusly: “Here is the way the human being’s miserable life runs: from the earth, on the earth, in the earth, from the earth into the fire, from the fire to judgment, from judgment either to Gehenna or to life (everlasting).” (Quoted in Russell, 1994). Such a view is certainly not consensually held nor emphasized nowadays, and it is contrary to every view on the subject expressed insofar as I know by any adherent of any Abrahamic religion.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is a remarkably close rendition of the original, having only minor variances from the overlaying patterns of rhythm, alliteration, and word sense, except in line 3.

Line 1 is an exact match, with the very minor exception that the translation says “mates” where the original uses “relatives” to stand for “friends”.

Line 2 is also an exact match. The translation says “abandon”, which does not include the nuances of “betray/deceive” which are in the Old English *swícan*. However, those nuances were clearly not meant by the author(s), for the stanza says that not that the mortal person intentionally misleads his or her pals, but rather that mortality stops the focal person in dead his or her tracks (if you will excuse the pun).

Line 3 is an exact match except that the second half-line (*dóme sine*) is not fully translated. The second half-line says “law from Yahweh” instead of the original’s “judgment of his” but the translation does convey the emphasis the ancient author(s) intended, that human mortality is the Christian god’s idea. Most readers of this book will recall the Abrahamic doctrine on mortality from *Genesis*. Mortal status for mankind is part of the punishment levied by Yahweh for Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the Tree of Life.

The flaw in the translation of line 3 is in the rendering of “*dóm*”. The ambiguity in the original shows in the transliteration. In the Old English, this ambiguity shows a stronger irony than can be presented with a one-word translation into Modern English.

In half-line 4b, to achieve sonic alliteration in the translation of line 4, you must pronounce “humble” with a silent “h”.

In both the original and Translation B, the “off” verses are all much shorter than the “on” verses. The present author does not endorse the isochronic theory of Old English prosody -- that all the half-lines take the same amount of time to perform. However in “Man”, the irony of the stanza is more apparent if you take the same amount of time so perform each half-line. In other words, if you speak the “off” verses all more slowly (and in a lower tone of voice) than the “on” verses.

The modernized-meter Translation C does not have this feature of softer-spoken half-lines until you get to its last line. If you recite both translations B and C, you can see the emotional non-verbal communication intended by the Early Medieval composer. This will affect your understanding of the explicit and implicit stanzas. It will also help you see the unspoken mystery that the composer intended us to meditate.

Translation C is in iambic pentameter until the last line, which is shortened. As in the traditional-style verse, the last clause should be pronounced following a short pause, which shows as a dash instead of a caesura dot in Translation C. And the pronunciation should be slower and at a softer tone of voice than the preceding parts of the stanza. In Translation C, the reference to Chapter 3, verse 19 in Old Testament is more blatant than in the original.

Translation D was created to capture more of the nonverbal message from the original. Punctuation shows where soft voicing or artificial pauses are used to accentuate the irony.

## *Discussion*

The meanings of “Man” clearly reflect the mingling and contact between adherents of two very different types of religions in Northern Europe beginning

before the Migration Era and continuing afterward. Overall, “Man” shows us a lot about how Teutonic Paganism viewed Biblical religions, especially Christianity.

Syncretic and Christian and Pagan it sees,  
 exploring and winding its way.  
 In its higher levels advice it gives  
 that anyone can use.

Many experts have felt that at least this stanza shows substantial bowdlerization. (For example, see Halsall, 1981; or Paul, 1996). Their conclusion is incorrect. Larrington (1993:139) concluded that “the ‘Christian unity’ of the poem is...a product of the Christian tone of the first and last verses”. Her view is much closer to what we find now, but still wide of the mark.

The main topics here are human social relations, power, benign attitude (or lack thereof) and nature. Relationships highlighted here are (A) between people, (B) between conscious will and the limitation of mortality, and (C) between people and Yahweh or nature.

“Man” alludes to the Bible’s Book of Genesis, Chapter 3 (Catholic Church, 1987: 10-11). That chapter deals with the Fall of Man and Woman. The reader will probably recall that Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of The Tree of Life, thereby gaining knowledge of good and evil. As part of the punishment for gaining divine mental characteristics, Mankind was sentenced to mortality. The literal expression in *The New American Bible* is “...for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return”. A similar expression -- practically a transliteration

#### ***The “Dust” Parallel***

The Early Medieval author(s) might not have been aware of this dusty parallel with the *Genesis*, for *Genesis B* shows this same passage as “þu sweltan scealt” (you shall be mortal). (Bradley, 1995: 9-12, 37-38; Jebson, 1994: *Genesis A, B in the Junius Manuscript*). It is interesting that the Koran also presents the same story as the modern Catholic *Bible*, but without the degrading “you are dust...” phraseology. This is in Al-A’raf, or The Heights, verses 11-25 (Pickthall, n.d.)

-- occurs in Ælfric's prose translation of *Genesis* from a Latin *Bible* (Crawford, 1922a and b) where Chapter 3, Verse 19 ends "for ðan ðe ðu ear dust ond to duste gewyrst" ("for you are dust and to dust [must] convert"). (See also the sidebar, "The 'Dust' Parallel".)

Note the contrast. In the Germanic polytheistic view, death is not necessarily a sign that we have sinned nor that we are being wronged.

It is easier to see the explicit and implicit stanzas and the contrasts in "Man" if one has a background in the fundamentals of Teutonic Pagan religion. Some readers might find it useful to page ahead to the addendum to this chapter before returning to this point and delving into the discussion of specific implicit stanzas.

The possibilities for meaning in this stanza are not fully teased out. Not discussed below is the possibility of an explicit stanza "Degradation" or "Glory", where "dóm" is rendered as "glory". The reader might want to ask herself or himself if such a stanza is plausible. If it is, then try fitting into a revised system of explicit and implicit stanzas. Also not discussed in writing is a possible metaphorical stanza where "soil" is a metaphor for the goddess Earþ and at the same time The Lord is a metaphor for wyrd or a hidden reference to a Pagan deity. An adventurous reader might want to also explore that possibility and what it would mean for the system of implicit stanzas.

### ***Yahweh Decided You Must Abandon Your Comrades***

A human in pleasure is dear to his close associates. But everyone must abandon his or her all others, for it is the Lord's desire – His decree – that the lowly mortal be given over to soils.

### ***The Lord Is Over Mankind***

Here is a warning against hubris. This explicit stanza restates Christian theology. The main point of "The Lord Is Over Mankind" is this: no matter how important you are to other people, no matter how much they want your company, all joys

and social nexuses will be destroyed by the truly awesome might of The Lord and at His unexplained whim. It is common knowledge that this incredible inequality of power between God and Mankind is a major theme of Biblical religion, and that God is not accountable for His actions in Biblical theology. The placing of the body under ground – literally lower than dirt – symbolizes this relationship.

### ***Christian Denial of Wyrd***

This explicit stanza also shows a non-Pagan point of view. “Christian Denial of Wyrd” emphasizes The Lord’s absolute power to carry out His conscious intention. The Lord’s power is highlighted by the repetitious assertions that human mortality is “...The Lord’s will...His judgment”. This irresistible ability to act without regard to human desires or intentions or any other limitation resembles wyrd.

This paragraph summarizes Appendix E. Wyrd is as blind as chance and as powerful as death. Wyrd does not reward the well-behaved nor punish miscreants. Wyrd has no rationale, for it does not serve an intended purpose, although it may have consequences. Wyrd does not have a visible etiology, and it cannot be resisted nor altered. It is not in any sense divine. Wyrd just is. The power spoken of is so great that people are also helpless against it; you have to work around it. And it is more powerful than any deity. Wyrd shows no discrimination between the chronically depressed and the habitually happy.

Medieval English Christians were required to deny wyrd, for they cannot allow a mindless power that is supreme above their Lord. Instead, they must attribute it to divine intention and power, specifically to the will of their supreme deity.

Therefore, Medieval English Christians attached to the term “wyrd” a meaning radically different from the Pagan understanding. This is a subtly veiled denial of wyrd.

The message of “Christian Denial of Wyrd” is related to a passage of King Alfred’s in which he attributes wyrd to God. Following is Stanfield’s (1997b) translation of that passage.

“And we call this God’s forethought and his foresight while it is thought, still with Him in His mind, before it is sent out. After it is fulfilled, we call it wyrd. May each person therefore know that these things are two names and two things: forethought and wyrd. This forethought is the Divine reasoning. It is constant in that the high Creator knows how everything happens before it takes place. Therefore, wyrd is God’s everyday work, both that which we perceive and that which we do not. Moreover, the Divine forethought controls all conditions so that they cannot fall out of order. Therefore, wyrd bestows appearances, positions, aspects, and regulations upon all creatures, because wyrd comes from the knowledge and forethought of the almighty God. He works whatever He wills according to His unannounced plan.” Alfred adds that wyrd changes, but only according to God’s plan (based on Timmer, 1940 & 1941: 130-132).

Alfred’s position is understandable. Since Judaism and religions based on Judaism posit a God supreme over and separate from everything, they cannot admit that wyrd is mightiest. The Christians have to contend that every phenomenon is part of a conscious, well-thought-out, divine plan which is fair to all.

In contrast, the Teutonic Pagan concept of wyrd exists to deal with the (obvious) fact that life is not necessarily fair in all its aspects and that life does not have to make sense. Wyrd relates to the fact that sometimes you must accept and adjust to circumstances that may or may not be pleasant. The use of “wyrd” in Old English is discussed at length in Appendix E.

In attributing the etiology of wyrd to a being, the Christians were following an example provided by at least some Teutonic Pagans. That is, we know that the Scandinavian Pagans attributed wyrd to a *norn*. The English Polytheists attributed it to another giant, *Metod* (Stanfield, 2003). The major difference

between the Christian and Pagan wights who cause *wyrd* is that the Teutonic Pagan norms and Metod represent *mindless* causality which limits even deities.

### ***Wyrd Is Impartial and Disinterested***

In life, justice is not necessarily served. Here, The Lord is a metaphor for *wyrd*. (One might say this is syncretic religion but the metaphor is likely camouflage.) It is The Lord's intention, and therefore his sentence, that every pleasant person will be taken from his or her delightful life and buried. Then the formerly useful and delightful member of society will be degraded into dirt. This literally killjoy attitude does not appear to serve a constructive purpose for The Lord or the people. Hence, our attention is directed to *wyrd*.

### ***Mirth Is a Human Treasure***

We are still at the lowest level of meaning. Although relatives are obliged to be one's friends – a prominent historian refers to them as “friends by blood” (Manyon, 1961a) – they do not have to enjoy it. You can help your kin enjoy relations with you by being a cheerful, fun person sometimes. Your kin will probably do a better job of helping you when you are in need if they have happy memories of your company.

As Paul (1996) interprets this stanza, we are reminded to enjoy life and share the enjoyment while we can. But three-fourths of the stanza is not about how wonderful mirth is on the human level. In “Man”, most of the emphasis is on termination of a person's life and social nexuses at The Lord's whim. In other words, mirth is a *human* treasure.

### ***Growth Stages Left Behind***

In this implicit stanza, the person and the relatives are metaphors for an aspect of the multi-faceted human psyche. The Lord, the supernatural being who governs nature, is a metaphor for the laws of nature. The notion of earth as grave-place implies death, which in turn stands for leaving a stage of life or lifestyle.

There may seem to be something sad about leaving a stage of life or a lifestyle that one enjoyed. As one person told me, “I feel like a part of me is dying”, as that person’s old habits of thought, old attitudes, and old behaviors were discarded.

It can be painful to change the balance of our psyches. Therefore, sometimes people try to refuse to change.

### ***Self-Controlled Transformation***

“Transformation” is supported by “The Lord is Over Mankind” and “Christian Denial of Wyrd”, “Justice is Impartial and Disinterested”, and “Mirth Is A Human Treasure”. In a Teutonic Polytheistic frame of reference, these implicit stanzas raise questions: “Are we really so helpless?” Are we really so dominated by some other sentient being with whom we cannot bargain nor struggle?

Of course we are not really so helpless! You are the lord over your own færyld (lifeway, course of life). You are not supreme, for no one is all-powerful. In addition to the limitations and oppressions of practical necessity, there is a channeling of behavior that results from just being a decent person – you prefer to act in good faith. You must work the art of the possible and accept responsibility to yourself and others.

Among other things, this means that you can leave a condition you find undesirable even if your current close companions would gladly have you as you are. You can transform yourself if this is your own will, backing up your own choice.

The possibility of personal transformation is definitely a message of both Biblical and Teutonic Pagan religions, for it is universal in religions.

***Intentional Transformation is Not Necessarily Easy***

This implicit stanza is based on “Growth Stages Left Behind” and “Self-Controlled Transformation”.

Just seeing the possibility of conscious self re-engineering can cause some discomfort, for this is not something easily done. Frankly, I do not fully live up to the “standards” I find in the *Old English Rune Poem*, not to mention Teutonic Heathen religion as a whole. I certainly cannot transform myself into just anything I want to be, and my inability to do this is not strictly a matter of wyrd. I am limited by my own degrees of self-discipline and awareness. One piece of wisdom emphasized by the Christians that we can all learn is the non-imperfectability of each of us. There certainly are standards of behavior in any system worthy of the name “religion”, but much of what we see in religious lore constitutes advice or standards rather than laws.

***An Alien God***

The implicit stanza “An Alien God” is supported by all the lower-level implicit stanzas except “Growth Stages Left Behind”, “Self-Controlled Transformation” and “Intentional Transformation is Not Necessarily Easy”.

It is fascinating that valid types of religion can differ so greatly. We have to keep in mind that although we might have difficulty making sense of someone else’s religion within our favorite system, there are people for whom that other religion works. Certainly, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have done enormous numbers of people a lot of good.

“Man” bears down heavily on the logical consequences of postulating a deity supreme over absolutely all. The content of this implicit stanza is a critique of Biblical theology from the Germanic Heathen perspective, for ancient native Germanic religion differed radically from Bible-related religions. Basically, in the Germanic Heathen view, Yahweh is in this regard more like a hostile giant than a deity. He is not of us, He is not like us, it is not even clear that He likes us.

Following is a very brief consideration of Bible-related theology, then a corresponding overview of Teutonic Pagan theology.

There is also a difference between the perfect and not-fully-intelligible Yahweh and the imperfect but more transparent polytheistic deities. As “The Lord Is Over Mankind” reminds us, Bible-related religions posit a deity who is all-powerful and all-knowing. As a logical consequence, denial of wyrd causes a difficulty for them, as they must explain how it comes to pass that “Justice Is Not Always Served” without holding their God responsible for evil or simply changing their theory of godliness. Ultimately, Bible-based religions are forced to posit a deity that so unlike us that standards of attitude and behavior cannot be applied to Him. Of course, this contradicts the claim that humans are somehow made in their God’s image. Essentially, the difficulty is that so much is claimed for one wight the theodicy is needed.

Teutonic deities are more readily understandable because they are more limited, as are perhaps most poly-dieties. Members of the Teutonic pantheon have emotions, make mistakes, and experience situations analogous to those of people. The behavior of Teutonic Pagan wights (including deities and other beings) and the codes of conduct to which those wights are held are understandable from a human point of view. As we see them in the myths, Pagan wights furnish us with examples of what to do and what not to do. This holds regardless of our gender, the time and place in which we live, or our ethnicity. The sense of familiarity that we have with Germanic deities is contributed to by their resemblances to us as individuals and to people we have experienced.

### ***Choose Your Religion***

All of the previous implicit stanzas taken together constitute a statement of comparative religion from a sophisticated polytheistic standpoint. This statement is fair but biased, and it implicitly raises an interesting question. We can see that there are aspects of different religions that are not equally comfortable to everyone, and the discomfort can reach the point where some people simply

cannot practice some religion or other. Indeed, some cannot use a religion or the progressive mysticism in a given religion at all.

Therefore it is reasonable for a person to consciously evaluate and choose her or his own religion, although there certainly people who would have you do otherwise. Make your own choice based on what is best for you!

Many persons in cultures dominated by Biblical religions have had their views of religion narrowed by propaganda which depicts Biblical religion or monotheism as the only religion. Consequently, many bright people opine that all religion must be characterized by the features of Biblical lore. Therefore, they deny themselves the benefit of any religious experience.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Man as mortal

The God of the Bible

Will, conscious desire

Devaluation of the animal aspect of mankind

Esoteric perception of deity or a deity

Physical degradation

Social degradation

Moral degradation

Ethical standards

The human body

Christianity, other Biblical religion

Wyrd

Etiology of wyrd

Denial of wyrd

Justice

Unfair punishment

Original Sin

Fairness

Death

Mirth

Social nexus

Social attraction between humans

Responsibility of the capable to care

Kin

Value of one person for another

Domination

Awe

Choice

Nature of divinity

Variations in the appeal of a given religion to different people

Frustration

Betrayal

Departure

### ***Contrasts***

Human versus deity

Pagan versus Biblical concept of deity

Fairness versus unfairness

Easily related-to versus alien

Freedom versus lack of choice

Friendly versus cold

Religious mystery versus nonreligious mystery

Taking charge of your own life; choosing/evaluating religions

A joyful life versus a hole in the social fabric

Positive attractions verses anger

Humane verses strict

### ***Advice for Living***

Mortality is intrinsic to human nature, as are transitions between stages of development. Concepts of deity differ greatly as between Biblical and Teutonic Pagan religions, in large part due to the presence of *wyrd* in the Teutonic Pagan system.

You can take charge of your own life. Among other things, you can choose for yourself a religion that seems most natural and comfortable to you. Anyone can take a meta-religious point of view and evaluate for his or her own purposes some alternative points of view that would be incomprehensible from each others' relatively specialized perspectives.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	5
1b	A	4
2a	B	6
2b	A	4
3a	A	6
3b	A	4
4a	B	4
4b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	10
3	10
4	9
Total	38

## **Addendum to Chapter 20: Comparison of Teutonic and Biblical Religions**

This is a selective and very brief comparison, limited to issues related to the stanza “Man”.

This addendum begins with a brief overview of religion itself. The tact of recognizing common ground might be helpful, since much of Chapter 20 presents negative critiques of religions that are very dear to the hearts of very many people. There might very well be outright mistakes in the following discussion. However, one reason many people will disagree with the following characterization of one or another religion is that they want to be Pagans, Christians, Jews, Moslems, but they cannot accept the fundamentals of such religions.

### ***A Brief Consideration of Religion***

This section reveals a meta-religious philosophy. First, these are the characteristics of a religion.

A religion is morally judgmental. As an organization, it makes moral demands on members as condition of membership or esteem. As a belief system, it makes moral demands as a condition of self-esteem or some other form of psychological comfort.

Religion offers psychological comfort. This comes in the form of providing a theoretical explanation of morally significant events. It also comes some form of practical relief from psychologically stressful conditions. This practical relief can come from solitary practice or from association with co-religionists.

It helps you live a better life -- in the here-and-now. In part, this is achieved by means of its moral demands. In part, this comes from

simply teaching wisdom. For at least some adherents, progressive mysticism may be a contributing factor.

Religion as a belief system posits at least one living, spiritual being and/or it posits an afterlife. The spiritual being would be a deity or guardian spirit or a dead ancestor, or a nature spirit. The spiritual being is involved in the system of morals or the rites that also characterize religion. The afterlife would also be involved in the moral system of the focal belief system.

Every religion has group and solitary rites. Although they vary in how orthopraxic they are, the overall pattern of rites in each religion is distinctive to that religion. These rites function to maintain group as well as express a belief system orthodoxy, although the relative importance of these functions may vary from one religion to another.

This definition corresponds to the way people normally use the word “religion”. All of Buddhism meets this definition because some varieties are atheistic but posit an afterlife as a reward of right living. Teutonic Paganism meets this criterion although some of its varieties offer no afterlife reward nor punishment, for all Teutonic Pagan denominations posit spiritual beings as exemplars of human conduct. Although anyone can find in the bible advice to “judge not lest ye be judged”, this has to be understood in context with condemnation of sin. Confucianism meets the definition insofar as it includes ancestor worship. Unitarian-Universalism, as practiced in the USA, includes persons whose approach to UU does and persons whose approach does not meet this definition. But friends in UU who are atheists sometimes describe themselves during informal conversations around a table as opposed to “religion”.

Paul Bunyon-type tall tales that “explain” natural phenomena are not required in this definition, although they are almost universal.

There is not a perfect, universal religion that is best for everyone. Each adult can decide for himself or herself how well a religion does or does not fulfill its major functions for him or her. (See also She-Wolf, 1997.)

This definition highlights the point that Abrahamic and native Germanic religions have some important things in common just because they are religions. In the next section, I will show how these two types of religion differ radically.

This is in contrast with Clifford Geertz' (1966) classic definition, but if we apply his definition strictly, it allows inclusion of secular political extremist ideologies as “religions”.

## ***Selective Contrast of Biblical and Germanic-Heathen Religions***

This section contrasts Germanic heathen and Biblical religions in regard to: community, authority, written lore, and theodicy. It is possible that in respect to these issues, Teutonic Polytheism is typical of many European polytheistic religions – or of all Pagan religions. On the other hand, Northern European or Teutonic polytheistic religions may be unique in regard to some of these five issues. Pagan religions vary greatly, and the present author is not an expert on all Pagan religions.

This is pretty much a one-sided presentation. However, I do not intend for this addendum to amount to a put-down, for each religion has its own strengths.

### ***Community***

The most basic lesson of any polytheistic pantheon is that no person is an island. We need cooperation of others for many practical purposes, and we need a feeling of community. Also, polytheistic pantheons show relationships of widely varying degrees of cooperation and conflict among widely differing beings. The metaphor of a Polytheistic pantheon posits as one of its most basic tenets that “it takes all kinds of people to make a world”.

Of course, all religions offer a moral code or set of guides that call for responsible and appreciative attitudes toward other people. These lessons have to be presented in a different way in any religion that posits just one deity or that insists that there is one deity of which all others are just aspects, hypotheses, or derivatives.

In the stanza “Man” the original authors seem to perceive a hostility or disregard of human’s enjoyment of community on the part of Christian dogma.

### ***Authority***

Authority relations are much more emphasized in Biblical religions than in Teutonic polytheism.

In the Teutonic pantheon, there is no commander. Wodan is called the chief or king of deities, but in most myths involving discussions among deities he does not even chair the meetings. Only in a few of the myths related by Saxo is Wodan shown acting as someone who is in charge. Wodan’s kingship of Asgard is analogous to the pre-Migration Age Germanic kingships described by Tacitus. Tacitus wrote that “The authority of their kings is not absolute nor arbitrary....The commanders rely on example rather than...rank.” In Teutonic Polytheist lore, commands from any deity to all mankind are as scarce as they can be (Crossly-Holland, 1980; Elton, 1905; Faulkes, 1987; Hollander, 1962; Hollander, 1964; Mattingly and Hanford, 1970: 107).

By contrast, Biblical lore is replete with commands from Yahweh or with scolding people to submit to Him. This authority relationship is the major theme of the *Bible*, appearing so frequently that no citations are necessary.

The stanza “Man” highlights the doctrine that the supreme deity is so very domineering in Christian dogma.

***Fundamentalism***

Fundamentalism arose among Protestants in the early Twentieth Century, and now manifests itself in all Biblical religions. The term “Fundamentalism” refers to certain fundamentals, including “literal” interpretation of the *Bible*, which fundamentalists feel is necessary to a strong Christianity. Strictly literal interpretation of the *Bible* is hindered by its self-contradictions and the usual problems with ancient documents. (Appendix A has a brief description of editing ancient documents, and there are references to common issues on philology throughout this book). But Christian Fundamentalism is characterized by as-strict-as-possible adherence to the infallibility of the Scripture in matters of morals and scientific fact. Fundamentalists of all Abrahamic faiths turn to more literal interpretations because they seek reinvigoration and renewal of purity in the face of modern religious liberalism (Barnes & Noble, 1996; Farah, 1994; Houghton-Mifflin, 1993; Learning Company, 1996; Macmillan Reference, 1987).

Fundamentalism is not possible in Teutonic Heathenry because of the literary base of this religion. Teutonic Heathen myths of the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* are surrealistic. They are not an attempt to present historical or natural-scientific facts. Many of the stanzas of the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme* and the one stanza of the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* do not make sense at the lowest level of meaning. As you have seen in this book, the *OERP* the lowest level of meaning tends to show little religious relevance, and what religious content it does show at the lowest level can be misleading.

***Theodicy***

Theodicy is needed in Abrahamic religions because such religions have to explain how the existence of evil is consistent with the descriptions given of Yahweh/Allah.

The way out for Christians, Jews, and Moslems is to contend that life is really fair, but we are not able to understand it because our minds are finite and Yahweh is infinite.

Theodicy is not needed in Teutonic Paganism. It does not claim that life has to be fair. No deity nor combination of deities in that pantheon is all-powerful and all-knowing. No one characterizes any of them as simply a deity of love and caring. None of the Germanic Pagan deities are not equally present everywhere at all times, nor is the entire pantheon. (Except, of course, that Earþ is omnipresent on or as our home planet.)

The idea that these deities have limits is symbolized by wyrd (Appendix E discusses wyrd in detail). In Teutonic Paganism, the etiology of wyrd is symbolized by mindless giants, not by deities. The *OERP's* view of divinity rules out the possibility that wyrd could be divine. That is, a deity is a conscious and thoughtful wight concerned with fair play, justice, responsibility, rationality, intelligence, intention, and knowledge.

Thus, the authentic Pagan concept of wyrd is incompatible with Christian theology.

In the relatively narrow focus of the stanza “Man”, the ultimate difference between worship of The Lord and the alternative is this matter of theodicy.

## Twenty-First Stanza: Confidence, Control, and Environment<sup>25</sup>

lagu byþ léodum	langsum geþúht
gif hí sculun néþun	on nacan tealtum;
and hí sæ-yþa	swyþe bregað;
and se brimhengest	bridles ne gymeð.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{large body of water; water} is (to) people

{long-lasting; extensive} {opined, thought (of)}

If they {should; happen to; have to, must; ought to} {venture; dare, be so bold as to}

In (a) {boat, ship, vessel} {unsteady, unstable; precarious, untrustworthy, unreliable}

And (acc.)them (the) waves

{Very much, violently; powerfully} {astonish; frighten, terrify}

And the sea steed

{(gen. – “gyman” takes genitive or acc.) bridle, rein; curb, restraint} (does) not  
{heed, take heed of; be attracted to}

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<sup>25</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999b).

**(B)**

Water to people • seems very wide  
 if they must go boldly • on boats unsteady,  
 and them sea surges • strongly frighten,  
 and the sea-stallion • steering ignoreth.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

Sea is by people considered extensive  
 when boldly they venture in vessels unstable,  
 and severely scary are the swells of the water,  
 and the boat they rely on -- is out of control!

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

The “original” is relatively clean regarding this stanza, partly because the words have less ambiguity than words in some other stanzas. Editing is discussed in more detail in Halsall’s (1981) book.

***Sæ-Ýþa***

The document we have to work from has “sea” and “waves” as separate words, but it has no inflectional ending for “sea” as an adverb. The inflectional ending would be awkward to pronounce, and might have been routinely omitted, but most editors simply emend this to a compound word.

***Naca***

Some translators (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Dickins, 1915) would render *naca* as “bark”. This is an implausible translation, since a bark is a three-to-five-masted sailing vessel. At most, a bark would have been a very rare phenomenon in Northern European cultures before 1000 CE (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

English ships of the time are discussed in Chapter Sixteen and in the “Discussion” section of this chapter.

### ***Gymeð***

The original has “gym”, which is grammatically incorrect. All editors of this poem agree on adding “eð”, the correct case ending.

I consulted six dictionaries and examined several uses in the corpus of Old English to get this word right. This is because it is markedly ambiguous, taking among its Modern English definitions two opposites (controlling or controlled by). Most of the ambiguity is in Modern English, for the word actually expresses a single idea. It is related to the notion which is common to our notions of “to care for” or “to take care of” or “care about”. For example, “gýmeleas” translates directly as “careless”.

### ***Critique of Translations B and C***

The “perfect” translation is an exact match to the original in every half-line. That is, Translation B and the original show identical overlaying patterns of rhythm, alliteration, and word-sense.

One’s technique of recitation of Translation B should emphasize that the boat is out of control. “Lagu” benefits from modulation in pitch, volume, and pace in the last whole line as well as from a definite pause in the middle of the line. At the first word on line 4, the speaker immediately slows slightly, then pauses at the end of the on-verse, then continues at the slower pace throughout the b-verse. This should communicate a subjective feeling of menace or alarm.

To the modern ear, the dactylic Translation C sounds more like poetry than does Translation B. Therefore Translation C more clearly conveys the full range of verbal and non-verbal communication that an Early Medieval audience would have found in the traditional meter. Also, punctuation in Translation C provides a clue to the performance of the last clause.

The performance of Translation C benefits from the same modulation and the same pause in the last line as you use in Translation B.

### *Discussion*

One of the most basic messages in the *OERP* is the advisability of taking control of one's own life. This issue is especially emphasized in "Lagu", and it is discussed here in terms of peace of mind.

At the lowest level of meaning, "Lagu" speaks to us of nearness to disaster on the water. The main thing we know about this situation is that it is scary. We do not know that the situation is hopeless, that the people will succeed, or if some other outcome will result. No one is ever a fearless and invincible hero in this poem. Albertsson (2011: 146-147) is correct to note that the journey is not in the scope of discussion and that this stanza does not mention nor hint at anything inherently evil.

This is a power struggle between mindless nature and people, with a vehicle as the focus of the struggle. Nature is winning this time: the folks are going nowhere, and they are in danger of being destroyed.

The idea is that the boat needs to be pointed into very heavy waves to avoid getting tilted over on its side by a huge breaker. And the people or person in the boat have lost their ability to do that.

To understand "Lagu", it is necessary to realize that a boat can have a crew and passengers, just a crew, or only one person inside.

Of course, it is not necessary to visualize a boat from the culture that produced this poem. The poem is not that culture-bound. Any boat of any description that has gone out of control in big breakers is consistent with this stanza. You can visualize something from the movie *The Perfect Storm*.

However, the reader might be curious about ships in Northern Europe during the Early Middle Ages. Germanic sea-going ships were long, narrow, and shallow. For example, the remains of a ship found in a burial at Hedeby imply a length of 17-20 meters and a width of 2.7 to 3.5 meters. Typically, they were less than 2 meters deep. You want a boat like that headed into heavy seas, because a big wave coming to the side can tip the boat over. So a loss of steering in heavy seas can be a severe problem. It is also important that the people at sea are in danger of being lost in a vast, trackless waste if they cannot make their craft go where they need to go. If the people in a boat without steering make land, they may be the mercy of strangers (Bill, 1997; Howarth, 1977: 72-73; Magnusson and Pálsson, 1969: 90-93).

If a small wooden boat capsizes, one or more of those who formerly were aboard can often use the boat as a float after capsizing – if the boat was not too heavily loaded. Sometimes, a small boat can be righted after capsizing, but boats that size are typically not seaworthy. In case of a breakup, you *might* find a piece of wooden debris from the boat big enough to be worth hanging onto, but people can be injured in the crash and have difficulty hanging on or swimming to floating debris.

Chief stave analysis reinforces the impression that the topic of “Lagu” is neither water nor a body of water. The four chief staves shown in Translation B are: wide, vessel, strongly, and steering. These clues help us discern that the focus of “Lagu” is the subjective impression people have of the sea when seafarers must make a crossing that seems unusually risky.

Some interpreters of “Lagu” see it as a storm suddenly arising after a boat is far from shore. However, arrival of a storm is not necessarily what scares the boat people.

Some students of this poem opine that “Lagu” is somehow related to traveling to an afterlife or to reconciliation with the Abrahamic deity. Those ideas are dealt with in an addendum to this chapter.

***Terror on the Water***

People opine the sea to be quite extensive when three criteria are met: (1) they have to go out on boats that are unstable, (2) the swells are frightening to them and (3) the ship cannot be steered. We get the impression that if the people knew *this* would happen, they would not be out in such a vulnerable boat.

The understatement (that the water seems a long way across) shows a dry sense of humor on the part of the original poet(s). Somehow, dangerous situations and dry humor seem to be appropriate company.

It is important to note that people on the boat cannot do anything about dangerous swells by confronting the waves head-on. They cannot avoid a side collision that swamps the boat or tips it over.

Also note a nuance in the wording, which is important for understanding metaphorical stanzas. We are told that the waves frighten, but not that they are breakers nor billows, nor that the people see a rogue wave. The waves might be large enough to tilt the boat over on its side, or they might not yet have gotten to that size. Of course the potential for capsizing exists even if it is not immediately present.

The issue of control over the boat leads us back to issues of character – courage and perspicacity. Is the dare necessary? To some students of the *OERP*, “Should” implies that it is. This might be persons going out on the water for themselves or heroically helping others. They might have been fully aware of the chance they were taking, or they might simply be foolishly inept. Here we see an image of voluntary risk-taking which is regretted during the period of risk. Many of us have had experiences like this – events that we are glad to have undergone but would not likely repeat. Of course, adrenaline junkies do voluntarily repeat this kind of experience.

By depicting the boats as “untrustworthy”, it is suggested that shrewd people would not use the boats in question on the open sea. This terror is experienced by those who have the courage to risk willingly when they must, by those who think not of danger, and by brave fools. The emotion is common, but for almost

all people it is aversive. For some few, this would be a degree of emotional trauma from which they would not easily recover.

### ***When Available Technology is Insufficient***

In this implicit stanza, the boat is carrying a group. The boat is a metaphor for methods and materials in use at the time. The water is a metaphor for all of nature.

If the technology is not trustworthy and the people cannot control it, they cannot confront even moderate difficulties, not to mention make progress. Nature might overwhelm them at any moment. This happens to human communities confronted with unusually cold and lasting winters, tsunamis, or severe droughts, to indicate a few examples. But it also happens when they denude their neighboring hillsides for firewood, exterminate or expel the game animals in their area, or contaminate their local water source. Overpopulation is more a matter of how people live than how many of them occupy and area.

. You are going to face vagaries of nature – that much is a given. Therefore, you must do what you can about your technical resources.

A major attraction people have to effective technology is that it reduces a feeling of insecurity. Technology has a defensive emotional role in our lives, if we use the right technology.

### ***Poverty Causes Anxiety***

This metaphorical stanza refers to the means and materiel available for coping with nature at the individual level.

### ***Imminent Body Crash***

Consider the water as a metaphor for the flow of events, and the waves are trouble. The boat is one's living corpse. The bridle symbolizes the mind's control over the body.

When people no longer can use their bodies to cope with challenges, they tend to not enjoy life, to put it mildly.

### ***Personal Depression***

In this implicit stanza, the water represents the individual's surroundings. The untrustworthy boat is a human mind not fully ready to cope with the bigger challenges in its environment. The waves -- regardless of how big or small they are -- seem quite threatening. And the "bridle" is one's ability to control his or her own emotions and thoughts. The consequence is misery and fear.

### ***Lack of Self-Confidence Accompanied by Lack of Self-Control***

Consider the boat as a metaphor for the personality that encompasses the mind or as the mind that manifests the soul. Nonreligious readers will likely prefer the first concept and religious readers will prefer the second, but both ideas get you to the same place. The idea is that there is an inner core of mental activity and an outer area.

The bridle is the means of mental self-control. This is a matter of skills and will power. Sometimes one is intellectually aware of what one is doing, but impulses, anxiety, or fear take over anyway.

The waves are events that originate from without. These events might carry the individual where he or she wants to go, or they might not. They might be strong and violent, or they might be gentle. But if one is afraid of such changes, they can be even worse when one lacks self-control.

In this implicit stanza, the focal person cannot handle social reality: afraid of change and unable to control himself or herself.

***Grossly Underdeveloped Divinity***

Here, too, the boat is a metaphor for the mind. In this metaphorical stanza, the boat is untrustworthy because it lacks adequate intellectual development. The intellect does not understand enough of empirical reality. The personality also lacks self-control. Because enlightenment requires not just an ethical inclination but awareness of one's surroundings and rational self-control, attempts to get enlightened can be unpleasant for some people.

This implicit stanza depicts a personality dominated by lower-animal impulses. As some people say, they know others who are "just animals".

***Intoxicated Incompetence***

This metaphorical stanza, is just a nuance different from "Lack of Self-Confidence Accompanied by Lack of Self-Control". Here, the boat is untrustworthy because it is intoxicated by chemical means or by greatly exaggerated and misplaced enthusiasm. For such a person, the significantly reduced ability to handle normal or exceptional events can make any waves scary. But when a lack of self-control is added to the mix, the intoxication is not as much fun as it is said to be.

It is probably a coincidence, not a cultural survival, that this is an allusion to the verbal expression, "bad trip" that appeared in America's 1960's CE drug subculture.

***Mental Strength Enhancement and Mysticism***

Consider the boat as a metaphor for the psychological structure that helps the human mind function and that makes a distinct personality. Like a boat, the personality and its subconscious and conscious defenses can leak or have defective parts or leaky joints or the equivalent of rusty rivets. It can be frail or ineffective to the point that it can be easily upset.

The waves, as in other implicit stanzas, represent the flow of events in the person's environment, but in this case it is the mostly unseen part of the

environment that Eliade (1959) would call “sacred” and Thorsson (1987) would call “numinous” and that Otto (1950) would call “the holy”. In this book, I usually refer to this “sea” as the vast extent of religious mystery.

A function of mystical exercises is to relax one’s psychological defenses and strengthen one’s confidence in confronting this vast, mostly invisible sea. Did you ever, while driving a car in easy traffic or taking a shower, get an insightful idea, a perception into some problem or another person’s attitudes or the meaning of a song? Mystics deliberately create this kind of open-mind situation by one-point meditation, dance, and other means.

***Progressive Mysticism Is Not For Everyone***

This implicit stanza is at the metaphorical level.

If the mind is on edge,  
 unsure of itself;  
 if soul's own control  
 cannot turn to face facts;  
 then nowhere you'll go.  
 There won't be any trip.  
 You just shouldn't venture  
 on myst'ry's sea.

Progressive mysticism is not to be forced on people. One should not try to entice into it folks who are not ready. It can actually be counterproductive for very insecure and not well-disciplined people. They have to grow outside of this practice.

In an article entitled “Toxic Religion”, a Wiccan priestess spoke to this issue among others. “Dangerous...cultic behavior and cultic entrapment need not be the result of a deliberate plan or a charismatic leader bent on destroying your life....The problems may arise so gradually...that no one sees what’s happening....[Some people] become involved because they...have difficulty establishing an identity for themselves....In other cases, a person may find, in a

powerful way, exactly what he or she has been seeking and gifts the source of their enlightenment [her term, meant ironically] with undeserved adoration....Anyone who has...taken on the responsibility of running a church group, coven, or other dedicated group, will understand the hard work involved. Sometimes men and women with strength and determination accomplish their goals at the cost of the welfare of their weaker members....” (She-Wolf, 1997). Although the writer used a nom de plume, I met this person many times and can attest that her experience and scholarly knowledge made her an adequate expert.

And the other side of this is well stated in the Christian *Bible* (in the Sermon on the Mount, although it is a religious universal. “Do not give to dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces” (Barker et al, 1995).

### ***Paralysis in Face of the Social Environment***

Here, the water is a metaphor for a group’s social environment. There is usually change going on in the social environment, sometimes it is a matter of slow currents and gentle swells, sometimes the waves are giant breakers, and sometimes the water surface is between these extremes. The boat is the culture or subculture that keeps a group together and separates it from the outside. The “bridle” is that aspect of the group’s structure that gives it self-control: leadership, rules, symbols, technology.

These things are issues if the group has not prepared to deal with outside persons or forces.

Most particularly, a group must sometimes have the flexibility to confront serious challenges head-on just to keep itself upright.

### ***Traffic with Outsiders***

The weak group does not want to face outsiders. Matters are even worse if the group is not internally governed so that it can take a proper attitude to directly deal with the outside world.

In “Lagu”, the boat’s weakness and lack of steering are not the result of storm damage on the current trip. We know this because the people have to go out on the untrustworthy craft. We also see that the stanza does not mention severe weather.

This implicit stanza is derived from “When Available Technology is Insufficient” and “Paralysis in Face of the Social Environment”.

### ***Deficient Ideology and Governance***

This stanza is suggested by “Paralysis in the Face of the Social Environment”, “Traffic with Outsiders” and “Grossly Underdeveloped Divinity”.

A group, such as a religious denomination, a political party, or some extremist outfit that is a little of both religious and political, can be burdened with a “boat” that is elaborate but not really well developed. In its lore, it could have stories that do not imply a moral. In its moral codes, it could have jury-rigged laundry-lists of ideal behaviors instead of inferences drawn from wisdom poetry or meaningful myths. These weaknesses of intellectual structure and self-steering would make it difficult for the group to deal with outsiders.

This can be seen in some Teutonic reconstruction gatherings. Sometimes the principle Teutonic myths are presented as stories for entertainment (like Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyan myth) suitable for persons 8 years of age and up. There is no philosophical depth perceived. The Nine Noble Virtues of The Troth and several variants presented by other organizations are not derived from their lore.

Ideology is needed to keep groups and individuals from being in disarray. If a community does not have a religion or a systematic and comprehensive secular philosophy, there may come a time when serious challenges will become a nightmare. But just having a

#### ***Ideology***

Some people regard “ideology” as a hypercomplicated, anti-common-sensical set of ideas to mislead or confuse people. An ideology is “the body of doctrine, myth, belief, etc. that guides an individual, social movement, social institution, class or large group” (Barnes and Noble Books, 1996). This relates to “Paralysis in the Face of the Social Environment”.

guiding philosophy is not enough. Flexibility is needed to cope with challenges that could otherwise destroy the members.

This is the time to discuss political correctness. In the USA in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries, “politically correct” usually was used to denote hyperconformist leftism or extra-considerately good manners. However, the term comes from Soviet culture. It refers to beliefs that are at variance with reality but consistent with party policy. For example, Stalin believed in the Lamarckian Hypothesis. The reader who is not already familiar with this example can read about it in several sources, but is at this URL: “<http://www.wired.com/thisdayintech/tag/lamarck/>”.

Political correctness is bad use of ideology and/or socially sick ideology. Using the term in a narrower or altogether different sense can blind people to an important consideration.

### ***Groups in Alien Surroundings***

Consider a large body of water, a place where mankind is literally out of its element, as a metaphor for alien cultural surroundings. The boat stands for group structure and values, but the group is not large enough to withstand rough seas. The waves are any trouble, large or small, occurring outside the group. The trouble is anything that would affect the little group in question, not necessarily anything directed specifically at them. The bridle is the members’ ability to control their own group.

These groups can be vulnerable to crop diseases, civil wars, totalitarian governments, economic depressions, and other catastrophes. Sometimes their neighbors or the host culture hates them.

This implicit stanza speaks of Christian colonists and missionaries in Early Medieval Pagan cultures (not in England), Pagans in Christian societies, Christian missionaries in Communist countries in modern times, urban American Indians trying to maintain ethnic identities, and the like.

If their subculture is not taken over by the host culture and manipulated against their will, they are OK. Otherwise, misery occurs.

### ***We Are in Trouble Back Here***

This one is derived from “Paralysis in the Face of the Social Environment”, and “Groups in Alien Surroundings”. If you are in a severely persecuted minority, such as English Pagans in the 900’s CE, this is how life looks. You are subject to torture and execution if you live according to your own conscience and integrity, and there is nothing you can do about it. But not just the actual Pagans would be affected; even persons of mixed religion or liberal Christianity would have to live in fear even worse than that of Blacks in the American South in the 1890’s CE.

It is as if, in addition to the wisdom poetry, someone left us a note to complain of their distress. Or, perhaps, so sensitize us not to treat others like this.

Although it is impossible for us to heed the distress call by rescuing our predecessors, we can pass on our concern to contemporaries and our successors. Not only by reconstructing and preserving the past Anglo-Saxon religion, but by supporting religious tolerance and conservation everywhere. The First Amendment to the US Constitution is not an ethical principle; it is a legal manifestation of a practical necessity (for domestic peace) *and* of an ethical principle. The ethical principle is in our hearts and -- in the final analysis -- in our hands.

### ***A Petty Approach Can Scare Adherents***

In this implicit stanza, the element of water represents the vast extent and depth of religious mystery, not fully visible from anywhere. The untrustworthy boat is a religion that does not include a mystical approach. The psychological or intellectual work is outside the scope of the system, or the means of meditation are simply excluded. The waves are challenges to confront the tasks of progressive mysticism.

This depicts a religion whose adherents are terrified of mystical challenges. This is not a question of the numbers of adherents nor the wealth of their organization. In *Runelore*, Thorsson (1987: 132) seems to be referring to this message when he says that the runester needs a good boat.

### ***Whole-Person Development***

This implicit stanza is derived from “Poverty Causes Anxiety”, “Imminent Body Crash”, “Lack of Self-Confidence Accompanied by Lack of Self-Control”, “Grossly Underdeveloped Divinity”, “Mental Strength and Mysticism”, and “A Petty Approach Can Scare Adherents”, and “Progressive Mysticism Is Not for Everyone”.

The idea here is the need for a temple to be wholesome and positive for its individual members. This requires selective recruitment and retention as well as developmental programs. The group must have resources and competent administration, but it must avoid “casting pearls before swine”.

### ***A Temple Is Many-Faceted***

The healthy, adaptable group takes care of its own inner resources and organization. This implicit stanza is based on (and explained by) “When Available Technology Is Insufficient”, “Deficient Ideology and Governance”, and “Whole-Person Development”.

### ***Characteristics of a Good Fareld Ideology***

This implicit stanza is supported by all the other implicit stanzas of “Lagu”. An ideology that promotes healthy progress through life has certain strengths. Of course, it should promote responsibility at the individual level. It should directly and indirectly promote thoughtful exploitation of technology, being an organized person, and healthy human social organization. It should, of course, promote itself. Given that no such ideology is going to work equally well for everyone, a fareld-helpful ideology should be eufunctional in circumstances of great human diversity – including diversity in this type of ideology.

If the group admits folks who are not ready for its program, members will likely eventually find themselves in a leaky boat with ruined steering. Hence, it is best that the group's or movement's ideology not being open to all, indiscriminately welcoming everyone. This is especially true if the group is a temple practicing progressive mysticism.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Voyage  
 Vehicle, especially boat  
 Fear or terror  
 Misery  
 People  
 Unreliability  
 Untrustworthiness  
 Lack of preparation  
 Waves  
 Nature's power  
 Violence  
 Surprise  
 Lack of control  
 Technology  
 Importance of adequate technology  
 Need for effective human groups  
 Need for commitment to guiding principles

### *Contrasts*

Control versus lack of control  
 Peace of mind versus terror

Some religion versus no religion  
 Discipline versus lack of discipline

### *Advice for Living*

There are several lessons in “Lagu”, but the one of most important is what happens when a person or group loses self-control to the point that they cannot directly confront troubles. What happens is a very bad trip indeed.

A good spiritual framework is important to each of us. We need the kind of ideology (or ideologies) that support technological use and progress and moral commitment. You need an ideology that helps keep you pointed in a direction that is good for you and that helps you make adjustments to make progress.

Another important lesson is that a group, such as a temple, must prepare to handle its social and physical environment. This is not a simple, one-dimensional matter.

Management of a temple includes recruitment and selection in addition to wise ideology.

## *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	5
1b	unmetrical	4
2a	A	6
2b	A	5
3a	C	5
3b	A	4
4a	C	5
4b	A	6

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	11
3	9
4	11
Total	40

### ***Addendum to Chapter 21: Anticipation of an Afterlife***

Some authors discuss “Lagu” as if it would have what I call an implicit stanza which the present author would name “Anticipation of an Afterlife”. There are two facets to their arguments: one side is Pagan and one side is Christian. Both sides of this coin are illusions.

The weakness of “Anticipation of an Afterlife” is that it depends on the use of water travel as a metaphor for death or for going to Heaven. There is nothing in Teutonic Pagan or Abrahamic lore about traveling over water to get to an afterlife destination. This idea actually comes from other Mediterranean religions, probably Greek or Roman.

The strength of this implicit stanza is that there is no reason to expect that the poet would be restricted to any particular religion’s lore for his/her/their metaphors.

If we were to accept the water-travel metaphor as valid, the message would be that one should lead one’s life according to a religious code to achieve a passage to the place of the afterlife.

Gundarsson presents the case for regarding water travel as a Pagan metaphor for death, but his case is vague and appears to lack empirical support. Surely, if water travel were associated with going to an underworld or other afterlife place, then we would see water strongly associated with Hel, the wight associated most

closely with death. Davidson shows that water is associated with other things, such as fertility, that are contrary to the idea of life's end. Davidson shows that it is earth instead of water that is associated with death in the Teutonic system. If Gundarsson were to make a detailed case, he would point to a funeral description in *Beowulf* and archeological data from ship burial mounds as evincing an association of sea travel with death. However, there is not always convincing evidence of a corpse or cremation urn buried with the mound ships in England or Scandinavia, for example at Snape or Sutton Hoo. (No corpse was buried in the personal gear found in the main mound at Sutton Hoo.) Lack of human remains in some of these ship burials is highlighted by the location of the mounds in or near cemeteries containing human remains from the ships' time. The idea of water travel to an afterlife was characteristic of Greek Paganism, but Teutonic mythology seems not to have absorbed this idea. Burials of ships apparently occurred for reasons not connected with religious doctrine regarding afterlife. (See Carver, 1992; Davidson, 1964: 138-162; Davidson, 1992; Dickinson and Speake, 1992; Elton, 1905; Faulkes, 1987; Filmer-Sankey, 1992; Graves, 1960: 120; Gundarsson: 1993a: 138; Hollander, 1964; Larrington, 1996; Myrhe, 1992; Welch, 1992: 88-96).

Now let us turn to the Christian aspect. Maureen Halsall (1981) suggests that "Lagu" is a metaphorical representation of the basic Biblical precept that Mankind needs to return to its original relationship to the Biblical God. In support of this view, she shows a passage in the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis* which is vaguely related to "Lagu". (For those who have not read it, the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis* contains a lot of material not in the original *Genesis*, including the story Halsall cites where Adam says something to Eve about going on a sea voyage). However, if "Lagu" were a discussion of the Christian problem of alienation from God, the stanza would be radically out of line with the rest of the poem. Also, the destination is not stressed in this stanza. It is indeed not even mentioned, so there is no room for a preplanned destination. We might justify assuming that the sailors are going somewhere, but we have no basis for determining whether they are returning or going away.

The focus of "Lagu" is the struggle between mankind and nature for control of the boat, not the trip.

“Lagu” definitely has nothing to do with recovering from a sinful lifestyle that alienates us from the Biblical God nor from the pre-Christian Germanic pantheon.

## Twenty-Second Stanza: The Hero Who Pursued the Wain<sup>26</sup>

Ing wæs árest • mid Éast Denum;  
 gesewen secgun; • oþ hé siððan ést;  
 ofer wæg gewát • wæn æfter ran.  
 Ðus hearingas • ðone hæle nemdun.

### *Translations*

#### *(A) Transliteration*

{A hero named “Ing”; a certain god} was {first, earliest; at first; before all}

{with; along with, together with; among} (the) {Danes -- they are known by  
 several nicknames}

{seen, beheld, observed; known; experienced} (by) {men; warriors; heroes --  
 secg is a nickname for these; seas, oceans}

{until} he {later, afterwards} eastward

{over, above; across; beyond; upon} {path, road; journey; course of action}  
 departed

{Vehicle; wheeled land vehicle such as cart, car, carriage, or chariot} {after,  
 afterwards, later; thereafter; thereupon} ran

{Thus, in this way; to this extent, accordingly; } {tough ones, hard ones,  
 strong ones; austere ones; brave ones}

{the, that} {man; hero, brave man} {named; invoked, called; addressed by  
 name; mentioned by name; declared, proclaimed}

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<sup>26</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999d).

**(B)**

Ing was firstly • in East Denmark  
 observed by soldiers • ‘til he later east  
 on his way did go, • wain after came.  
 Thus the hardened ones • then the hero calléd.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

Ing was first among the Danes by warriors seen.  
 But later on he eastward went,  
 and a wagon followed on.  
 Accordingly brave soldiers -- strong, austere, and stern --  
 that hero they did call.

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

This strophe has an unusual number of challenges for the translator. These challenges start with the first word and continue in every half-line, ending with the last word.

***The Title Word***

As Appendix D shows, the title word is the name of a Pagan god. However, it is unlikely that He would be mentioned directly in this poem. This is because the *OERP* does not elsewhere mention directly any deity, except Yahweh to whom it refers as The Lord. (Os is the principle of divinity, divine energy, or a meta-deity). Instead the title word refers directly to a hero whose legend has since been forgotten.

Some authors interpret the title word as referring to a constellation (Osborn and Longland, 1982:75-76). But if Ing and the wæn are constellations, then the stanza says that no one other than the East Danes noticed these constellations. This is not likely. Also, if Ing were a constellation, the rotation of the Earth would make it appear to have continuous movement through the night sky every

night the sky was clear. So a constellation could not pause “until he later” moved. And the illusory movement would be westward.

One trait this stanza has in common with “Tír” is that the intended camouflage referent is harder for modern audiences to see than is the Pagan referent. It seems that astronomy and legends are not as well remembered as is ancient Teutonic religion. However, this might simply be a result of Protestants destroying documents found in monasteries during the Reformation.

### ***Éast Denum***

The East Danes are just Danes. In *Beowulf*, the Danes are referred to by many monikers, including East Danes but also Spear-Danes, Glory-Danes, Ring-Danes, et cetera. These might appear to be different ethnic identities, but any possible distinctions among these terms in *Beowulf* are of no importance whatsoever. Hence the translation you see in the Translation A. (Regarding “Danes” in *Beowulf*, see the Glossary of Proper Names in Alexander, 1995 and Heany, 2000: xiv -- or just read the poem, since that might be more fun.)

Moreover, for the purposes this poem was intended to serve, it does not make any difference whether the reference here is to all Danes or some particular subset. What is important about the chief stave expression in the first line is that it indicates a broad community of people.

### ***Secgun***

Although this word could mean “by men” -- and it often is so translated -- it can also denote war-fighters. The reference to hearinggas in the last line implies that war-fighters are, indeed what the Early Medieval author(s) had in mind here.

### ***Gesewen***

The original has “ge sewen”, which all students of the *OERP* agree is nonsense. So the unanimous opinion is to emend to “gesewen” for “seen”.

**Ést**

The issue of *ést*-vs.-*eft* is crucial to interpretation of the stanza at the lowest level of abstraction, and opinion has been divided. Kemble (1840) was the first editor of the *Old English Rune Poem*, and he emended this word to *eft* without comment. Kemble has been followed by several others (Albertsson, 2011; Dobbie, 1942; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1987; Wordsmith, 1994 in Wódening, 1995b). But others have not found enough reason to doubt the medieval source (Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Jones, 1967: 77 and 105-106; Pollington, 1996; Thorsson, 1993).

The reason for the disagreement seems to be an opinion on the part of some that the line should say that Ing departed “again” or went “back” despite what we see in the Hickes’ printed copy.

The burden of proof is on those who make the claim that the scribe did not mean what we see in Hickes’ copy. So the question is whether we have a strong enough case to rebut what the “original” document shows. The word as written does make sense in the stanza at the lowest level of meaning, so emending it to *eft* would have to be supportable with little or no doubt.

Furthermore, the only excuse to make the change would be that Ing is a sidereal object. If Ing and the *wæn* are constellations, then *est* (east) is impossible and hence *eft* (back) is required, for the rotation of the earth gives the illusion that stellar objects move westward. But we know that neither Ing nor the vehicle is a sidereal object for reasons given above.

Therefore the word in question is definitely “*ést*”. This word can be emended to the more common form “*éast*” or left as is.

**Ofer Wæg**

In the edition of “Ing” used in this book, “*wæg*” refers to a land route, with the implication that the route has been prepared or planned out. Although “*wæg*” has the same ambiguities as the modern “*way*”, only the denotations that

indicate conscious intent and preparation apply to this context. Hence, “direction of travel” is omitted from Translation A. Justification follows.

It is illogical not to correlate one’s translation of verse 3a with one’s translation of verse 3b. To certain major students of the OERP, line 3 says that Ing departed across seawater. However, they always interpret the accompanying wæn as a land vehicle. For example, Turville-Petre speculates that the stanza refers to moving a ceremonial chariot and an idol. Shipping the icons eastward across the sea would have moved the center of Frey’s cult out of Denmark and into southern Sweden. These ideas are interesting except that they do not help us make sense of the stanza at the explicit level. (Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page, 1973; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1996; Thorsson, 1993; Turville-Petre, 1964: 165-175; Shippey, 1972; S. Wódening, 1995b)

Someone left us a punctuation clue. In the “original”, the whole of line 3 is punctuated as one unit. One of the things you do not see in Appendix A of this book is that the scribes and authors in Europe’s “Dark Ages” were often multi-lingual and well aware of issues in translation. Therefore scribe might have been trying to tell later generations to interpret the two half-lines as one unit of meaning. This is the way the Early Medieval scribe had to leaving us a hint to coordinate our interpretations of the “on” and “off verses in this line.

Wæn has been used to gloss the Latin for vehicle, although the modern direct descendants of wæn / wægn (wagon and wain) refer specifically to towed, wheeled land vehicles. But, “wæn” is always translated as wagon, cart, or the like based on use in context. So it is not possible that the vehicle could be a ship. (Barnes and Noble Books, 1996; Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Hall, 1960; Traupman, 1995).

A possible consideration is that wæg is singular, and therefore could be taken to mean one route as opposed to many waves. (The plural of wæg as “wave” is wægas and the plural of wæg as “way, path, road; the direction in which movement proceeds”, is weogas or wegas.)

However this is not a decisive matter. This consideration is not decisive because of the frequent use of the singular “wave” in Old English where the author clearly meant the plural. Here is an example cited in the Bosworth-Toller dictionary: “fámig winneþ wæg wiþ wealle” -- “frothily struggled wave against wall”. Thus “wave” is used as a poetical synecdoche. Hence the Old English “wæg” could mean a road or many waves.

Here is the decisive consideration. The wheeled land vehicle ran; it was not shipped and did not float.

### *Wæn Æfter Ran*

The phrase “wæn æfter ran” has been controversial. Most scholars have interpreted this phrase as indicating that the wæn followed Ing (Albertsson, 2011: 182; Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Pollington, 1996; Page, 1973; Plowright, 2002; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1987; Turville-Petre, 1964; Wodening, 1995b). On the other hand, some see Ing following the wæn (Osborn and Longland, 1982), and one imagines that he sees Ing “driving” the wæn (Paul, 1996).

It is easy to see why the majority of translators would see the vehicle running after Ing. The usual prose syntax calls for a subject then a verb, and in both Old and Modern English modifiers usually precede the words they modify. This means the wain is doing the running, and the running is in the manner of following. Apparently this is such an obvious case that scholars do not bother stating it.

Of course, we often find word order reversed in poetry to alter cadence, enhance emphasis, or create a pretty (or mysterious) turn of phrase. However, if this half-line were “ran æfter wæn”, the half-line would still be a good D2 verse, just as it is in Hicckes’ copy. So what you see is what you are stuck with.

Therefore, the syntax of verse 3b implies that the vehicle follows Ing.

Why does “car” appear in Translation A? “Car” always meant a towed, wheeled, land vehicle until relatively recently. It is now used to denote railway cars, but always with “railway” or “railroad” appended to “car”. Otherwise, it denotes a self-propelled car, or automobile. But if some subsequent translator needs the hard “c” for an alliteration, the present author decided to include “car” as a suggestion.

### ***Heardingas***

Everyone has difficulty briefly translating this word, the present author included. The transliteration (above) shows the conclusions of the current research.

Modern English does not have a single word that corresponds to “hearding”. We do have a word that corresponds to the opposite: “soft” = lazy, cowardly, out of shape physically, and/or lacking in will power. The more specific “soft in the head” indicates craziness defined by poor judgment and gullibility -- flabby thinking, analogous to lack of physical conditioning. But the expression “hard man” indicates a villain in a cowboy story, a man who lacks responsibility and compassion toward others.

What we need here is a word that shows approval of a high level of discipline, especially self-discipline, a high level of physical readiness and durability, and a willingness to make decisions in morally loaded and dangerous situations. Also, we need to include the notion of strong discipline or austereness, which we find in dictionaries.

I examined this word everywhere it occurs in the surviving Old English literature. It is in a boundary-setting legal document, buried in the compound “Wynnhearding”. I could not make sense of that occurrence except that it clearly does not refer to an ethnic group. *Heardingas* appears twice as a freestanding word in the poem *Elene*, where it refers to fighters on offensive operations with an emphasis on their individual formidability apart from equipment.

Incidentally, although Bessinger (1960) says that “hearding” occurs 261 times in Old English poetry, I found it to occur only 3 times in all the surviving poetry and prose.

There have been various approaches to handling this difficulty. Due to the difficulty in finding a one-word translation, some translators simply render the focal word as “warriors”, but this loses a lot of the originally intended meaning. Pollington definitely erred by translating this as “hard men”, but he was trying to catch an important nuance. Dan Bray’s rendition of line 4 as “thus hardy warriors named that hero” is beautiful iambic pentameter, but also does not capture the full meaning of the original. Albertsson decided on the partial translation of “brave men”, which sacrifices prosodic excellence to get closer to the original meaning. Halsall was equally close with “stern warriors”. (Albertsson, 2011; 182; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1940; Plowright, 2002: 66; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1987 and 1993).

Paul (1996) just omitted the word -- and the idea -- from his translation.

In addition to problems of meaning, I could not use either Bray’s rendition nor Halsall’s in the present Translation B because their translations do not fit the native rhythm nor alliteration. Although “warriors stern and brave” sounds quite poetic, it does not include the notions of strength and discipline. And that expression gets us even further from the traditional prosodic structure.

So, to fit a translation into three syllables with stress on the first syllable and get alliteration with a translation of “hæle” in the “off” verse, I cheated in Translation B. The translation is a shade away from saying “hard men” but it also is not quite completely avoiding the idea. I resorted to “hardened ones” in hopes the reader or listener would think of people like the US Navy Seals, US Army airborne rangers, or the British SAS. Such people, and not villains in cowboy movies, are what the composers of *Elene* and this poem had in mind.

The difficulty in translating “hearding” need not adversely affect a modernized-meter translation. A problem others are having with their blank-verse translations is stubbornly sticking with translating half-line-by-half-line. If the

translator gets out of that box, she or he can feel free to take up an entire line of poetry with a translation of what was one word in the original. You can see this illustrated in Translation C.

Some students of the *OERP* contend that this word refers to a Scandinavian ethnic group (Dickins, 1915; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Wódening, 1995b; Page, 1973). Based on the word study reported in this section, I disagree with those who have decided that this word refers to an ethnic group, and I agree with those who decided it refers to a type of person (Dobbie, 1942; Halsall, 1981; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1987). Dickins was unaware that the focal word appears in *Elene* despite his search through the corpus of Old English, and those who followed him did not cast their nets into the water.

### ***Nemedun***

It is ironical that to communicate the full pattern of ambiguity in “néman”, we cannot use its direct descendant “to name”. That direct descendant now means only to give a name to someone or something. To include the notion of summoning or invoking, the translator must resort to the verb “to call”, which is a descendant of the Old Norse (or as the Anglo-Saxons might have said, “Danish”) word *kalla* (Barnes and Noble, 1996).

### ***Critique of Translation B***

On the whole, matching the rhythm and alliteration patterns was not as difficult as translating the senses of the certain words. Nonetheless, a pretty high level of success was obtained.

Line 1 is a pretty close match. The rhythm and word sense patterns match exactly, but in the original the word for “firstly” alliterates with “East Danes”.

In line 2, the match is exact if the speaker pronounces “soldier” -- as English speakers usually do -- ignoring the “i”.

Line 3 is also an exact match. In the original, “wæg” refers to a prepared or planned route of travel. It is not just wandering at random in a trackless waste. The translation captures that by referring to “his way”. Although “route” or “path” or “road” would have been a more precise translation, there were two advantages to using “his way”. Of course the alliteration with the chief stave word in 3b and the type B rhythm are considerations. But the original stanza seems to be based on a longer story, and we can intuitively infer that the hero departed because he had some injustice to correct or a home base to return to. So the translation presents a nuance that is probably quite consistent with the original intent, that the departure is not just wandering off on a randomly-selected road but on a route that Ing ought to take.

Line 4 is a pretty good match, but the present author did not find a perfect translation of “hearding” that would fit the meter. “Hearinging” has been discussed in the previous section.

The “on” verse in line 4 is unmetrical, and this is surely because the original intent was to place equal stress on the two ideas that (1) *elite soldiers* named or invoked the hero and (2) the notion of “hæle”. There is no traditional rhythm for the “on” verse that would do that job. So the match to the original rhythm is important.

It might be easier for a modern English speaker to see what the Early Medieval composer(s) tried to do with the enjambment of lines 1 and 2 by comparing Translation C with Translation B. In Translation C, the ideas in three half-lines of the original are combined into one line. This clarifies the point that it does not really matter for present purposes where the women, children, old people, or cowardly slackers first saw Ing.

The comparison of Translations B and C illustrates the point that a “perfect” translation is not always an exact clone of the original into the words of the audience’s language. Translation C presents the same messages as the original by translation the non-verbal content into a modern form that corresponds closely to the emotional intent of the original. Of course this point is probably

easier to see in chapters where the “perfect” translation really is perfect according to the standards set out in the appendix on methods.

One problem with both translation is that “called” does not have the same emotional effect as does the original word. Nonverbal effects can be difficult to analyze in words, but they can effect the subtle mystical tendencies of poetry. The difference in effect between “called” and “nemedun” could be due to the association of “to call” with shouting, but it is more likely due to the different effects on the speaker of the principle consonant sounds -- the sonics of c’s and l’s as opposed to n’s and m’s.

## *Discussion*

The implicit stanzas are built from two explicit stanzas. One interprets “nemdun” as meaning to give a name or nickname, and the other interprets it as denoting invocation.

Throughout the implicit stanzas of “Ing”, we can see Yngvifrey at least in the background (that god is described in Appendix D). Somewhere in this book it should also be mentioned that indirect references can be a coaching tactic. If you allude and hint instead of bluntly state, you can make people think for themselves. Getting people to engage their own logic and emotions helps them experience insights that I am calling “mystical”. They then more easily understand profoundly as they come to realize empirically.

### *The Hero Ing*

This explicit stanza refers to a long-lost legend of a hero named Ing. The adventure alluded to here cannot be reconstructed in detail. But once we infer that the main character here is a hero instead of a villain, then the broad outlines of the story can be discerned sufficiently to make sense of the stanza.

Ing was first noticed by soldiers while he was amongst the Danes. He continued to have their attention for awhile. He was known intimately and directly by

Danish warriors. But eventually he departed from them to a remote location somewhere east of Denmark. He left on a planned route, not waiting for his logistical support, which had to start out later.

The morally, mentally, and physically best-fit warriors gave him a nickname in memory of his eagerness to go on that mission to the east. These would be the persons who are most effective themselves and who have the highest standards.

Ing was needed to do such a deed as we would find in a heroic saga. That might mean he would have to save a village from Hun or viking raiders, just as a Texas Ranger would save a village from Comanches or cattle barons trying to run people off. Or perhaps he would have to save a damsel from some unwanted but powerful suitor, or save a young mother plus her son or some children from losing their inheritance from their dead husband/father due to the predations of an irresponsible relative or king. Or perhaps Ing made his move to defend the Danes from a foreign enemy who was preparing to attack.

Ing was moved to do this as if by his own inner altruistic urge, by a sense of responsibility to mankind or to his own community, or by an unconscious pull from the distressed. This is the way Beowulf decided to go to Heorot, when he could have stayed home. This is the way the Lone Ranger and Tonto decided to save others. There is some motivation not mentioned in many heroic stories, simply left as a mystery.

Historical and fictional accounts sometimes say that a leader did something or went somewhere when they mean that his armed force did or went. Therefore, it is possible that Ing lead a patrol or small war party to the east to save whoever he was to save. The group would have to be small, since its logistical train consisted of a single land vehicle.

This partial story is based on the inference that “hæle” is not used ironically. Although irony is used elsewhere in the poem, the inference that Ing is actually a hero is based on the idea that the names of Pagan deities are here used respectfully. The deity Ing does not have a dark side; there are no surviving

myths that depict him in morally very ambiguous terms as is the case with some other polytheistic deities (see Appendix D in this book and Lang, 1907).

If a scholar were to try out the point of view that this is a strictly Christian poem (not a syncretic nor Pagan work), then in this stanza and elsewhere it would be necessary to view Pagan deities as demons and any mention of them as ironic and highly critical. Tír, Ing, and Os would be in the same category as þorn. At best, they would be in the same ambivalent category as ice or hægl. As a non-heroic stanza -- one in which Ing is fleeing justice or persecution of Pagans or local disease and famine or deserting his comrades -- the overall image of the poem would be rather different from what most people see in the *OERP*. (If anyone wants to try that, he or she has my translations and commentary to start from or react to; but such a study has to explain the absence of any direct reference to Jesus or His sacrifice -- is the poem Jewish instead of Christian?)

The hero Ing was named after the god, as Icelanders were sometimes named Grim (after Oðin) and Scandinavians were often named after the god Ing. Depending on the age of the legend, that name would indicate that his parents dedicated and raised him as a follower of Ing. (Yes, it is also possible that the name was given to him by the hearding, but then we have to explain why the stanza implies that Ing had no other name when initially noticed by the soldiers.)

This partial reconstruction of the legend is also based on the notion that nowhere does the *Old English Rune Poem* refer directly to a Polytheist or Abrahamic myth. The composer or composers would not have referred directly to either religion because the historical period in which they lived was a time of severe persecutions. It was not just Pagans who were persecuted, but heretics also. It is not that the victims were fired from their jobs or slandered; they were tortured to death.

### ***Memory of the Hero Ing***

Here, “called” is understood to mean “invoked” or “referred to by name”. Otherwise, this implicit stanza is very similar to “The Hero Ing”.

The hero Ing is first known among the East Danes. However, he abandons life among his home folks to bring justice in another realm. In doing so, he gains esteem everlasting among persons of the highest standards, esteem that outlasts his physical presence among them. He does something we have seen before in the literature on Teutonic Polytheism — he outgrows his origins.

In the story, the hero has taken the long view and had the courage to move out into the distance. It is for this that the hardiest and most disciplined persons remember him. It is the spirit of Ing's adventure that is called upon in his memory.

### ***The Cult of Ing Becomes International***

In this implicit stanza, Ing is a reference to a specific deity, and the secgas are a metaphor for His worshippers (of both genders) who struggle for enlightenment in a mundane world that presents harassment and obstacles every day. The travel eastward is a metaphor for spreading abroad. The car is a metaphor for both the hardware, liturgical, and mythical support for His cult. The highly-ready soldiers represent the most advanced members of that cult.

So in this implicit stanza, the god's existence is noticed first by some of the Danes, who are able to know of him as one of their own. But people in another community find inspiration from this deity also, and then they adopt the features of His cult. Hence, He is given a name by the more advanced members of his now international following, so that they will all know who they are talking about when they discuss this deity.

This suggests the importance of consensual agreement in establishing harmonious order in a cult, by communicating enough to at least maintain a common terminology. Holidays shared by -- and perhaps hosted for -- folks from other communities can be quite useful.

***Worship of A Deity Spreads***

This implicit stanza is similar to “The Cult of Ing Becomes International”, except that here, Ing represents any mythic deity. Also, the Danes represent just any ethnic identity. So this implicit stanza refers to the potential value of a college of experts in a given religion to maintain a larger sense of community.

***The Leader***

In this implicit stanza, Ing is a metaphor for a person who becomes a leader. He is first noticed by ordinary soldiers of the Danes and it is as just another Dane that they regard him. Then things change when he undertakes an urgent expedition that marks him as a hero in the eyes of the elite of the Danish war-fighters.

***The Savior is Invoked***

This metaphorical stanza is more closely related to “Memory of the Hero Ing” than to the other explicit strophe.

Ing is at first noticed as an ordinary Dane, but one of interest to soldiers, who stand for those most interested in protecting their community from evil. This lasted until he hastily departed in the direction of danger to his community. Then the physically and mentally best-qualified among the soldiers declared him Savior.

The correspondence of this implicit stanza with certain passages from *Dream of the Rood*, where Christ is “the young hero”, is quite clear. But the Danes do not live in Palestine. Moreover, we are allowed to suspect that the hero Ing survives the danger he faces.

***Enlightenment Takes Priority Over Religious Structure***

The story here speaks of an exemplar who initially comes to be known among a subset of the community. But then he embarks on a determined struggle against hindrances to progress by making his own progress against them.

His first priority is that campaign, not the religion he uses to support the campaign. And that is how he comes to be identified as especially valued in the minds of the most advanced of this subset of the community.

This story is supported by a set of double metaphors. The hero Ing is a metaphor for the god Ing, his patron deity. The departure eastward implies going into the land of the giants, maybe along with Þunor and maybe not -- neither possibility affects the meaning of this implicit stanza. In turn, the god represents the seeker of enlightenment who is a leader and example for those who struggle for personal progress (secgas). And the east -- as the land of giants -- represents a realm of less conscious thought which is a source of hindrance to enlightenment. This is a common metaphorical arrangement in Scandinavian myths.

In this case, the East Danes can be a non-metaphor or can stand for people in general, or for adherents of Nordic religion. This is to say that it does not matter who they are.

In this implicit stanza, “hero” is a metaphor for positive role model, or exemplar.

As in so many stanzas of this poem, the vehicle is a metaphor for religious structure. The structure consists of customs, liturgy, myths, codes of conduct, symbolic equipment, and other things.

This view of “Ing” might seem to imply that first one decides to be a progressive mystic, then one selects a religion. The wagon or cart stands for an intellectual and organizational structure that supports mystical work (a theology or broader religious philosophy). This comes to the seeker after she or he has made that first decision -- whether to embark on the campaign. This is probably the opposite of the way most progressive mystics got into the practice. At least in many cases, we followed a religion and then got channeled somehow into its way of struggling for enlightenment.

What this really means is that religious tradition is a secondary priority, not that it is rationally selected. It might or might not be selected as one would select a tool from a tool chest.

Putting this message into “Ing” ass probably based on the implicit sermon which is embedded in one of the stories involving the god Ing. See Appendix D regarding *Hrafinkel’s Saga*.

### ***Admiration by the Tempered Ones***

This implicit stanza is derived from all the explicit and metaphorical stanzas in “Ing”. The emphases here are (1) that Ing is perceived, esteemed, and spoken of by people who might be pretty hard to impress; and (2) that Ing’s action is under his conscious control.

This implicit stanza advises us that conscious self-control is highly valued by some persons who are the hardest to impress. Perhaps one of the things that really tough people admire is sheer self-discipline. This would hold even if that inner toughness is not oriented toward physical combat and not necessarily accompanied by physical strength and skills used in fighting.

This can be important advice, because sometimes very disciplined people can feel “nerdy” or simple quite nonconforming with the less mature. This implicit stanza is encouragement to do what you know is right for you.

### ***Pursuit of Progress within Custom but Outside the Box***

Ing “upon path departed”, and this implies structure that has been provided by countless others acting on their own initiative and in their own best interests. After all, that is how paths are worn or how roads are created and maintained. In turn, this is analogous to customary religious or secular philosophical ways, or to business or occupational ways. The choice is conscious but also a response to an inner “voice” -- the soupersoul -- and the action chosen follows rules based on responsible priorities.

This derived stanza is supported by “The Hero Ing”, “The Leader”, and Enlightenment Takes Priority over Religious Structure”.

### ***Model for the Non-Naïve***

This implicit stanza is supported by the implicit stanza “Admiration of the Tempered Ones”. In this view, “heardingas” is a metaphor for those who are no longer naïve, perhaps because of trials, experiences, or deep insights obtained through exercises. Ing is a super-hearding or the god Ing. The vehicle is an esoteric means of attaining accelerated or easier personal progress. It represents the rituals, skills, and attitudes of a religious practitioner. The east is the subconscious.

This idea that the east represents the subconscious calls for some explaining. In *Runelore*, Edred Thorsson (1987: 132-133) says that going to the east is a metaphor for faring into the realm of giants, who are “preconscious” beings. I concur with Thorsson’s philological conclusion that giants represents less conscious beings as compared to deities or people, and that they reside eastward of Asgarð — and I have written detailed support for these notions (Stanfield, 1999c). Of course, “east” here is not a physical direction, but a metaphorical or metaphysical direction. This metaphorical “east” is associated with the less conscious aspects of mental functioning.

### ***Invocation of Lord Ing***

“Invocation of Lord Ing” tells us that we invoke the spirit of Frey that is within us by being religious. In this implicit stanza, the hero is a metaphor for the god and the vehicle refers to Yngvifrey’s association with vehicles. The wain represents the structure of religion.

The deity is invoked by elites because of what He stands for. He is not invoked because of ethnic identification nor because of empty ritual formulas. He stands for the values of the physically and mentally most disciplined (this does not exclude partially disabled persons). He stands for their dedication and priorities and service ideals.

This implicit stanza is supported by “Memory of the Hero Ing”, “The Cult of Ing Becomes International”, “The Savior is Invoked”, “Enlightenment Takes Priority over Religious Structure”, “Admiration by the Tempered Ones”, and “Pursuit of Progress within Custom”. It also is supported by the lore in Appendix D.

### ***Religion is Recommended for the Strong***

This implicit stanza is supported by all the stanzas at the second level and by “Invocation of Lord Ing”. Religion is recommended not as a crutch for the weak, but as something of especial interest to the more capable people.

Reference to the hearingas in this context is a metaphorical way of saying that religion is of most benefit to those whose basic needs are met and who are pretty competent. The hearingas are highly capable at their jobs. Therefore, they represent people who are at least very good in comparison with others. Lord Ing is shown in Appendix D to be closely associated with organized religion, and He is a fitting model for non-naïve and highly effective persons. There are things about organized religion that can help a person meet basic physical and psychological needs, but those things are not specifically religious.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Mental sophistication  
 Intellectual power  
 Divine realms or modes of being  
 The hero Ing  
 Outgrowing one’s origins  
 Progress  
 Movement between stages of development  
 Those who are difficult to impress  
 Strength  
 Toughness  
 Capability

Making a lasting impression  
 Moving from a relatively static to a more dynamic condition  
 Organized religion  
 Religion as custom  
 Religion as strengthening of conscious self control  
 Religion as a means or path  
 Chosen religious goals  
 Finding enlightenment by exploring one's less enlightened aspects  
 The divine as an aspect of each human  
 Usefulness or appeal of religion to even the most capable

### ***Contrasts***

Striking out on one's own versus staying back  
 Static versus dynamic  
 The admired and relatively active versus the admiring and less active  
 Goal versus course of action  
 The more naïve versus the less naïve

### ***Advice for Living***

You can make a strong impression on people of high standards by showing daring and self-control. True religion means making a bold decision to face difficult realities and make changes. Religions vary in the degree to which one follows traditional means as opposed self determined means, and in the degree to which one seeks a chosen goal as opposed to improvement towards ultimate divinity. Nonetheless, religion that is done well is worthy of the strong among us.

## ***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	C	4
2a	A	5
2b	D2	5

Stanzas of the OERP, Chapter 22

Ing

3a	B	5
3b	D2	4
4a	unmetrical	4
4b	A	6

<u>Line</u>	<u>Syllables</u>
1	8
2	10
3	9
4	10
Total	<u>37</u>

## Twenty-Third Stanza: Rights, Dignity, Prosperity, and Home<sup>27</sup>

Éþel byþ ofer leof; · æghwylcum men;  
gïf hé mót ðær; rihtes · and gerysena on  
brúcan on bolde · blædum oftast.

### *Translations*

#### **(G) Transliteration**

{home district, region, or country} is {over, overly; super, ultra-; very  
much; excessively} {dear, beloved, valued}

(to, by, on the part of) {every -- literally “all-which” in dative case} person

if he (or she in this context - “man” means person, not male adult) {may, is  
allowed to} there {of right, properly, by right}

and {in dignity, in honor; properly; in propriety, in decency, fittingly}

{enjoy, make use of, consume} {at, in} {dwelling, house, home; (perhaps  
figuratively) temple}

[prosperity; harvest, crops; that which is produced] {very often, most often;  
this means “most of the time” or “usually” in this context}

#### **(B)**

Home-land is very dear • to each human’s heart  
if they might by right there • also right fairly  
at homestead have use of • harvest mundanely.

---

<sup>27</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999d).

**(C)**

Homeland by humans is heartily loved,  
 if there they by right and rightly may  
 enjoy in their homes in the good things of life  
 as a frequent occurrence and matter of custom.

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

This strophe presents several technical problems. Once again, the title word is controversial, although in this case it should not be. Translators have also had difficulty with the word for “with propriety”. This strophe also presents some issues of edition, but most of them are not controversial.

One topic of interpretation here is that this strophe mentions human rights. It is an error to opine that the topic is strictly modern or that the very idea of “rights” did not appear until the 1600’s.

#### ***The Title Word***

There is a misconception in the literature that *épel* can refer to an estate, home, or dwelling. The word has been interpreted that way by some various competent authorities, including the leading complete dictionary of Old English (Albertsson, 2011: 160; Bosworth and Toller, 1898, 1921; Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1993).

However, other authorities see this word as referring only to a broader area than a house and the plot of ground it rests on. These authorities are correct (Hall, 1960; Healy, et al, 1996; Kemble, 1840; Paul, 1996).

One way to check up on this is to examine the examples provided in the best dictionaries. Let us begin with the prestigious Bosworth-Toller dictionary. All their examples imply not a house and yard nor even a mansion and estate; but a

district, territory, region or country that one feels is “home”. Some uses of éþel refer to a home realm ruled by the focal person. Such a realm would include more than one abode. These same inferences are supported by the examples in the more recent Toronto project dictionary.

In addition to examples cited in definitions, the compounds beginning with éþel that are listed in the Bosworth-Toller, the Hall, and the Toronto project dictionaries also imply that an éþel is a broad area, not personal real estate nor a plantation.

Of course for this chapter the most important use of éþel is in this stanza, where there is clearly a contrast being drawn between one’s dwelling (**bold**) and one’s éþel. In the present context, the éþel is a district or region that includes the real estate which is called a home (**bold**).

### *Rihtes*

“Rihtes” is singular genitive, “of right”. This is called the “adverbial dative”, and is analogous to the way the Anglo-Saxons would say “by day and by night” (dæges and nihtes).

This expression is easy for a modern American to interpret as referring to human rights. This interpretation is not just cultural bias. It is obvious from the context that the author(s) in Europe’s Early Middle Ages was/were talking about human rights. The strophe pretty clearly says that people love their home country if the government, religion, or the culture in general does not abuse them. In other words if they are allowed “by right and in dignity to enjoy at home material prosperity as a normal matter.”

The idea of a right to be allowed to have dignity, peace, and prosperity in one’s own abode is timeless. In Early Medieval times in Europe there were no mass media of communication. And the (totalitarian) states of the time were less responsible and perhaps even more abusive than those of modern times. Nowadays it is fashionable and easy to talk about human rights, so many people opine that the concern is modern. Nowadays, even the most totalitarian

governments cannot suppress discussion of the issue; the “best” they can do is pervert the discussion and cheat on treaty obligations (Cole, 2012).

Consequently, lack of ancient discussion can make this can look like it is not an ancient concern. But there were severe problems in Early Medieval Europe and they were plain to see. Bryan Ward-Perkins (2005) has shown that following the Germanic takeover of Britain, the standard of living declined from the prosperity of Roman times to a level below that of the Iron-Age culture that preceded Roman conquest. Examine the first eleven lines of *Beowulf* to see how the “good” kings behaved and how useless they were to the common people. Frank Stenton’s (1971) history tells non-fiction tales of violence, oppression, and lack of useful services. One might well say that the nobles burned farms but did not build roads.

Also, it is only rational to expect that a significant religious work, whether Christian, Jewish, Pagan or whatever, would express some concern with humane values.

Despite these concerns and the economic issues in Early Medieval Europe, England was considered prosperous by the time this poem was written down. England’s standard of living improved (as a general secular trend) from about 600 CE until after the time the *Old English Rune Poem* was written down, although progress improved greatly after the viking raids ended (Bloch, 1961a: 59-71; Hagan, 1998 and 1995; Rowling, 1968; Ward-Perkins, 2005: esp page 122).

Otherwise, this would be a daring political statement for the explicit level of meaning. It might have been a little risky anyway.

Hickes’ copy shows “rihter”, but all students of this poem agree with Jones (1967: 107) that the scribe, Hickes, Wanley, or the typesetter made a typo here. It is surprising that there are not more errors like this. You can see the similarity between the letters for “s” and “r” in the alphabet used in England of that time in Appendix A.

***Ĝerýsena***

The focal word is genitive plural, but a plural translation does not make sense in Modern English. Also, the parallel construction -- adverbial dative using a preposition -- with “by right” (“rihtes”) does not make sense in translation.

It is possible, of course, for a poet not restricted to ancient metrical rules to achieve a similar effect with a different parallel construction. “By right and rightly” is exactly what the original author(s) meant.

This is a multi-dimensional concept. The concept of “fittingly” or “rightly” meant not in excess, not in inconvenient circumstances, and not consuming stolen goods, and not otherwise in sin.

Some translators have had surprising difficulty with this word. Albertsson (2011: 160-162) translated this as “honesty” and went on at length about how honesty was what this strophe was about. Osborn and Longland (1982) translated “rihtes and ĝerýsena” as “properly and in peace”. However, at least these authors noticed that the strophe touches on morality and freedom.

***Bolde***

The original has “bloodily” (blóde) as the last word on verse 3a. That does not make sense, so every editor I quote in this book emends the word to bolde (at home).

***Why Not “and Ĝerýsena on / Brúcan on Bolde”?***

The stanza “Éþel” sounds much smoother and more musical as I have the half-lines arranged in this book. Almost all editors of this stanza put that first “on” at the conclusion of line 2 for alleged metrical reasons. But there are adequate metrical reasons to attach that preposition to line 3.

Here is how all this adds up. Arranging the half-lines with “on” at the end of verse 2b causes a pause between the second and third lines. The sound is awkward enough to be ugly. So the “on” belongs on the beginning of line 3.

It is interesting to consider the metrical alternatives in detail here, since this matter has been neglected by previous scholars. We lack the normal punctuation clue for where the author(s) wanted to separate verse 2b from verse 3a. Hence modern students of the poem have to figure out the half-lines. But most students of this poem do not give detail on the basis for their choice of putting the “on” on line 2 instead of on line 3. They just move on to another issue.

Wherever we put that “on”, it is superfluous except for the poetic cosmetics. Hall says that as a prefix “on” is usually meaningless, and that is also how Bosworth and Toller interpret “onbrúcan” in their translation of the passage in question (Bosworth and Toller, 1898: 432; Hall, 1960: 261). The “on” functions like the nonsense syllable sometimes put into folk music just to get a satisfactory rhythm (for example the song “Froggy Went A-Courtin”).

Putting that preposition “on” at the start of line 3 makes for a more beautiful construction. This way, verse 2b gets a type C rhythm and verse 3a becomes a type A (with anacrusis) and with a pretty parallel construction as follows.

x	x	/	\	x	
and	ge	ry	sen	a	
x	/	x	x	\	x
on	bruc	an	on	bold	e

So why does everyone except Stanfield, Bosworth, and Toller edit this strophe otherwise? If we put the “on” in line 3a, then line 2b is not very good as a type C. It might sound too close to a falling-by-stages (Type D1), and Anglo-Saxon audiences might not approve. (Then again, they might think it is OK.)

The way to avoid that possible issue is to insert the “on” as an out-of-order preposition in line 2b, so that it gets heavy stress. This supposes that we can

have a stressed word that carries no actual meaning. So this would be the rhythm of the two half-lines, with strong-sounding type B rhythm in verse 2b and (still) a good type A in verse 3a.

x	x	/	x	x	/
and	ge	ry	sen	a	on

/	x	x	\	x
bruc	an	on	bold	e

When I pronounce this set of half-lines, I put less emphasis on the “sen” in “gerýsena” when I anticipate the “on” at the end of the line. But a speaker who has a secondary emphasis on that syllable gets a pretty D2 (falling-by-stages) rhythm in verse 2b. But of course, you get a pretty D2 only if Grienberger (1921) is wrong to say that this meaningless preposition is unstressed. He is probably correct; in Modern English we do not normally stress meaningless syllables like the “in” in “inflammable”. (On the other hand, many speakers of the Texas regional dialect do stress the first syllable in “inflammable”.)

Following this paragraph is an edition with the “on” out of place and a “perfect” translation composed to match the rhythm (as I would recite the Old English, assuming that Grienberger is wrong). The main flaw of the translation is that it is smoother than the Old English, because the superfluous syllable at the end of line 2 reflects frequently-heard bad English of modern times.

Éþel byþ ofer leof; · æghwylcum men;  
 ġif hé mót ðær; rihtes · and ġerýsena on  
 brúcan on bolde · bláðdum oftast.

Home-land is very dear • to each person’s heart  
 if they might by right there • and in righteousness too  
 have for their home use • harvest mundanely.

But speakers of Old English -- judging by the remaining corpus of printed work -- did not put surplus detached “on’s” in their sentences the way modern people are likely to throw in too many “too’s” to give some emphasis.

### ***“Blædum”***

According to the Dictionary of Old English (from the University of Toronto), this is the only place in the entire corpus of Old English where “blæd” is spelled “blead”, and I confirmed this with my own search. Perhaps this is a typo. So I emended the word to a more readily recognizable spelling.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The “perfection” in this chapter did not work as perfectly as in most of this book. According to standards of matching alliteration, word-sense, and rhythm, the present author lost the struggle to get a perfect match to the original in line 1, but got two out of three. However, there is a poetically significant flaw in the “perfect” translation of line 2.

As in many cases, the translation into modern poetic structure is in some ways a better conveyance for the composer’s intent than is the “perfect” translation.

Line 1 is defective in alliteration and the pattern of word-sense. The ancient author(s) had the word for “homeland” alliterating with the word for “each” (person) and the word for “super” (or “excessive”; or in modern English slang, “uber”). But in the translation “homeland” alliterates with “human”, thus failing to convey the emphasis on “each”. Moreover “heart” is part of the description of emotion which should be entirely in the first verse of this line, not completed at the end of the line.

The rhythm in line 1 is an excellent match. Verse 1b is a five-syllable type E, whereas the original is a four-syllable type E, but the emotional effect of the two type E rhythms is quite similar.

Despite the exact match in word-sense, alliteration, and rhythm with the original in line 2, there is an artistic flaw in Translation B. Line 2 was originally intended to present an implicit parallel construction. Following the introduction to the line (“if they might there”), the line is supposed to say “by right and in propriety” using dative inflections instead of prepositions. This is supposed to blend in with, and smoothly transition to, the parallel construction using prepositions in the beginning of the next line. This means that Translation B fails to convey the full nonverbal message in both lines 2 and 3.

Line 3 per se is a perfect match. The difference between the original “oftast” (very often) and “mundanely” (practically every day) is trivial with regard to the original intent behind this stanza.

One striking feature of the twenty-third stanza is that the traditional Old English rhythm sounds quite pleasant in Modern English. Often, when the translator simply copies the ancient meter into Modern English, the result does not sound poetic to the modern listener.

Thus the advantage of the basically dactylic modern-meter translation is not that it sounds more like rhythmically smooth poetry, but that it captures the word-senses of the original more effectively. Translation C re-arranges the order of ideas from the original to get this effect, and it more explicitly translates “oftast”.

Translation C does convey the same emotional effect of the implicit parallel construction of line 2 (“rihtes and gerýsena”) with an alliterating pun that means exactly the same as the original (“by right and righteously”) and that has a very similar rhythm. This illustrates an advantage of departing from the traditional meter to reproduce similar effects in a modern cultural context.

The principle disadvantage of Translation C compared to the “perfect” translation is that Translation C does not as clearly reveal the main topic. The main stress in the first line is on “each” (person), and the topic here is human attitudes, not the homeland. This stress does not appear in Translation C, although it is conveyed by the “perfect” translation.

Another flaw in Translation C is that half the last line is redundant with “right and rightly”. The concluding expression “and matter of custom” was added merely to avoid an abrupt ending to the line.

### *Discussion*

“Épel” describes patriotism and regional loyalties and their motivation at its explicit level. At the metaphorical level and above, it reminds us of the religious importance of freedom from hassles and deprivation on the petty level, where people live most of the time.

In “Épel”, the poem speaks of all persons in general. Unlike some other stanzas, it does not mention nobles or elite nobles.

On the whole, the stanza emphasizes that for people in general, it is not good that a movement or organization excessively denigrate this-worldly pleasures, deprive folks of artificial gratifications such as food and art, or complain about what pigs they are.

#### *A Homeland Is a Place for Private Sanctuary*

A homeland is very highly valued by every person if he or she may — by right and in dignity — enjoy the fruits of the earth and of human labor in his or her own home there as a matter of normal life.

Oh, how important it is to have dignity and comfort -- physical and psychological -- at home! Home -- it is down on this petty level where we live. Not in grandeur, not in an afterlife, not in wandering adventure, not behind a plow, nor on the high seas do we reside. The reality of “home” for each person is not an epic poem. Everyone needs somewhere, sometime, to enjoy some normalcy.

***Love of the Homeland***

(A) homeland is overly valued by every person if most of the time he or she may — by right and in dignity — enjoy prosperity in his or her home there.

The superlove for one's homeland manifests itself in various ways, which are not explicitly discussed by the stanza. This love is such that people usually stay in their homelands even if there is another area nearby with better climate, better economics, or other objective advantages. People are commonly willing to make significant sacrifices for their country or province, even to the extent of dying. People are often enthusiastic boosters for their city or some obscure district — not to mention their country — of which they are quite proud. These visibly manifested emotional attachments rival in strength those to parents, lovers, or offspring. This is not a new idea. People are often quite patriotic even if they complain about being oppressed in their homeland. This is illustrated by behavior of persons of various ethnic groups during wars of the Twentieth Century. It takes a lot of oppression to discourage the superlove we have for our homeland.

The discomfort that prevents or discourages extremes of homeland love can be physical or psychological. We utilize material goods, but we do not want this utilization to be an emotional, moral, or legal hassle.

***Allowance for Joy in Religion***

In this implicit stanza, the homeland is a metaphor for a religious movement or any formal belief system. Also, in this view of the stanza the home is a metaphor for the home of the religion of its deities -- a temple. The produced things are a metaphor for the sensual pleasures of food and drink, of comfortable surroundings, of games and other social amusements, and of the comradery that people produce in each other's company.

So here the message is that most people will love their religious movement a lot if they can have fun and just be normal people while at the place of worship. The religious movement cannot be demanding constant fasting and prayer. It cannot constantly try to rack its members with guilt. You can scold and deprive

all of the people some of the time, but you can only hassle and deprive a very few of the people all of the time and make them like it.

This is in part a critique of the monastic movement of the time, which attracted many people who were made unhappy with the rigid disciplines of nunneries and monasteries, and who therefore did not adhere to the rules.

### *A Good Way of Life*

Consider the homeland as a metaphor for a culture, a set of familiar and accustomed ways. This yields an implicit stanza which might look similar to “Allowance for Joy in Religion”, because religions in general try to reshape their host cultures. But a culture is not necessarily revolutionized by mere ideology.

Other aspects of culture involve technical means of production, the extent of division of labor, and line-of-communication arrangements, and many other aspects directly related to producing and distributing goods. Other factors also include degree of: freedom from restrictive laws, predatory government, or scolding by authorities.

Therefore, this implicit stanza addresses also the issue of how well the culture is producing and distributing goods. As mentioned above, in the discussion of a the expression “by right”, this was a problem throughout the Early Middle Ages in England and throughout Europe. When the culture does allow dignity and prosperity, the people seem to fall in love with their homelands. And they are glad to do so. However, we know in modern times that people often “vote with their feet” when their native culture does not allow them to enjoy bláða at home. The Germanic peoples had invaded the Roman Empire in hopes of sharing in the wealth and comfort, not to ruin the economy. This did not work out so well at first.

***The Familiar and Dear***

“The Familiar and Dear” is a discussion of the relationship between the public and the private. In this implicit stanza, “homeland” represents not just a physical area, but also a gestalt of experiences, ways of doing, familiar personalities — in other words a setting or subculture. “At home” represents not just a place, but the petty level on which we live.

Thus, the familiar culture or subculture can be hyper-dear. But this is not merely because it is familiar. It must also allow members to have on the petty level personal worth -- rights and moral dignity. No doubt material wealth is important, but people want to enjoy it as a normal matter and without degrading circumstances.

At this point a summary is needed. “The Familiar and Dear” speaks to us of a normal, powerful attraction to a familiar public context that we consider homelike. We each have a deep inner need to enjoy a feeling of community, and persistent psychological abuse or severe poverty is required to break that emotional tie. Although issues related to our need for that kind of context are partly economic, emotional security is also important.

***Low Expectation of Home Religion***

This implicit stanza is based on “The Familiar and Dear” and “Love of the Homeland”.

If a person is raised in a religion, then that set of ceremonies, symbols, and rituals is like a homeland to that individual. They tend to not expect much of it in terms of personal growth. Instead, they will give it a deep love as long as it does not drive them out on petty grounds of human dignity or material deprivation.

***A Mind at Rest Tends to Remain at Rest***

This stanza is supported by “The Familiar and Dear”, “Allowance for Joy in Religion”, and “Low Expectation of Home Religion”. In general, the message in

“A Mind at Rest Tends to Remain at Rest” is that people tend to *not* consciously choose to radically alter their environments as long as they can enjoy a certain complacency. The implication is also that when people do attempt to change their broader environments, it is usually to achieve or restore a sense of rights and morality to their private and mundane lives. Any problems in that context would have to impinge harmfully, materially, and consistently on material conditions of one’s private life to break down that natural conservatism.

If we look upon blæda as including non-instinctive ideas, then this conservatism applies to attitudes and philosophy also. This would say that if our environment allows us to enjoy attitudes and beliefs as proper and things we have a right to have, then we tend to want to keep things as they are.

### ***Shaken Loose***

This implicit stanza is the contrapositive of “A Mind at Rest Tends to Remain at Rest”. People will be not so in love with their homeland if they do not have dignity and if material enjoyment is not a usual experience. They are likely to revert to Paganism or to choose heretical religion, as happened occasionally during the Early Middle Ages.

The irony emphasized here is that the impetus to make changes in one’s physical, social, or cultural environment — or to depart on an inner fareld — is primitive and reflective of the lower animal side of mankind. This so even where our concern is for our most intimate associates. This implicit stanza is another Pagan comment on how the lower animal in us is a basis for the divine.

### ***The Homeland of Infinite Progression***

Progressive mysticism works well and is greatly enjoyed if it leaves the practitioner with a sane and comfortable mundane life.

If a person is willing to accept a dynamic stable state, a personal-growth version of religion can become in a sense the person’s homeland, with its familiar people, rituals, etc. Along with the stable factors of this éþel, the esoteric

participants would find means, motivation, and coaching for individual personal progress. This implies that one would have to feel reasonably comfortable with a need to wisely venture out of one's psychological comfort zone once in awhile. Although a sense of dissatisfaction can lead to progress toward a new sense of complacency, the healthy motivation for continued progress would be an enjoyment of growth per se.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Homeland  
 Comfortable environment  
 That which is familiar  
 Private home  
 Closest friends or family  
 The concept of "home" in all its facets  
 Superlove  
 Excessive emotional attachment  
 Material wealth  
 Produced goods  
 Private enjoyment  
 Exploitation of material wealth  
 Rights  
 Dignity  
 Propriety  
 Peace of mind (freedom from oppression)  
 Complacency  
 Impingement of the outside culture on one's private life  
 Context

### *Contrasts*

Material versus spiritual or psychological  
 Homeland versus private home  
 Having rights & dignity versus not having rights and dignity

Society versus household  
 Broad context versus narrow context  
 Private life versus culture

### ***Advice For Living***

It takes a lot of discouragement at a primitive level to diminish or suppress the extreme love that people naturally have for their homelands. That affection is effected by what the homeland means for our private lives, which take precedence. This is a key to understanding our attitudes toward both the extensive outer contexts and our inner mental aspects, for the physical and psychological comfort of ourselves and our most intimate friends and relatives is a primary consideration.

Religion is an aspect of both that outer and that inner context. So this means that when people change or try to find religion, they will often do so on a relatively primitive basis. In the process of finding a “home” feeling, we can unintentionally find an exoteric version of a religion. In turn, healthy motivation to pursue esoteric religious practice is based on exoteric religious learning.

### ***Statistical Analysis***

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D2	6
1b	E	4
2a	Hypermetric A	6
2b	C	5
3a	A	6
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	11
3	10

Total 31

## Twenty-Fourth Stanza: Wonder, Enjoyment, and Enlightenment for Mankind<sup>28</sup>

dæg byþ drihtnes sond; · déore mannum;  
mære metodes léoht; · myrgþ and tóhiht  
eadgum and earmum; · eallum brice.

### *Translations*

#### **(H) Transliteration**

Day is (the) Lord's {send, sending, thing sent; message; messenger}

{dear, beloved; precious, of great value; noble, glorious, excellent} (to)  
{people, persons; men}

{Great, excellent, splendid; famous, widely known; pure} Metod's light

{mirth, pleasure, joy, delight} and {hope, glad expectation; trust or  
confidence in a person or thing}

(to/for) (the) {happy, blessed, prosperous, fortunate; perfect} and  
{destitute; miserable, wretched}

(to/for) all {of benefit; useful}

#### **(B)**

Day by the Lord is sent, • dear to mankind!  
Metod's marvelous light, • mirth and high hope  
for poor and affluent; • for all to profit!

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<sup>28</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000a).

***(C) Modernized Meter***

Day is here sent by the Lord,  
dearly beloved of mankind!  
Metod gives marvelous light,  
bringing delight and good hope  
to rich and to poor folks alike.  
Of value it is to us all.

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

This stanza presents two issues, one in edition and two in translation. The editing issue is easy, as is one of the translation issues.

The major translation issue is Metod. This issue requires extensive consideration. I agree with the consensus of scholars that Metod is the name of a Pagan wight, but I depart radically from that consensus as regards the nature of that wight.

I will explain that Metod as a Pagan wight is nornlike. I will also explain that as an aspect of Yahweh, Metod is an inscrutable giver of inevitable circumstances.

***Sond***

I decided to follow Halsall's (1981: 151) example by avoiding a translation of "sond". She used the phrase "is sent by" to avoid the issue of whether the focal word means "messenger" or "message" in this context. This not only simplifies translation, but also preserves the ambiguity of the original.

***Metod***

In summary: there is no need to translate the name of Metod, and the name does not indicate an ultimate creator nor a creative aspect of Yahweh. As a Pagan wight, he is like the personal and high-level norms combined. He is allotted at birth, and is therefore called The Allotted One -- but "Metod" is good enough for

present purposes. Also like the Norse norms, he gives us good or bad circumstances without regard to justice or fair play and without forethought. With Metod as an aspect of Yahweh, there is forethought and justice but they are incomprehensible to us anyway.

To make the case, I will describe the consensus of academic experts, then show why it is wrong. I then justify a correct interpretation.

In the corpus of surviving Old English literature, Metod usually refers to the Christian god, Yahweh. (The name is sometimes spelled “Meotud”.) The name is commonly thought to be a survival from Pagan times, a reference to a divine wight named “Measurer”. However, the word is also commonly translated as “Creator”. Another translation is “Ordaining Lord” (See Barnes and Noble Books, 1996; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; Bradley, 1982: 349; Dickins, 1915; Hall, 1960; Halsall, 1981; Houghton Mifflin, 1993; Mitchell and Robinson, 1992; Page, 1973 Rodrigues, 1993: 118-119).

Grammatically Metod cannot be “Measurer” nor “Creator”. The clue is the form of the word. The focal word is a past participle form of the verb metan. Metan means to measure out, to measure, or to compare. Thus, “metod means “(is) measured”. For example: “Wé hæfdon metod” = “We had measured”.

The correct way to say “measurer” in Old English is “metend”. To indicate an active agent such as a painter or instructor, Old English uses the ending “-end” instead of our endings of “-er” or “-or”. A creative person who invents things is a gescyppend or scyppend (also spelled “scieppend”). In fact, “Scieppend” is used in the surviving corpus of Old English literature to specifically indicate aspect of Yahweh as ultimate Creator (Hall, 1960).

To corroborate the grammatical clues, I examined several of the more prominent uses of the focal word. I examined uses in *Cædmon’s Hymn*, *Beowulf*, *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, *Maxims I*, and *The Battle of Maldon*. These sources are Christian or predominately Christian mixed-faith in orientation.

The passages in question clearly do not imply a “Creator” Metod. For example, in the highly Christianized *Seafarer*, lines 103-116 mention “Metod’s terror”, and this in a context of discussing death instead of creation. The data are examined in detail in Appendix E of the present work.

Therefore “The Meted Out”, and “The Allotted” are literal definitions of the focal word and correctly describe the name “Metod” in the Teutonic Pagan perspective.

In addition to being not an ultimate creator, Metod also is not a deity in the Pagan system. He is probably a giant.

A past participle seems an unlikely way to refer to a deity, for the reference is to an acted upon being or thing: “The Meted Out” or “The Measured”. This implies that in the polytheistic system, Metod was not a deity.

Therefore, Metod as a concept is related to the Scandinavian idea that birth we are allotted norms. The Pagan vocabulary is different as between Norse and English branches, but a comparison is instructive. In Norse religion, one of the norms creates that which the ancient English called wyrd. In English Paganism, Metod creates wyrd.

For both Pagan and Christian point of view, the surviving uses of “Metod” imply a wight who is a dominating factor in a chain of circumstances. Whether mindless or planned in advance, the notion of “Metod” does not include adjustments nor learning. *You* adjust; the circumstances are fixed. Metod is a nonconscious being allotted to us, or he is an allegory for an original cause in an unseen chain of circumstances. In the Pagan religion, the domination is without will or awareness.

The name “Metod” refers to something that gives us limits and opportunities, which we can work around or exploit but not avoid. Metod is not the circumstances themselves (they are wyrd).

Metod became an aspect of the Christian god during the period of mixed faith, but he disappeared (along with *wyrd*) in more advanced stages of de-Paganization. It is illogical to refer to Yahweh as a *norn*-like being, but in the Germanic countries Christians had to attribute *wyrd* to their god. Otherwise, they would have seemed in denial of obvious reality at the time.

Metod has a similar meaning in the Early Medieval English mixed religion.

Yahweh has nothing to learn. He has all this thoroughly thought out, but it is not for us to know nor to understand His plan. We have passage from Alfred explicitly supporting my claim about how the *wyrd*-setting aspect of Yahweh works.

Appendix E and the Addendum to Chapter 20 have more details on *wyrd*.

### ***Magnificent Light***

One could object: “If Metod is a *norn*-like character, then how could Metod be splendid, excellent or otherwise ‘*mære*’?” The answer is that *mære* does not refer to Metod.

The original author(s) compromised word-order in verse 2a to get an acceptable rhythm pattern. The inflexional ending in *mære* is weak, nominative, singular, and neuter -- and this is a clue that it refers to light, not to Metod. This is reflected in many —but not all — of the experts’ translations going all the way back to 1840 (Dickins, 1915; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Page, 1973; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1993; Wödening, 1995b).

The alternative interpretation would be that Metod himself is shining. This would imply that Metod would be a polytheist’s sun deity. But that interpretation would not fit the grammar because of the inflexional ending on *mære*”. And it would be a theological absurdity from the perspective of Germanic religion (Stanfield, 2003).

***Tóhiht***

The original has “tó hiht”, which is not an expression used on Old English, but “tóhiht” is. All students of the *OERP* agree on this.

***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is a very close representation of the structure of the original in Modern English. But Translation C, with its smoother flow of words and more consistent rhythm represents the original intent to a modern audience more efficiently. A comparison of the two translations helps elucidate a subtlety that is in the original (and that is communicated in Translation B). The Anglo-Saxons were accustomed to more subtle rhythms and more variety than are modern audiences.

In line 1, the match to the original’s alliteration and word-sense are excellent, with a very minor departure in rhythm. In the original, verse 1a has a five-syllable type D2 pattern, and the translation has a six-syllable type D2.

The emphasis in line 1 is devotional, and this effects its rhythm. When the present author pronounced line 1 of the original at first, it was unmetrical because it came out with the same level of stress on each noun. But studying Jones’ (1967:127) rhythmic notations and experimenting with a Christian perspective showed how that verse could have a falling-by-stages pattern. In that line, the most stressed word is not “dear” (the chief stave word), but “Drihtnes”. Pronouncing the line that way seems to take stress off of “sond” as if “Drihtnes” were taking a bigger share of a scarce resource.

Line 2 is a perfect match for the original in all respects, except that the order of presentation of the ideas “splendid” and “Metod’s” has been reversed in the translation. The reversal of word-sense was done to match the rhythm of the original, as well as to make it clear what is splendid.

Line 3 has three departures from the original. The original has normal traditional alliteration, but the translation has double alliteration. Also, the translations of 3a and 3b have anacrusis, which is not in the original. The extra syllables are to

insert prepositions which are not needed in the original, with its more inflected language. Resolved stress is needed in “affluent” to achieve a type A pattern for verse 3a.

Unfortunately, the effect of anacrusis and the more musical “affluent” in 3a upsets the flow of rhythm and thought that was originally intended. This has a deleterious effect on the emotional impact of the strophe and therefore also on the meditative value of Translation B.

In a translation that does not try to match the original prosody while it conveys similar non-verbal content, the issues affecting Translation B do not occur. Translation C ‘s lines are dactylic trimeter with an extra stressed syllable at the end, except that the last line has its extra syllable as an unstressed beat at its beginning. The change in structure for the last line is trivial.

When reciting the original and Translation B, the speaker should soften his or her voice and slow the pace slightly while communicating a smiling satisfaction in the last verse, and the same should be done when performing the last line in Translation C.

If we compare the modernized-meter Translation C with Translation B, it is easier to see an interesting ambiguity in the original. The ambiguity means that there are two views of the explicit level of “Dæg”.

In the first line, the stanza is a little blurry about whether it is day that is so dear to people or Yahweh. This ambiguity is preserved in Translation C.

Verse 2a says that the marvelous sunlight is Metod’s. In the normal course of traditional Anglo-Saxon poetry, there are many parenthetical phrases like this that restate a verse or part of a verse just above it. And that would be one reasonable interpretation. That is, the daylight that by the Lord is sent is exactly redundant with Metod’s splendid light.

But the punctuation in Translation C starts a new sentence in line 2, making a separate statement. Although there is still room for day as Metod's light, another possibility is suggested.

The other possibility is: the first line worships the divine Lord, then the rest of the poem celebrates -- but does not actually give thanks for -- daylight. In the English polytheistic system, there is no point in thanking Metod; he would not notice and is not doing you any favors anyway.

To keep this ambiguity in Translation B, it has no punctuation.

This ambiguity is in the original, and the expression of it depends on a slight nuance in enunciation. It is not clear if everyone in an early medieval audience that has been drinking two-percent (or stronger) beer for awhile would catch the subtlety.

## *Discussion*

Modern-day reactions to this multi-faceted strophe are interesting, in that Christians think it is Paganized and Pagans think it is Christianized. One thing for sure: we see a pleasant side of wyrd.

To understand the apparent contradictions at the lowest level of "Dæg", it helps to be familiar with some basic religious notions described by Andrew Lang in his influential (1907) review of various polytheistic religions of the world. The following consists of generalizations; it is not an assertion that every religion fits the exact same pattern.

In many polytheistic religions there are two versions of theology existing side-by-side and often practiced by the same people.

One version of theology has little or no mythic support, has just one or a very few deities, and the deity or deities behave divinely. The well-behaved deity or

dieties often have no image, and tend not to require sacrifice of animals, other food, or people.

Where there is just one deity at this level and that deity is commonly a creator. Lang likes the label “all-father” for the creator-deity, although the “all-father” might be female or not gendered.

The other version of theology has a pantheon defined by myths of “erratic fantasy”, as Lang likes to call it. The behavior of the deities in such myths is not strictly divine. As an example, consider the Greek myth where Cronus swallows all his children. The deities are anthropomorphic or theriomorphic beings who typically require feeding by sacrifice, and they are commonly represented by sculptural or graphic images or fetishes.

In some religions, the highest deity is of both types. Greek and Roman polytheisms do not have the higher type of deity.

Thus, in the discussion of explicit and implicit stanzas of “Dæg”, we see two versions of “Drihten”. (A) In one version, He is the higher type of deity who gives unconditional blessing. (B) In the second version, we see Him as a deity who is beloved, as mythic deities often are, but he is balanced out by a blessing from a more primitive being.

### ***A Valuable and Unconditional Sending***

Daylight, dear to mankind, is sent by Yahweh. It is Metod’s light -- given without our having to deserve or earn it -- given unconditionally. It will never be taken back nor modified for anything you do. This light is wonderful because it brings happiness and hope. And it is available to be enjoyed by all mankind of every social rank or degree of wealth.

This explicit stanza expresses view that has “mære Metodes leoht” as a restatement of the first half-line.

The *OERP* never refers to the Christian god as “God”, but we know that Yahweh is The Lord because that is the way *The Bible* refers to Him. Also, part of the importance of the concept “Lord” in Biblical religions is the emphasis upon submissiveness to Yahweh.

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At this point, an aside is in order. In this strophe we encounter something that cannot be described as an explicit nor implicit stanza, but that is important to fully perceiving the meanings of “Dæg”. It is read “between the lines”.

This is a fundamental statement about the nature of sacred mystery. In *Genesis* Yahweh produces day without a hint that this is done for the sake of people. It is only natural that a gift as glorious as day would tend to make us occasionally celebratory or filled with a mixture awe and love.

With this stanza, whoever created this poem was trying to steer us toward that mystical experience -- regardless of our religious affiliation(s).

It is such natural wonders that tend to make us think of the divine and turn to some form of religion. Things might be commonplace and have powerful objective effects on our lives and be nonetheless wonderful and sacred. Even so, the sacred aspect of the commonplace is not fully subject to explicit description.

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### ***Dual Values***

Yahweh, who sends day to Earth, is Himself beloved of mankind. Also, Metod’s marvelous light, which is mirth and hopefulness for rich and poor alike, is of benefit to everyone. This is fortunate, because that light is a fact of life, not something we are free to reject.

This explicit stanza expresses the view that has a completely different statement following the invocation of The Lord.

***The Nature of the Wight Called Day***

This is an explicit stanza in which the Lord is represents a deity called All-Father. Day is sent by this All-Father but is not created by Him. This is a Pagan counterpart to “A Valuable and Unconditional Sending”.

The story is told in the *Deluding of Gylfi* and in the *Prose Edda*. It is alluded to in stanza 25 of *Vafthrudnir’s Sayings*, and in *Skakskaparmal* (Faulkes, 1987: 90, 137; Larrington, 1996: 43-44; Young, 1954: 37-38).

There is a giantess named Night. She comes of a physically swarthy family and is very dark herself. She is sequentially married to three males. Night’s last husband is a god named Shining One, and Day was Night’s only offspring in this marriage. Day was “bright and beautiful”, favoring His father’s side.

The All-Father (Oðin) put Night and Day into the sky and gave them each a horse and a vehicle. Day’s horse has a mane bright enough to light up the sky and Earth. It is the job of this mother and son to circle around the world every twenty-four hours with the mother in the lead.

Among other things, this myth tells us that day is not a creation of the All-Father, but something for which He found a very useful employment. Day as a messenger, precious and glorious, is certainly bringing good news just by showing up on a regular basis. (Except, however, that we usually take this for granted.)

An examination of Teutonic myth reveals that nowhere is Day called a god. Like his mom, Day is an allegorical character for a mindless natural phenomenon. In the Teutonic Pagan system, such wights are giants regardless of how beautiful and beneficial they might be (Stanfield, 1999d).

There is no support in Norse literature for a being named Metod. Hence, this perspective in “Dæg” brings us to the fact that the Norse and English polytheists did not have exactly identical cosmogenic myths. The English might have had a creation myth in which Metod existed prior to the creation of a Sun-giant called Day. Other religions also have creation myths that contradict each other or that

are internally contradictory (Catholic Church, 1987; Lang, 1907; O'Flaherty, 1975).

***The Word of Yahweh Is a Treasure for All***

This metaphorical treatment of the stanza is based on the viewpoint revealed in "A Valuable and Unconditional Sending". It represents a syncretic religious perspective.

In this implicit stanza, day is a metaphor for the Word of God. "Drighten" is a nickname for Yahweh, as it was used so often that it was almost His official name. Metod is the aspect of Yahweh that makes for all mortals a generally merciful and beneficent environment. This is not only the physical environment of our home (and only) planet, but also the circumstances in which humans can perceive Yahweh's message and be aware of His love for mankind.

The splendid light represents teaching and preaching -- opportunities to learn Christian religion.

***Jesus Christ***

Consider, as Christians do, that Jesus is Yahweh's messenger. "I am the light of the world...." -- John I:12. This is a syncretic view of "A Valuable and Unconditional Sending", so Metod also figures in the story. Metod stands for the Holy Spirit that motivates the Apostles and their successors.

If one accepts the syncretic Christianity of the time, this is probably the most emotionally powerful "take" on this strophe.

***Conversion Missions***

This implicit stanza is based on "A Valuable and Unconditional Sending".

Consider day as a metaphor for a Christian mission. The mission could be one person or a commune, but in the Early Middle Ages, missions were usually

communities of very saintly people who volunteered and were specially selected for the purpose. The lord is a metaphor for the Catholic church as an agent of the Lord. Metod stands for the mysterious spirit of inspiration that motivates and encourages the volunteers.

Organized missionary activity is not a feature of modern times only. During the era when the *Old English Rune Poem* was composed and written, the Catholic church recruited from England some now-famous missionaries to show Christianity to heathens and try to convert them in Eastern and Central Europe (Fletcher, 1997). They would usually form residential communes but make themselves familiar to the local nationals. A similar mission began the official campaign to convert the kingdom of Kent.

Of course, the problem with these missions is that they show what is possible, but not necessarily what is going to happen. While they are filled with saintly persons, Christianity recruits indiscriminately from the local non-Christian population.

### ***Deity Worship and Enlightenment***

This metaphorical treatment is based on the viewpoint of “Dual Values”. In this view of the stanza, day stands for Christian religion. It is the message of Yahweh, and He is beloved by mankind.

Metod is himself in the polytheist sense, and his light is that which makes possible the profound perceptions that are the basis of rational self-control. Metod’s light brings high morale and good mood to those who have it, and it is equally available available to all, regardless of social station, just as sunlight is available to everyone. And like sunlight, it is something we can try to work around, but it is pervasive, powerful, and inevitable: it is a matter of wyrd.

Thus, Yahweh is beloved, but progressive mysticism is made possible by something more basic and inevitable than a deity or any particular religion.

***Growth Religion and the Chance to Learn***

The metaphors here are based on the perspective of “Dual Values”. This implicit stanza is a more abstract version of “Deity Worship and Enlightenment”.

Here, day stands for an enlightening philosophy.

Consider the implication of “lord” this way: the concept of drihten refers to conscious control, and high levels of conscious and rational control of one’s environment and self are divine. The drihten is a metaphor for that lord within, the subtle awareness that bothers and the caller who beckons one to seek something more profound. It is the supersoul that is within and between all humans. That supersoul stimulates folks to make enlightening religion That is, it stimulates people to increase conscious, ethical, and rational self-control.

Metod stands for the primitive and mindless source of circumstances that constitute limitations and opportunities in our lives. Metod makes visible the efforts of mankind to find higher ground. Without our deserving that “light”, we nonetheless have materials to write on, an atmosphere to speak through, chances to live long lives -- and all the other things that make our thoughts communicable to each other and that give us opportunities to expand our understanding.

Hence, “Growth Religion and the Chance to Learn” tells us that day is something of divine nature that originates outside of the divine. And it reminds us that the raw resource (light) is still available for us to use in our own divine work.

For those who are accustomed to only Abrahamic religion, a briefing is appropriate. The Teutonic polytheist deities themselves originate from giants. In polytheist cosmogeny, whoever makes the world as we know it commonly starts with materials already at hand. This is also the case with Teutonic polytheism. (Faulkes, 1987; Lang, 1907; Larrington, 1996)

***Mystical Wonder, Awe, and Joy Are in Different Religions***

This implicit stanza is based on “A Valuable and Unconditional Sending”, “Dual Values”, and “The Nature of a Wight Called Day”. What this adds up to is that mystical joy, wonder, and awe do are available pretty much regardless of what religion one practices. Any system that is right for you, in its own way, can help you find some lore to help bring on this kind of experience.

***Enlightenment is Available***

This aspect of “Dæg” discusses something fundamental to all religion. “Enlightenment is Available” is supported by “Mystical Wonder, Awe, and Joy Can Be Found in Different Religions”, “The Word of Yahweh Is a Treasure for All”, “Deity Worship and Enlightenment”, and “Growth Religion and the Chance to Learn”.

Enlightenment comes to us from conscious self control, a desire to be ethical, and rational intent that seeks to expand conscious self control and empower further rational and ethical intent. We are told that this enlightenment (1) is as readily available as day, (2) is of great human value, and (3) is of equal value to all who can attain it. Moreover, (4) it is natural and inevitable that the potential is available. Religious enlightenment is not something that we have to earn. It can be of value to the very bright and the average, to the physically excellent and the not-so-able-bodied, to the lucky and the unlucky, to the happy and the wretched, to the wealthy and the impoverished.

***Natural Cycles of Dark and Light***

This implicit stanza is based on “The Nature of the Wight Day”. It is a philosophical statement about the dialectical nature of all life. We see this emphasis upon dialectics in several ancient Teutonic Pagan sources cited in the present book.

The Myth of Night and Day tells us that Night is the mother of Day and that she precedes him through the sky. This is consistent with ancient Teutonic calendrics, in which the diurnal cycle begins at nightfall, not at midnight nor at

dawn. The myth and calendric custom remind us that things mysterious or relatively intimidating can be preludes to wonderful good fortune. It is also a reminder that periods of relative inaction or of recreation can be preludes to more exciting or tedious times, and that the alternation is natural. To paraphrase the Old English poem “Déor”, both the high and low times will pass (Rodrigues, 1993).

### ***Cycles of Behavior and Perspicacity***

This implicit stanza is suggested by “Enlightenment is Available” and by “Natural Cycles of Dark and Light”. The idea is that it is not in our nature to act enlightened or to think with perspicacity all the time. As a matter of fact, we obtain insights from our own errors. What is divine and possible is to strive, not to attain a static condition of perfection.

### ***Creation and Dialectics***

“Creation and Dialectics” is an esoteric explanation of the nature of creativity. An important metaphor used is that of divinity and giant-ness. This implicit stanza is supported by “Dual Values”, “The Nature of the Wight Called Day”, “Natural Cycles of Dark and Light”, and “Cycles of Behavior and Perspicacity”.

The dialectical process is not a matter only of ideas nor only of material phenomena, it is a general principle of creation. The principle is that something exists and somehow there appears its antithesis. Then in an interaction between the thesis and antithesis, a synthesis is created. Consider the story of the cosmogenesis as told in *The Deluding of Gylfi*. There is first Dark Hel (Niflheim — a region of ice and intense cold). Then Fire Home arose (Muspelheim). In interaction between the two regions there arose life (Young, 1954: 32-33).

This dialectic process does not occur in the presence of purity, although the antithetical elements are not necessarily in conflict. Night does not give rise to Day by herself, for she combines with Shining One. Wóden does not give us daytime by Himself, for he uses Metod’s magnificent light. The diurnal cycle does not occur without the

In short opposing points of view can be productive. The opportunity for religious enlightenment is readily available, but it can more fully be exploited if we take a sophisticated approach. For a very creative and progressive mundane life, we need to accept and sometimes foster the dialectic process.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Daytime

Light

Nighttime

Darkness

Wyrð

Benefit(s)

Good things that are inevitable

Jesus

Gospel

Metod

Equality of effect regardless of the object's circumstances

Dialectical creation

Natural cycles of paired conditions

Something or someone which has been sent

Similar messages in different religions' terms

Great value in human terms

Natural treasures available to all

Human universals

Generosity that looks for no reward

Mindless giving or causing

Glorious

Useful

Dark is the beginning of light

Conversion (to Abrahamic religion)

Christian missionary work

Syncretic religion

### ***Contrasts***

Day versus night

Created versus found-and-employed

Pagan versus Biblical

Commonalities versus differences

Purity versus dialectics

Syncretic versus orthodox

### ***Advice for Living***

There are wonderful things in life that cannot be coveted and that provide all humans with background and interests in common. Some of the very best in life is available to anyone willing to enjoy. This applies also to esoteric religion, which is readily available to be taken up by those who are emotionally and intellectually ready.

On the other hand, it is a mystery of life that creation and progress come from contradictions, oppositions, variation, alternations, and even conflicts. Of course these things are not necessarily productive, but they can be. Moreover they are a necessary part of life, we should enjoy and exploit dialectical processes. Avoid over-emphasizing the value of uniformity, purity, or conformance.

That profound alteration of mood you get from daylight, that so-subtle consequence of the obvious, that phenomenon so pervasive that you take it for granted and so powerful that you have no will to resist — that is a window to the divine.

## ***Statistical Analysis***

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Verse Type</u>	<u>Syllables</u>
1a	D2	5
1b	A	4

Stanzas of the OERP, Chapter 24

Dæg

2a	D2	6
2b	D2	4
3a	A	5
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	10
3	9
Total	28

## Twenty-Fifth Stanza: Versatile Value and Challenge<sup>29</sup>

Ác byþ on eorþan; • elda bearnum;  
 Flæsces fōdor • fereþ gelóme  
 Ofer ganotes bæþ • garsecg fandap;  
 Hwæþer ác hæbbe • æþéle tréowe.

### *Translations*

#### *(I) Transliteration*

(The) oak (tree) is on Earth

(to/for) {persons', humans'} {offspring; sons}

{living creatures'; flesh's, meat's; livestock's} fodder

(it) {fares, travels, goes; bears, carries, conveys, brings; departs} often

over gannet's bath (the sea or ocean -- gannets dive up to 40 feet to get fish)

{ocean, sea; literally: spear-sedge or spear man, but never used in a literal sense} {tests, examines, proves}

whether oak (wood) {holds, keeps, retains; carries on; here it is "stays"}

nobly {faithful, reliable, honest, trustworthy}

#### *(B)*

Oak is on Earth for • anthros' offspring.

Food-beasts' fodder • frequently fareth

over sea-divers' bath • surges testing

whether oak keepeth • hon'rably faithful.

<sup>29</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000a).

***(C) Modernized Meter***

Oak is on earth for the children of men.  
 Food 'tis for livestock, and often it fares  
 forth on the bath of the sea-diving birds.  
 There where the swells of the ocean can test,  
 can see if the oak remains nobly in troth.

***Issues in Translation and Interpretation***

There are two issues to be considered here. (1) Dictionaries disagree on the definition of elda. (2) This chapter is an apropos place to consider the notion that the *OERP* presents us with riddles.

Incidentally, the Anglo-Saxons used “ác” the same ways “oak” is used in Modern English. The first appearance of the word in this stanza refers to a type of tree and the second refers to a substance.

***Elda***

The major dictionaries disagree on the definition. The upshot of my investigation is that the evidence cited by Bosworth and Toller supports the definition of elde as “people” (without regard to gender or age).

Bosworth-Toller and Hall define elde as “men”. The Hall dictionary implies that the more usual spelling is “ielde”, and it seems to be a word which never appears in the singular case. The prestigious (and quite competent) Toronto project *Dictionary of Old English* dictionary disagrees with Bosworth-Toller and with Hall. The *DOE* did not define elde at all. It did define “eald” as a reference to age or a long-past time. (Bosworth and Toller, 1898: 245, 1921; Hall, 1960: 203; Healy et al, 1996).

I examined all of the references cited in Bosworth-Toller in support of their definition of elde. In every instance but one, the form of the word was eldum

“Elde” appears many times in the surviving corpus of Old English literature. Indeed, in the next stanza of the *OERP*, this word appears in dative plural (eldum). (Alexander, 1995; Bradley, 1982; Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Jebson, 1994; Rodrigues, 1993).

It appears that the omission of a definition of “eld” or “elde” as “person” from the Dictionary of Old English is an error.

### ***The Riddle Issue***

Paul Sorrell (1990) has an interesting and perceptive article in which he compares this stanza to riddles and other poetry. Mr. Sorrell reviews others’ evidence showing the existence of a classic oak riddle in Europe. This evidence is based on examination of sources in Latin, Middle English, Modern German, and Old English. Mr. Sorrell goes on to show that the *OERP* strophe “Ac” has certain features in common with Old English riddles and some remarkable similarities to the classic European oak riddle. He infers that the focal stanza is a riddle placed amidst a gnomic poem.

Although the resemblance between “Ac” and oak riddles is interesting, this stanza is clearly not a riddle, nor are any of the other stanzas of the *OERP* riddles.

For this stanza, we have three clues that is not a riddle..

Our first clue is that each of these “riddles” begins with the word you are supposed to guess. Mr. Sorrell is correct to note that the rune stave at the beginning of each stanza would not be a clue to persons who know nothing about runes. However, this poem was composed and written no later than 950 CE, when rune staves were commonly used as abbreviations for their name words, implying that early medieval English scribes assumed runic literacy on the part of their audience (Pollington, 1995).

The second clue is that “Ác” allows us to know for sure what the rune name is, for the word is spelled out in the fourth line.

Our third clue is that the stanzas tend to be too vague as riddles to allow a definite answer. Now I will have to admit something about the present stanza. The other trees that frequently provided boat building materials do not fit the stanza. Ác fits the alliteration while, for example, the words for pine (fúrhwudu and pinbéam) do not. We also know the title word here is not ash because it is the first word in the next stanza (see Chapter 26). However, other stanzas are not such giveaways.

Paul Sorrell does quite perspicaciously observe that the riddles subtly present philosophy. Since the present book is long enough as things are, I leave it to the reader to examine an oak riddle or two and see if there are similar implications to those revealed in this chapter.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is an exact match to the original in word-sense, rhythm, and alliteration. The making of a modernized-meter translation was more difficult.

In verse 3b, the kenning “garsecg” (spearmen) is replaced by a more transparent reference to rough seas. Otherwise, the “perfect” translation is almost a transliteration. The ability to do this in some stanzas of the *OERP* indicates how much Modern English owes to Old English, despite the importation of words based on Greek, Latin, Spanish, Japanese, and other languages, and despite the very extensive loss of inflection.

By comparing the way the “perfect” translation and the modernized translation sound, one can get a clearer perception of what the original author(s) were trying to do with their staccato style and subtly varying rhythm. However, experience will give you information I could not write out.

Every line in Translation C is dactylic trimeter with an extra stressed syllable at the end. Nonetheless, Translation C is handled similarly to Translation B. For the last half-line in the original and Translation B, a pause at the beginning and then a softer, lowered voice should be used. But for the last whole line of Translation

C, pause and slow the pace, and it is not necessary to modulate the volume of one's voice.

## *Discussion*

The humanistic emphasis of Teutonic religious philosophy shows clearly in this stanza. Also, this stanza shows a very down-to-earth standard for evaluating how worthwhile a thing really is.

Looking at the chief staves, we can see: persons', travels, ocean, and nobly. So what this stanza is mainly concerned about is human progress on the open ocean, and whether our resources or personal qualities are high-grade.

But prior to discussions of the explicit and implicit stanzas, some readers will benefit from brief explanations of the meanings of some key expressions.

For those not familiar with Early Medieval agriculture, a briefing on oak as fodder is helpful. Acorns were the main winter food for Anglo-Saxons' pigs, which in turn were the second most important source of meat (cattle were the most important). Sheep can also eat acorns. Deer also to acorns, although by the 950's CE, venison was not commonly found on English dinner tables. Mid-summer often saw the less prosperous of the ancient English running low on food. At that time of year boiled, ground-up acorns could have been used to supplement ordinary flour. (Hagan, 1995, 1998; Lacey and Danziger, 1999; Osborn and Longland; 1982: 66-67; Welch 1992: 39).

During early medieval times, oak was commonly used as a building material for ships as well as for homes and other important items. Thus, oak wood would often convey (so to speak) people and their valuable cargo over the open sea (Bill, 1997; Welch, 1992: 18, 29).

In more than one implicit stanza of "Ác", the ocean is a metaphor for the sea of life. Among other things, the notion of a sea of life refers to the fact that one's life can proceed in any of many directions, that one can fail and sink. On the

“sea of life” one can drift about and go nowhere, for progress requires some work because one cannot count on currents and tides to do well for oneself. The gannets’ bath looks like a desert unless you know that below the surface is a lot that you can use -- if you know how. And the sea of life has storms which can make a wreck. And people need some way to navigate through life.

### ***The Tree of Food and Faring***

In this explicit stanza, oak is on the earth for mankind. It is food for living creatures, and it provides a very reliable manufacturing material, often traveling on the seas as wooden boat structures, where the ocean proves that the oak has noble reliability.

There are two ways to read the statement in Line 1: as a statement of purpose or as a statement of value. The notion that oak trees are on Earth for a purpose -- for mankind to use -- is an allusion to a famous passage in Genesis. It might also refer to lost mythical or mystery-cult lore from English polytheism, expressing a similar idea. But it is best not to rely on merely supposed evidence.

Another view of line 1 is that oak-trees are on this planet, but their value and meaning to homo sapiens is what we make of them. Their value to us might not explain why they exist, but it describes the functional value of oak trees. That also explains why there is a stanza that starts “ác”: without such significant functions, this poem would simply ignore oak trees.

Both views are valid artistically, and they are not mutually exclusive. The first view is more consistent with the phrasing of line 1. However, the statement-of-value meaning is more consistent with the overall thrust of the stanza as shown by the rest of the strophe. The value of this tree as a source of raw material is tested every day under mundane and hazardous circumstances.

The list of uses (fodder and shipbuilding material) is intended to be symbolic of great variety, not a complete list. The expression is similar to the cliché, “rich and poor alike”.

***A Material of Great Value-in-Use***

In this implicit stanza, the oak tree stands for any natural (raw) material that is remarkable not only for its range of uses, but also for its reliability.

Such raw materials might not cost as much as gold, but mankind is very dependent on them.

***The Nurturant and Otherwise Productive Woman***

Consider the (grammatically feminine) oak tree as a metaphor for a woman. “Oak” was a common nickname (kenning) or metaphor for an adult female human in Icelandic Pagan culture, according to the *Skaldskaparmal* in the *Prose Edda* (Faulkes, 1987: 115-116). Therefore, it might have been a kenning for “woman” in Old English, since the two languages did have some kennings in common.

The productive woman may feed directly from her breasts those who are not weaned, but in a predominately agricultural economy both genders (and all ages) have livestock caring duties. And at the household level food preparation was usually woman’s work, nourishing the warm bodies at home. Women did most of the weaving, even when industrial cloth-making first started to come back after the Early Middle Ages.

Moreover, even a homemaker goes out on the sea of life, where she can sail or fail, depending on her own inner resources. Emotional and physical nurturance are vital functions, and also vital is work done out in wider ranges of life.

The more general point is that any woman in any walk of life would have a wide range of purposes in everyday life, and her dependability would be proven as she goes. Although it was usual for any adult woman to spend her life as an officially subordinate member of a household, it must be admitted that they did not all fit into the usual course of life.

***Everyday Nobility***

This implicit stanza is very similar to “The Nuturant and Otherwise Productive Woman”, except that here the oak tree stands for a generic person. This is a statement of what nobility means on the sea of life.

In this view of “Ác”, flæsces fódor is a reference to mundane usefulness and productivity. “Garsecg fandap” refers to facing strong challenges when others depend on us. The hint is that nobility is more than just occasional heroism or combat adventure. Nobility is also shown if one is somehow useful and reliable in mundane affairs, especially when it is difficult to be reliably useful.

This noble fiber is meaningful because it is useful and reliable in human terms. It turns out that whether a person has noble timber is a matter of nurturance and progress in everyday useful work.

No one is here on earth just for himself or herself. Enlightened self-interest means recognizing that each of us has a value-in-use to the species, and that mankind -- especially those whom we are most directly effect -- have need of us.

***Talent***

In this implicit stanza, the oak tree represents any natural, undeveloped talent. Talent exists for the benefit of mankind. Almost any human talent can be developed in ways that nourish natural life, including the lower-animal aspect of people. It can also help to create economically useful things.

But value is proved out in use. So just creating or contributing is not the measure of value. Ultimately, the sea of life will test whether that talent has been turned into something worthy of our trust.

***Humanism and Natural Resources***

In this implicit stanza, the oak tree is a metaphor for natural resources. It is not just the oak wood that is being tested. Our use of it is also proved out by the sea of life.

The inclusion of “living creatures”, and not just humans in verse 2a points to an interdependence in the ecosystem. Interdependence is given a second mention in 3a, where the ocean is described as the “gannet’s bath” — the creatures of the air and of the sea interact.

Humankind is biologically adapted to this system, and has evolved ways to make it function even more strongly for our benefit. But there is no guarantee that what we make will work, for our trusted materials or devices sometimes fail in the face of nature’s mighty forces.

### ***Religious System Tested Against Human Purposes***

In this implicit stanza, the oak tree is a stand-in for an ancient religious system, growing out of its native soil, existing for the needs of humankind. It is not the only kind of religious system and not the only religious system of its type.

And it is in terms of this test by the sea of life that we can tell if the oak is really worth the trust of those who would live nobly.

Although many people do not like to think of something sacred as subject to validation, a system of religious practice that is supposed to help us be better persons must show effects in the overall courses of our lives and in the details of everyday affairs. We would not necessarily expect to see results every minute of our lives, but we should expect to see positive results.

The test proves whether the system is specifically right for you, your family and friends, and your community, and whether it gives morally acceptable results.

### ***The Testing of Religious Fiber***

This is in part a metaphorical stanza and in part one suggested by “Religious System Tested Against Human Purposes”.

In “The Testing of Religious Fiber”, the ocean is a metaphor for subconscious or spiritual realms. The oak tree represents core source material for religion, the World Tree (Yggdrasil in the Norse Religion). This tree in turn stands for a set of basic ideas and aspirations originating in individual and cultural roots no longer visible, and extending far above us. This basic, unformed religion feeds our inner psyches, giving us motivation. Of this basic raw material, we make a vehicle -- which stands for the structure of a religion. And we use that religion to venture into the realm of the subconscious or spiritual.

The ocean voyage is not just a test of the specific religious system one uses, but also how the individual is in touch with the ultimate source of that system.

### ***Challenges Are Necessary***

The message here is that challenges to our character and competence might be as unpleasant as thorns or as ugly as yew trees, but they are valuable in human life. This implicit stanza is supported by “The Productive Woman”, “Everyday Nobility”, “Talent”, and “Humanism and Natural Resources”.

Both natural resources and persons are properly evaluated for their value for human lives. By analogy, mental resources, attitudes, and human behavior are to be evaluated in humanistic terms. This further implies evaluating religions and religious progress in terms of human values.

In conclusion, tests of our worth are positive in terms of basic philosophy and esoteric religious values. The pressure to provide both private and social necessities is positive. Likewise, the risk of failure to serve is a positive thing. Experiencing these challenges is the only way to know if we are meeting social and our own personal standards. Indeed, meeting the tests of the spearmen in our lives is the only way to truly be noble.

### ***Religion Does Not Exist for Its Own Benefit***

This implicit stanza says that a religion does not exist for its own benefit. It may indeed help feed the poor and unlucky in addition to its own paid staff. But it is

often taken out into everyday life, on individual and group levels, And it is out on the sea of life where its effects on both psychological and social well-being are tested.

This implicit stanza is based on “The Nuturant and Otherwise Productive Woman”, “Everyday Nobility”, Religious System Tested Against Human Purposes, “The Testing of Religious Fiber”, and Challenges are Necessary”.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Humanism  
Nuturance  
Food  
Challenges  
Mundane challenges  
Character, nobility  
Living creatures (in the empirical realm)  
Faring  
Conveying  
Facing challenges  
Nobility  
Resource(s)  
Material resources  
Multiple uses  
Versatility  
Validation of religion  
Proven value  
Woman

### *Contrasts*

Strength of character versus failure of troth

Humane values or standards versus inhumane values or standards

Success versus failure

Tested versus unproved

### *Advice for Living*

Value to mankind is a standard. The entire ecosystem is to be exploited for human purposes. By analogy, human psychological and physical phenomena are available to benefit mankind. This is not necessarily a matter of why these things exist; at least it is a matter of how resourceful we are.

Do not resent nor be depressed by challenges. Even challenges that are hard to welcome are part of a good life, for real-world tests show what we really have inside.

Religion systems also are tested for what they are made of: practice a religion that works for you.

## *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	5
1b	A	4
2a	A	4
2b	A	5
3a	B	6
3b	A	4
4a	C	5
4b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	9
3	10
4	10
Total	38

## Twenty-Sixth Stanza: High Integrity and Courage<sup>30</sup>

æsc biþ ofer héah, · eldum dýre,  
stíþ on staþule; · stede rihte hylt,  
ðeah him feohtaþ on · firas moniġe

### *Translations*

#### *(J) Transliteration*

{ash tree; ash wood; ashen spear; spear, lance; boat}    {super, very}    {tall;  
high; exalted, high class, important}

(to) people    dear

{strong, firm, hard, stiff; stubborn, unrelenting; resolute, brave; strict, rigid in  
behavior or attitude, austere}    {in; on; of}    {base, foundation; stability,  
security}

(on, in) {place, appointed place, position, station, site; condition; firmness,  
stability, steadfastness}    {rightly; properly, justly; appropriately}  
{holds, keeps, occupies; defends}

{although, though}    it    {fight, attack, struggle}    against (this preposition  
refers to “it” not to the benighted persons)

{benighted persons or men}    many

#### *(B)*

Ash tree is ultra tall; · loved by anthros.  
strongly based it is, · station rightly holds,  
though assaulted by · simpletons many.

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<sup>30</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000c).

**(C) Modernized Meter**

The tree ash is so very tall  
 and beloved by folks so much!  
 On its base does it firmly stand,  
 its station does rightly hold,  
 though it faces a fight against  
 benighted ones many.

***Issues in Edition and Translation***

There are three unmarked divisions in this section. I have included a brief back-grounder in ash trees and ashen wood. There is a very brief discussion of a neologism “anthro”. Then several editing and translation issues are addressed.

***Ash Trees***

An ash is any tree of the genus *Fraxinus* of the olive family (Oleaceae). Some of approximately 70 species are valuable for their timber and beauty. Most ash trees are about medium height for a tree, but some of the varieties exploited for timber grow to 120'. These trees tend to not be as tall as poplar, but ash trees are much less likely to break in a strong wind. Ash is common in Europe and North America. The fruits are one-seeded and winged. It had little value as food for humans or their livestock.

The wood is a lightweight material, firm but elastic by wooden standards. It is commonly used for baseball bats, tennis racket handles, shovel handles, polo sticks, and the like. It was a good choice of material for ships or spears in ancient times. It is no wonder that the word æsc was a nickname for “spear” and “boat” (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Encyclopedia Britannica, 1999c; Hall, 1960; U-Net, 1998d).

Metaphorically, ashen wood represents hardness without brittleness. The wood and the tree also represent something or some quality of great value to human society that is widely available if not present everywhere.

### ***Eldum***

In making Translation B, I coined a word for “human” (anthro) that alliterated with ash. I try to avoid neologisms, but want at least one translation in each chapter to present the alliteration and rhythm of the Old English original.

Some will object that the coined word is based on Greek. Many more modern English speakers will recognize a word related to “anthropology” or “anthropoid” than will recognize a neologism based on any ancient Teutonic equivalent to the Greek “anthros”.

The definition of *eldum* is also discussed in Chapter 25 of the present book.

### ***Stip***

Clearly, what the author or authors meant in this stanza was a depiction of resistance, defiance, or not giving in easily. Because of the admiration apparently intended here at the explicit level, I did not attempt to include in translation the idea of “severe, harsh, cruel”.

The transliteration shows that “*stip*” is not exactly the same as the Modern English “stiff”, although it is pretty close, and some expert translators use that word. (For example, Jones, 1967: 83). The idea of “*stip*” is something that is difficult, but without the negative implication of the modern “difficult”. For example, the Anglo-Saxons would have said that high standards are “*stip*”.

Also, the ancients might refer to a harsh taste as “*stip*”, just as we might refer to a strong shot of whisky or a mixed drink with a very strong taste of whisky as a “stiff drink”, meaning both that the alcohol content is strong and that the taste bites you back.

The Anglo-Saxon word that is the ancestor of the modern “stiff” is “stif”.

### *Stapule*

Several previous students of this poem confused “stapul” (also spelled “stapol”) with “stapol”, which denotes pole, beam, or pillar. In this context, “stapol” would refer to the tree’s trunk instead of its position. (Albertson, 2011: 95; Dickins, 1915; Paul, 1996; Shippey, 1972; Stanfield, 2000c.)

Actually, the difference between verses 2a and 2b is that 2a says the tree stays in place firmly and 2b says that it stays in place properly. For in this context, “stapul” and “stede” are synonyms.

### *Ðéoh Him Feotap On*

Emendation is required in line 3. The grammatical problem in the third line is that “fight” is in the infinitive form in Hickes’ copy, which reads: “ðéah him feohtan on • firas moniġe” (“although it to fight against people many.”)

Most major students of this poem interpret line 3 as something like “though many men attack it”. Ironically, they do not all edit the line to be grammatically correct and consistent with this substantive interpretation. However, the implicit consensus is that feohtan is a typo.

Grienberger’s (1921) interpretation is quite different, for he contends that ðéah is the typo. He contends that the correct word is the second-person singular indicative of dukan (to be competent; be of use, be fit, be strong; be good; be honest, kind or liberal; to do good; to thrive). Dukan is probably etymologically related to the Modern German “taugen”, which is similarly defined and which Grienberger uses to translate dukan into Modern German.

I make two objections to Grienberger’s interpretation of line 3. One objection is on grammatical grounds and the other is on substantive grounds.

The grammatical problem with Grienberger’s interpretation is that the ash is the object of the phrase. For Grienberger’s interpretation to be correct, it would have to be the case that (accusative) “him” and (nominative) “firas” are both in the wrong case, so that the oak could be the active agent and the men the object of the verb. But that would mean that there were three errors in one line. Therefore, Grienberger’s emendation is unlikely on grammatical grounds.

The substantive objection is that Grienberger sees line three as saying that the ash is useful to fight many men. If Grienberger is right that the first word is *ðeah*, then the line would say: “of use in fighting against it (are) many men”. This would introduce a remarkable reversal of focus for the strophe. The strophe begins with high praise for ash in line 1 and proceeds to explain this praise in line 2. If line three were consistent with this theme, it would continue the praise, saying that ash can resist many men. If *ðeah* were a typo -- and if “him” and “firas” were in correct case -- then line 3 would imply disapproval by advising us to use many men to fight against ash.

Therefore, it can reasonably be inferred that the correction needed is of *feohtan*, which becomes *feohtaþ*. And thus the consensus interpretation stands its ground rightly, but produces a new emendation.

Since “firas” (nominative plural) is the active agent of this phrase, then the grammatically correct version is: “*ðeah him feohtaþ on · firas monige*”.

### ***Firas***

This word emphasizes the lower-animal (less-enlightened) aspect of mankind as opposed to the more conscious or divine aspect. Although the dictionaries defined “fira” more broadly than I do here, I examined the uses of the word and concluded that it has a more specialized meaning than “person” or “man”. This definition is also discussed in Chapter 1 of the present book.

In this instance as in the first strophe, it is easier to see what the Early Medieval author(s) meant if we understand the nuance of “fira”. However, if the original

author(s) had used a more general term, the context in each case would eventually clue the student in.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

Translation B is a pretty close match to the original, despite difficulties in exactly translating two words. An experiment with pronunciation implies that Translation C might be closer to the original intent than is the original composition.

The first line is an exact match to the original for patterns of rhythm, word-sense, and alliteration.

The second line is an exact match except that the translation of “stede” does not capture the full ambiguity of the Old English word. The original includes both the idea of “fixed place” and “stability”. (“Condition” would not be included among the intended meanings, because it is not just any condition that is retained here; it is the tree’s condition prior to people messing with it.) Modern English does not have a word that would exactly match the original.

Line 3 has two minor flaws. Verse 3a matches the original’s patterns of alliteration, word-sense, and rhythm exactly. The “off” verse fits the alliteration pattern of the original, but it was necessary to add a syllable to get a close match to the word-sense pattern of the original, yielding a five-syllable type A verse to translate the original’s four-syllable Type A. The more significant deviation is that there is no Modern English word to exactly match “fira”. Simpletons are not enlightened, but they are lacking in common sense. A fira might have common sense but lacks the more advanced awareness, rationality, and self-control that the progressive mystic strives for. The simpleton category is a subset of firas.

A comparison of Translation B with a modernized-meter translation illustrates some cultural differences in poetry styles. Translation C is more smoothly-worded than the original. If a person is accustomed to reading Old English poetry, the abrupt composition of the original sounds natural, but the same

wording in Modern English seems more abrupt and obscure. Translation C avoids this discomfort.

Except for the last line in Translation C, each of its lines consists of two anapestic feet followed by a trochic foot. This tends to give Translation C a happier emotional message than might have been originally intended.

Translations B and C show different ways of achieving the same effect. In the original and Translation B, the speaker highlights the odds against the ash tree by slowing and softening his or her voice after the final caesura. There is no clue to this embedded in the strophe. In Translation C, the last line causes the reader to suddenly switch from the strictly 3-foot anapestic structure of the preceding lines, and this tends to cause a slight pause followed by an audible change in rhythm. This has the originally intended effect of emphasizing the odds against the admired tree.

It is interesting to observe what happens emotionally if we pronounce the original with a certain traditionally incorrect rhythm, corresponding more closely to the rhythm in Translation C. Translation B is close enough to the original that it is used here, modified to show the alternate rhythm. Most of the strophe is converted to an almost childishly simple chant easily recognized by modern English-speakers as poetic rhythm.

Ash tree is ULtra tall  
 loved by ANthros  
 strongly BASED it is  
 station RIGHTly holds  
 though asSAULTed by  
 simpletons MANY.

This experiment implies that the rhythm of line 2 in the original is defective, because the author(s) wanted to stress the idea of “rightly” more than the idea of “station”. Thus, achieving a standard line in traditional meter seems to have restricted composition due to a lack of words to fit into the alliteration and customary verse rhythms in Old English.

By the way, Translation C says “stability” where a closer translation would have “station” because Translation C does not translate the word for “station” in the original. That translation is close to a half-line-by-half-line corresponding rendition, but it is not necessary to be that close to get the meaning of the original.

### ***Discussion***

The most outstanding topic in “Æsc” is greatness. This is not praise of mere independence or obnoxious stubbornness, but of approaching divine standards.

This refers to opposition from outside.

As is common with metaphors, the metaphorical aspect of “Æsc” tends to break down if we examine it too closely. Although it is good to have hardwood forests, any specific full-grown ash tree is worth more to mankind chopped down for processing than standing. We know the original authors meant for us to overlook this, because the strophe is admiring. We know the admiration is not ironical because the ash is said to hold its place properly.

Both of the explicit stanzas remind us that the high value of æsc can only be revealed in performance under stress. This lesson applies to the metaphorical stanzas also.

#### ***Ash-Tree is Admired and Tough***

The ash tree stands very tall and is dear to mankind. This is because the tree, strong in foundation, holds its place rightly, although many persons struggle against it.

Unless noted otherwise, all the metaphorical stanzas are based on this explicit stanza. But the next section shows a more cynical interpretation of the words.

***Admired but Attacked Anyway***

Ash is dear to people for its stability, but the less-enlightened attack it anyway.

This explicit stanza is based in part on reading the chief staves:

eldum: to/by/for people

stede: station, condition, firmness

firas: people in their more animalistic aspect

This explicit stanza is a remark on the admiration a tough hardwood tree can get, even from people who would like to chop it down.

***Hardwood Spear***

Here, æsc is a nickname for a spear, which has value for its ability to withstand a hard fight. The emphasis here is on stability in the handle, not the point. What makes the ashen spear so high class is that you can go on using it as intended when you most need to be using it.

The emphasis here is on prominence and struggle, and the outcome of the struggle is ignored. The general thrust of this stanza ignores the fact that people chop down (or saw down) trees practically without fail. If this fact were not ignored, the metaphorical stanzas would be elegaic.

Although the idea of chopping down does not appear at the lowest level of meaning, it is relevant in a very general sense at more abstract levels.

***The Upstanding Man***

Going from “A Hardwood Spear” to “The Upstanding Man”, there is a remarkable but subtle shift in point of view. The inanimate object is dear to persons because it is very controllable under severe stress. The ash man is dear to fellow humans because of his resistant to severe external influence.

In this implicit stanza, æsc is a metaphor for an adult male person. The English had poetic kennings in common with the Norse. Therefore, the metaphor is

suggested to us by a passage in *Skaldskaparmal*, where Snorri tells us that ash is a poetic nickname for “man” (Faulkes, 1987: 94), and by the more general instruction in that essay, that trees with grammatically masculine names are used as kennings for men.

Think of tallness as a metaphor for self-esteem, for a reality-based pride. Unrealistic self-confidence, self-esteem based on illusion, and false pride are not beloved by mankind.

The tree’s base represents the ash-man’s core ethics. His station is his social situs. The social situs could be a role, such as potter or priest. It could also be a matter of relations to others, such as a promise to deliver jugs of honey or a marriage vow.

The defense put up by the focal man is proper. On his part, the fight is carried on fairly, and he is within his rights of self-defense. This man is not going out of his way to attack anyone, nor is he making threats.

The benighted persons are not sufficiently aware or self-controlled to act or to speak in ways consistent with their own core principles, or they have failed to develop a well-conceived morality.

The assault can be verbal, physical, or both. It could also simply be business pressure such as discriminatory pricing, refusal to hire, or reluctance to promote.

The ash-man is also not foolishly persisting nor stubbornly repeating, but is quite mindful. The ash man is resistant because he is under control by his own conscious intent and by high principle. This person is reliable but not submissive nor conformist.

Great strength lies in something very basic in the personality of such an individual. We can all aspire to greatness, whatever the scale on which we conduct ourselves.

Society needs such people to function well. Such individuals are needed not just as leaders, but as followers. In historical examples we see this in the grand scale and in public view, and on a more personal scale we can see this in our private lives.

Sometime in our lives, we have probably each observed the respect that people often have for a person of great individual integrity. Often we also see admiration by others. We would all like to have such faithfulness to something we believe in, even if we are among the “many persons” who struggle against the ash-man in question.

The idea is that a person who carries out a duty set forth by something like a basic ethical principle, legitimate personal order, or constructive written law -- and who does this under conditions that challenge his or her character -- is a treasure to people. . For example, if this kind of man is elected treasurer of a club or accepts a temp job assignment from an agency, he does not just walk away from the job without notice nor fail to show up to start work. This kind of man does not desert his wife and children nor betray his country or religion. The ash man accepts social obligations and lives up to them.

At least you can count on those high integrity people to stand for something. This applies to matters of good taste, simply keeping promises, adhering to standards of work quality, or in other areas of human endeavor.

### ***A Person of Integrity***

This implicit stanza is similar to “The Upstanding Man”, but in this case consider the ash tree as a metaphor for a person. The other metaphors are the same as in “The Upstanding Man”.

What is admired are the self-esteem and the commitment to integrity in the face of heavy attack.

With regard to integrity and greatness, what is true of men is true of women, although there may be differences. People of both genders tend to expect more

of men in regard to highly conscious self control than we expect of women. In articles by Bridle (1999) and Edelstein (1999a and b), we are told that women are often hostile to the very idea of self-mastery. Osborn and Longland (1982: 89) infer that the fareld of the *OERP* is basically masculine.

However, adult gender roles require us to favor adulthood over gender. The masculine tendencies of violence, forcefulness, and rebellion against authority must be partially suppressed for the achievement of proper adulthood. Likewise, excessively feminine behavioral tendencies are counter to achievement of proper adulthood. An enlightened person has a definite gender identity, but self discipline and conscious, enlightened control must override.

### ***Widely Admired but Not Always Respected***

The metaphors in this implicit stanza are the same as in “A Person of Integrity”, but the view of content is based on the explicit stanza “Admired but Attacked Anyway”. This implicit stanza emphasizes the distinction between admiration and respect.

### ***The Great Leader***

Consider the ash tree as a metaphor a leader. Let tallness stand for social prominence. The foundation is the leader’s constituency, and the social situs is that of the group as well as the leader.

Again, lines 2 and 3 explain what the people love so much about this leader. They admire righteously holding on against attack when the odds against are heavy.

This is, of course, a common attitude. One can see this attitude toward an outstanding leader in the Old English poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, in which a patrol of English soldiers is massacred by vikings (Diamond, 1970: 119-137).

***The Strong Adherent***

This is similar to “A Person of Principle”, except that the foundation is a religion’s philosophy instead of a meta-religious set of rules. The station represents membership in a religion. The other metaphors are the same as in “A Person of Principle”.

Again, the strong adherent is widely admired, even though many object to his or her religious principles or meta-religious rules. Indeed, it is easy to encounter people who do not understand the idea of meta-religious rules regarding religion. Many opine that people should just agree with whatever religion they think is right or should reject all religions. Amazingly, some persons even claim that they opine that all religions are identical.

And what is admired here is not necessarily the adherent’s foundation, but his or her self-esteem and commitment to integrity.

Sometimes, this admiration for a martyr causes people to think more highly of the religion to which she or he is so attached because of their admiration for the person.

***The Martyr***

This section relates to an issue so frequently mentioned by Islamic and Christian persons that one might expect to find it in this poem. The only difference between this implicit stanza and “The Strong Adherent” is that the ash-person’s defense against attack fails or there is no defense attempted against attack. In that other metaphorical stanza, there is no attention paid to the possibility of success or failure of attack nor defense.

The stanza does not directly address whether martyrdom might or might not work as positive propaganda for the martyr’s religion. Christians seem to have had good luck with it for part of their history, both when they were being martyred and when they did the martyring. European Pagans seem to have very bad luck with it, both when they did the martyring and when they were being martyred (Fletcher, 1997).

In the last few hundred years, martyring has come to be regarded as a violation of practically every religion's basic ethics. Regardless of what the public might think of a martyr's moral foundation, they often become rather negative about the benighted many who attack.

### ***A Group's Integrity is Admired***

Here, the ash tree is a metaphor for a well-defined and firmly-organized group of people. Tallness is a metaphor for prominence, which is not necessarily majority status in the group's broader social setting.

A prominent group can expect to be admired for its integrity, as in the explicit stanza "Ash-Tree is Admired and Tough". But it can also expect to be challenged, as in the explicit stanza "Admired but Attacked Anyway".

### ***The Spineless One is Not Well Thought Of***

This is the contrapositive of "A Person of Integrity". In propositional terms, if a person does not have a well-thought out philosophical base and (A) either holds on without proper conduct, or (B) just caves in when pressured, then people tend to not regard that individual admiringly.

### ***The Righteous and Strong-Willed***

This implicit stanza is supported by "Hardwood Spear", "A Person of Integrity", "The Great Leader", "The Strong Adherent", and "A Group's Integrity is Admired".

A religion can be like a hardwood spear. It is something one can count on to help avoid difficulties, but it also is reliable when difficulties arise. If a group has a firm commitment to an adequate ethical philosophy, then its adherents -- especially its leaders -- will tend to be admired by people in general.

Good religion helps build the person of high class because it provides him or her with a firm and worthy base, and it encourages individual and group integrity. It helps one think clearly and to concentrate, and it strengthens self-esteem and self-confidence.

Earned admiration and respect are rewards to be cherished, and they are strengths in themselves.

### ***Enduring Religion***

This implicit stanza is supported by all the explicit and implicit stanzas below it.

If a religion, a religious movement, or a local religious community is to endure, it will do so because it has greatness. It is not the only tree in the forest, but it is one that stands tall and that maintains a strong core with ethical means and impressive courage.

In other words, the “many persons” can be struggling against religion because they are simply not ready and do not understand. A person in a benighted stage of development might not understand the true nature of religion per se or the content of a particular religion. If these people exert substantial influence on organization, belief, or practice, damage can result.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Hardwood  
Ash  
Control  
Manual control  
Physical combat  
Fighting against many opponents  
Fighting alone when outnumbered  
Weapon

Popularity

Man

Person

Principle

Exaltation

Standing tall

Firmness in foundation – emotionally and intellectually

Motivation

Greatness

Competition or struggle against persons

Struggle against heavy odds

Defensive victory

Justly or honorable obtained victory

Inner strength

Inner strength manifested outwardly

Being high class in one's conduct

### ***Contrasts***

Being admired versus being respected

Defense versus offense

Social control versus higher control

### ***Advice for Living***

You can be a treasure for others by letting them control you. However, one attains a higher value by rising to a higher mode of being under control. That higher level is the control by one's own conscious intent and by high principle.

Merely being socially valuable does not automatically mean that everyone will like you. Even some who admire you may oppose, perhaps fiercely. The way you handle this opposition is a test of your degree of greatness.

Both individuals and human societies need the strengths of traditional religions. Religions that help people approach or attain greatness are of value even to

those who oppose them. Persons who approach or attain greatness are of positive importance to society.

High-class character can be a characteristic of both individuals and organizations, and it tends to be admired by everyone.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D1	5
1b	A	4
2a	D1	5
2b	D2	5
3a	B	5
3b	A	4

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	10
3	9
Total	28

## Twenty-Seventh Stanza: the Fancy and the Profound<sup>31</sup>

ýr byþ æþelinga · and eorla gehwæs;  
wyn and wyrþmynd; · byþ on wicge fæger;  
fæstlic on færeld; · fyrdgeatewa sum.

### *Translations*

#### **(K) Transliteration**

{some kind of hand-held weapon} is (to) {noblemen; (poetry only) heroes, saints, (poetry and plural only) men, people; those who are good quality in mind, those who are famous or excellent, those who are ennobled}

and {earls, noblemen, persons of high governmental authority; warriors; men} each

{joy, delight, pleasure} and {indicator of rank, dignity, or social value; badge of prestige; indicator of fitness}

is on (a) horse {beautiful, fair; free from trouble; pleasant}

{secure; firm, solid, sound; enduring, lasting} on/in {journey, expedition, progress; motion; passage between stages of a life; course of life}

{army; field army; military force; military expedition; ford} {gear, equipment; adornment; clothing} one

#### **(B)**

Yr is athelings' • and earls' ev'ry one  
winning worth-mark. • It's on war-horse lovely,  
wayfare-stress enduring, • war-gear that is fine!

---

<sup>31</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000c).

**(C)**

For a thane or a baron, a yr's always a joy  
 and badge of prestige to have.  
 Looking good on a horse but still tough on the road,  
 such fine gear for war it is!

### *Issues in Edition and Translation*

There are three issues to be considered here. First, the definition of the title word presents interesting technical difficulties. It cannot be precisely defined, but we can get close enough to interpret the strophe, which is not about “ýr”. The second issue is the definition of “fæstlic”, which seems to usually be misinterpreted in context. The third task is less daunting: a pair of typos in the last verse.

#### *The Title Word*

Ýr is untranslatable. It is some kind of hand-held and probably decorated weapon that only nobles could afford, but we cannot be sure specifically what. However, since the sound represented by “ý” is unpronounceable in Modern English (it is the same as the Modern German unlauded “u”), the rune name is rendered “yr” (pronounced “yer”) as if this were a translation. Rationalizations for this conclusion follow.

In translations of this poem, ýr is usually translated as “yew”, “bow”, or “gold jewelry” on the basis of etymological considerations. The translations of “yew” and “bow” derive from the Old Norse ýr. In the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme* this word is usually translated as “yew”. In the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem* it is usually translated as “yew-wood bow”. (See Bosworth and Toller: 1898, 1921; Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Halsall, 1981; Kemble, 1840; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Page, 1999: 75; Paul, 1996; Pollington, 1996; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1993; S. Wödening, 1996a).

As Halsall (1981) has noted, the stanza does not make sense if we translate the title word as “yew”, “bow”, or “(gold) jewelry”, although she translated the word as “bow” anyway.

We can rule out “yew” as a translation because another word with the same definition is used as the name of another rune. Of course, as a synecdoche, “ýr” could refer to something partly or wholly made of yew wood -- such as an axe or a bow. But in that case a clearer translation would be the name of that object instead of a name of the material.

There are five surviving uses of the word in the Old English corpus outside this stanza. Four uses of ýr are in the famous signatures of Cynewulf (Pollington, 1996: 56-60). In these “signatures”, the rune names are used as words in the poetry and at the same time the rune staves spell out the author’s name or present an anagram of his name. In three of the four specimens it is not clear at all from the context what ýr is. In one instance, Cynewulf says in relation to his recollections of war service that thought of ýr “saddened” or “grieved” him. If Cynewulf was having post-traumatic stress syndrome, a weapon might have that effect.

The fifth instance is in one of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. Dickins says that the focal word appears in Chronicle E for the year 1012 as “ax-head” or “ax iron”. (See Dickins, 1915: 159; Garmonsway, 1972: 142-143).

The passage in Chronicle E for the year 1012 could just as well have said “ax handle” as “ax-head”. I checked the original, using Jebson’s (2006b) edition. The passage in question says that vikings killed a hostage who refused to be ransomed, partly by pelting him with hard objects but also by someone hitting him in the head with an ax “ýr”.

It is not clear that yew would be likely material for an ax handle. There is an advantage to yew wood as material for a battle ax handle, since yew tends to resist chopping, and having your ax destroyed by an ax man or swordsman in battle is to be avoided. On the other hand, the elasticity of yew wood makes ash or oak a more appealing material. Sometimes the ax handles were reinforced

with metal languets to protect the handle from sword and ax blows (Knight, 2009; Wikipedia, 2012).

Grienberger (1921: 219) decided that a ýr is not a weapon. He based his decision only on the content of this stanza: the ýr is an item of equipment which to the nobles is pleasure, which on a horse looks beautiful, and which on a military expedition proves durable or secure. Nothing is said about causing wounds. Moreover, the word closely resembles an Old Norse word denoting a type of wood (yew). Hence, Grienberger inferred that ýr refers to an item of horse tack, and that most likely this would be at least part of the wooden saddle frame. But the problem with this is that the wooden frame is normally hidden under leather or some other covering. Hence, any quality of looking fair would not be readily apparent.

In the previous century, Stanfield (also not looking beyond the stanza “Ýr”) agreed that the noun would have to refer to horse-riding equipment, but left the definition as the generic “fancy horse tack”. In medieval times fancy tack was definitely a status symbol. And tack has always been expensive. In America in the late Twenty-First Century, a new and complete but comparatively plain outfit — cleaning materials, English saddle, bit, etc — would cost almost as much as the present author was paying for a used car. (Dent, 1971; Encyclopedia Britannica 2000a; Green, 1978; Stanfield, 2000c; Tanbark Group, L.L.C., 2000; McElyea, 2000a).

But “horse tack” does not fit all the known uses of the focal word. If we translate ýr as “fancy horse tack”, “jewelry”, or “horn”, then we cannot see a coherent and meaningful statement of how this object could bring post-traumatic grief as well as enjoyment.

Moreover, the strophe specifically states that this is war equipment.

In later medieval times, nobles’ horses would have been heavily armored. However, in the culture that gave rise to *The Old English Rune Poem*, armored horses would have been rare and not always practical. Horses were normally tethered nearby while the army fought.

So there is only one kind of object that can satisfy all the uses we see of this noun: a weapon that would fit on horseback along with a rider. We can rule out a spear or lance. Such a weapon would have to be carried by the rider and pointed upward practically all the time. (Otherwise, a horse or a person could be wounded in an accident.) A spare ax handle might be too plain to fit the stanza. Inlaying gold or jewels in the wood would tend to weaken the handle. Some spare ax handles might have been beautiful, considering items available for auction nowadays, depending on the finish on the wood and the way languets were designed and fastened on, but it might look strange without an ax-head. Also, possessing a spare ax handle does not mark one's status as war fighter.

This leaves two options. A battle-ax for infantry use can be a large weapon, but it could be secured on a horse for transport to the battlefield or encampment. The head can be decorated with inscriptions, inlays, or paint. A well-made ax tends to be very durable, although its edge will occasionally need some work. A bow likewise could be transported on horseback with the rider, and a war bow should be durable in transit if it is any good in battle.

### *Fæstlic*

In this context, the focal word refers to durability, not to being fastened down. This is the consensus view, but not everyone has agreed with it.

The Bosworth-Toller dictionary defines this word as “fixed, steadfast”, and the Hall dictionary shows a very similar definition. This seems to explain why I previously defined “fæstlic” as denoting “secure”. (Bosworth and Toller, 1898; 1921; Hall, 1960; Stanfield, 2000c).

There are two objections to that definition for this context. (1) “Secure” is not a characteristic of yr; it is a condition into which it might or might not be placed by the noble or one of his servants. (2) A more important characteristic of concern for expeditionary equipment is durability. Almost anything that fits on a horse can be fastened down securely if one is conscientious and skilled and has the right materials. But trouble occurs if one's equipment breaks down while

one is in camp far from home, out on the road, or -- worst of all -- when someone is trying to kill or cripple you.

The Toronto project's *Dictionary of Old English* shows a more varied definition than do the other two authorities. In addition to "fixed in place", they show "reliable" and "enduring" (*Dictionary of Old English Project, 2008*). These ideas are much more applicable to the present context.

Osborn and Longland (1981: 53) and Albertsson (2011: 180) interpret the focal word as meaning that the bow is "quick in its course" or "steadfast on its course". But these interpretations appear to assume that the topic has changed from the yr to an arrow, since they translate "ýr" as "bow". This is certainly the case with Osborne and Longland. In any case, the strophe is not concerned with how good a shot the user is.

### ***Geatwa***

The original has "fyrd geacewa" in the last half-line, but this seems to be three typos.

First, there is no word "geacewa" anywhere else in Old English literature, but there are instances of "géatewe" to denote "equipment". There is also frætewe, denoting treasures, adornments, armor, or trappings (Hall, 1970). It is likely that a medieval scribe or Hickeys' printer copied a letter incorrectly. Halsall (1981) emends geacewa to geatwa, noting that t and c look alike in insular minuscule. Here are the two letters — first t and then c — in the Junius font:

ƿ c

Second, there is also no Old English word "geatwa", so the last letter is commonly emended to an "e".

And third, most editors combine "fyrd" and "geatwe" into one word. If this is not done, the rhythm of the verse 3b is defective, having too many stressed

vowels. The combined word, occurs in Old English just once, but it is clearly appropriate this once.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

In this instance, the “perfect” translation is surprisingly close to an exact replication of the original’s patterns of rhythm, alliteration, and word sense.

There is a slight deviation in line 1, such that the Translation is not quite as happy-sounding as the original. Verse 1a has a six-syllable D1 rhythm, and the translation has a five-syllable D2. Although the alliteration and word-sense match exactly, the difference in rhythm produces a significantly different emotional impact. There is a similar defect in verse 1b, even though the match is perfect by the objective standards set for this study. This could have an effect on religious-mystery meditation.

The issue in verse 1a could have been avoided by making a slight neologism. Using “athelingas” would have achieved a six-syllable D1 rhythm. However, that would be beyond the limit of poetic license used for this book. My arbitrary rule requires that a neologism not be a puzzling mis-spelling of a word you can find in a dictionary.

Line 2 is a perfect match for the original, except that it begins a new, complete sentence. This gets the listener away from the staccato style of the original, but the effect on most native English speakers will be slight. The original intent was a new, incomplete sentence or independent clause. In fact, the caesura between verses 2a and 2b marks a boundary between two ideas: delightful and practical.

In line 3, there are three deviations from the original. In verse 3a, the order of word-sense is reversed. The original has “on route” after “durable”, but the translation reversed the order of those ideas to get a match on rhythm. Also, the original alliterates on both of the main ideas (durable and expedition), whereas the translation only alliterates on one of those ideas. Verse 3b meets the objective standards for “perfection” but is more direct than the original. The

original says that the yr is really some piece of military equipment, which is an indirect way of saying “excellent”, but the translation says the same thing outright.

A comparison of the “perfect” and modernized-meter translations highlights how different two cultures were for poetry. Translation C corrects a problem with the original wording that affects users of Modern English. In Old English “eorla gehwæs wyn” sounds natural and beautiful as poetry. But in Modern English “earls’ each joy” sounds rather awkward.

Translation C conveys to the modern audience much more efficiently the upbeat tone the original author(s) communicated to an Early Medieval audience. This is partly because the wording is smoother and partly because of the mostly anapestic (and much stronger) beat. These features are more congenial and communicative to modern audiences than are the features of ancient meter placed into la modern language.

## *Discussion*

Five implicit stanzas provide a ladder from the most concrete to the most abstract messages of “Ýr”. At the lowest level of meaning, “Ostentatious Horse Tack” states some of the salient social and psychological functions of ýr. At the second level of meaning, “Trappings of Serious Status Can Be Fun in Themselves” extends this discussion to manifestations of social status in general. At this stage, the stanza draws our attention to the distinction between aspects of things that are of immediate practical value and aspects that serve other uses. A still-more metaphorical stanza tells us that “Fancy Stuff Can Look Good with Religion”, and leads us to the third level. At that level, “Fancy Gear Can Be Narcissistic” reinforces a lesson from a previous stanza, in which we were warned of distractions which appear in normal religious practice. Finally, “A Mixture of Lower Animal and Ultimate Divine” states an underlying philosophical principle: in this religion we try to make the best of ourselves that we can in an art of the possible.

This implicit stanza refers to the following conditions. In Migration Age and early medieval Teutonic societies, the entire able-bodied, non-slave male population could be levied into an armed force. In England in Early Medieval times that force was called the fyrd. Members of the fyrd provided their own martial supplies, clothing, and equipment. Food and other supplies could be obtained by force from areas where the army happened to be.

### ***Pleasurable, Prestigious, Pretty, and Practical***

To each noble, including the earls, a yr is a joy to have and a badge of status. It is good-looking on a horse and durable on route. Quite an item of military equipment!

The explicit stanza clearly implies that yr is a symbol of membership in a military elite. Such a display would have positive effects on the morale of the users, and might in that sense provide indirect military benefit. Even some of the lower-status members of a fyrd might prefer to see their leaders looking “cool”.

There are two perspectives on yr. In the original, each is begun with “is” (byþ). In the first perspective, yr is fun for the nobles and their leaders because it builds their pride. In the second perspective, yr is a very practical item to take on a military mission.

### ***Physical Symbol of Membership***

In this implicit stanza, yr stands for a symbol of a membership that brings pride to the member. It is not readily attainable. The wayfare (færeld) is a metaphor for the course of one’s life. The symbol is therefore durable in the sense that it does not lose its meaning as one matures. The fyrd would be a metaphor for any project, such as educating new recruits to Christianity or building a city wall.

For this to apply to the unmounted, the horse has to also be a metaphor. As the fyrd is the group, the horse is the motivation (the pun is intended) to participate. That motive force is the spirit of the group, and the symbol is such as to be consistent with that spirit.

Such symbols provide indicators of the group's boundaries. Therefore they help organizations maintain cohesiveness and commitment from members, and they reinforce individual senses of identity.

### ***Overt Indicator of Religion***

Consider the horse as metaphor for means of personal progress, specifically a type of progressive mysticism. The horse in this implicit stanza represents the living corpse. The fyrd would then be the work done with this method. The yr endures in the sense that it retains its meaning as the focal person's life progresses. That is, the focal person does not outgrow it as she or he develops.

In this implicit stanza, for both the rank-and-file mystics and their leaders, the yr is an emotional pleasure as a fine piece of art. It indicates their commitment to nobility of character. The symbol per se is consistent with the work done in the program.

Such a source of pride and joy need not be a physical symbol. For example, Jewish dietary restrictions set Jews apart as a distinctive ethnic group. For English polytheistic religion, the poetry or the worship of the pantheon is a distinctive marker.

However, physical symbols such as temple building, special groves, or hammer pendants are also overt indicators of religion and are more readily perceived in everyday life.

For an unarmed monk or nun, a large and fancy crucifix would fit this description. During this period, many civilian Christians wore crosses, and in some places Christian soldiers wore tunics marked with crosses.

A person into mixed religion could wear a combined symbol, such as the hammer with crosses marked on it, dated about 1000CE and found in Yorkshire (Shøyen, 2009). The crosses on that pendant are equal-armed, so they do not necessarily represent Calvary, but could represent a saint or some Pagan idea.

***Trappings of Serious Status Can Be Fun in Themselves***

Here, a well-rounded approach is depicted as desirable. This implicit stanza is derived from “Physical Symbol of Membership” and “Overt Indicator of Religion”. We enjoy displaying it and the symbol is simply somehow fun to have. This applies not only to persons of distinction but also to the elite among them. However, the pride and joy of these possessions is extraneous to the basic function of the equipment.

Both aspects -- the fun or pride aspect, and ht practical -- are important.

***Fancy Stuff Can Look Good with Religion***

This implicit stanza is supported by the explicit and implicit stanzas below it. Here, the horse is a metaphor for religion. Therefore the yr is a metaphor for a variety of things associated with religions but not directly part of the esoteric core of any religion.

Included would be luxurious or highly decorative equipment or costumes used in religious organizations or ceremonies. It is well known that people tend to decorate their religions with sumptuous buildings and altar equipment, even if their religious lore praises humility or relating to nature. At this point, it should be added that at least some pre-migration age Teutonic peoples used open-air temples but not temple buildings (Owen, 1985; Mattingly and Hanford, 1970). Clergy also are often decked out in very distinctive and fancy attire. In various religions these symbols would also include robes, skull caps, censers, crosses, hammers, chalices, and many other things. For example, there are clergy jobs, organizational titles, ranks of honor or achievement, songs, chants, beautiful poems, and fascinating stories. The fancy stuff also provides badges of communal and individual status, and can simply be enjoyed.

The purposes of this fancy stuff may serious purposes, such as include honoring deities. Also, the numinous and our own psyches cannot usually be approached directly, and religious yr can help us focus during specific ritual work.

Moreover, it is just human nature to look upon such things as indications of high levels of organizational and individual competence.

### ***Fancy Gear Can Be Narcissistic***

This implicit stanza deals with a problem to all religions. The common problem is a danger of drifting off into religionism if we become distracted by outward symbols. After all, buildings, badges, costumes, or specially-styled equipment might be helpful, but they can also be extraneous to esoteric religious practice. And however good such things are they can also distract and therefore hinder our becoming less narcissistic and more aware and rational.

This perspective on “Ýr” is suggested by the lack of any mention that the weapon actually works. The symbols are discussed in the section “Fancy Stuff Can Look Good with Religion” and “Trappings of Serious Status Can Be Fun in Themselves”.

The tension between the glorious appearance of yr and its function as war gear is emphasized in the Cynewulf signature mentioned above. Although Cynewulf’s slant is more Christian than Pagan, he is dealing with an analogous ambivalence. When he looks at his bow or his battle ax, he sees both tragedy and glory, but the tragedy seems avoidable.

In this case, the tragedy is merely being full of oneself, and not slaughter.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Ostentation

Pride

Joy

Membership

Weapon

Decoration

Attractive art  
 Symbols of prestige  
 Symbol of office  
 Symbol of accomplishment  
 Joy  
 Elite persons  
 Leaders of elite persons  
 Sumptuous things  
 Appearances that are good for morale  
 Narcissism  
 Need for pride  
 Distraction by symbols

### ***Contrasts***

Decoration versus function  
 Esoteric religion versus religionism  
 Sumptuous versus plain equipment

### ***Advice for Living***

In many human pursuits, fancy trappings and doings can be quite useful in various ways, including making delight and boosting self-esteem. This applies to religion as well as other institutions, and it applies even to the more enlightened among us. However, we must not allow ourselves to be detoured by enjoyment of showing off signs of rank, achievement, or wealth.

## ***Statistical Analysis***

<u>Verse</u>	<u>Verse Type</u>	<u>Syllables</u>
1a	D1	6
1b	B	5
2a	A	4

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Ýr

2b	A	6
3a	D1	6
3b	E	5

Line	Syllables
1	11
2	10
3	11
Total	32

## Twenty-Eighth Stanza: Mundane and Spiritual Amphibianism<sup>32</sup>

íar byþ eafíxa • and ðéah a brúceþ  
fódres on foldan • hafaf fægerne eard  
wætre beworpen • ðær hé wynnum leofaf

### *Translations*

#### *(L) Transliteration*

Beaver is (of the) river/stream/water fishes

and yet always {consumes, uses, enjoys, eats; partakes of food}

food on (dry) land

(it) has (a/an) {pleasant, agreeable; (“beautiful” or “fair” is not be a good description of a pile of mud and sticks)} {dwelling, home; natural place}

(by) water surrounded

{there; where} he {joyfully, delightedly, happily} {resides; lives}

#### *(B)*

Beaver’s brook-fish like, • but habitually eateth  
fodder in forest. • Has a fair kind of home,  
wrapped ‘round by water • where it relishes living.

#### *(C) Modernized Meter*

The beaver is like a fresh-water fish,  
but food it takes on land.  
A lair it does have too, a goodly home ground,  
a place with water all ‘round.

<sup>32</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000d).

And there does it happily live.

### ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

There are two categories of issues regarding this stanza. First, the title word occurs only in the *OERP* and in lists of runes, so that there are questions of spelling and meaning to be dealt with here. The second category of issues involves minor editing to correct typos.

#### ***Translation of the Title Word***

Beaver do not always eat on land, but they often do. A typical beaver project is storing twigs stuck in mud under water, for viands when ponds are frozen over. Beavers do not always reside in lodges built in their ponds; sometimes they burrow deep into a bank instead. This is the usual practice when they reside in lakes or rivers instead of building a pond. But the usual practice is to dam a small stream and live in a lodge built similarly to the dam -- with mud, twigs, and logs. They typically build two floors in their lodges, sleeping in the upper level and dining in the lower level. The top of the lodge typically has looser construction than the rest of the structure; this is for ventilation of the home. Sometimes beavers dig ditches that get filled with water. They use these canals to transport logs more easily than dragging overland. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2000: “Beaver” and “Rodent”).

It is only a slight extension of what people usually mean by “on land” to include the floor of a lodge or lair dug into a river bank. If we allow that stretch, then “íar” can be translated. Otherwise, no animal will fit the description. (This issue is taken up again in the subsection on “a brúcep”.)

Another translations that has been discussed is “hippopotamus”. Hippos do always eat on land, grazing on grass at night. But their home is not surrounded by water, for the hippos hang out directly in the water of rivers, ponds, and lakes by day.

There have been several other translations proposed for the title word. But they much less plausible than “hippo”, and they are briefly discussed by Page (1999b: 75).

By the way, the more familiar Old English word for beaver, and the ancestor of our modern term, is “beofor”. The word for “hippo” is “nicor”, which also means “water monster”.

### ***The Spelling of the Title Word***

We have no need to normalize nor “correct” the spelling of the title word.

Since Hickes’ day, there has been some confusion over the spelling of this rune name. The spelling “íar” appears only in this stanza; and in all the lists of Anglo-Saxon rune names (that are shown without poetry), the name of this rune is íor. Hickes (1705) showed rune names that appeared in another medieval manuscript, but added phonetic equivalents based on another rune list he published. (See Appendix A). Since in this case the phonetic equivalent from that other rune list (io) did not appear to him to match the rune name, he inserted a “correction” above the rune name, calling the rune “io”.

Following rune lists other than Hickes’, most editors of the poem emend the rune name to íor. (See Dickins, 1915; Dobbie, 1942; Grienberger, 1921; Halsall, 1981; Hickes, 1703-1705; Kemble, 1840; Pollington, 1995; Shippey, 1972; Thorsson, 1993; Wordsmith 1989 in Wódening, 1996a).

But there is no meaning attached to “íor” other than as the name of a rune. Perhaps the “íar” and “íor” were distinct words in the year 950 CE. So let us just leave the word as it is.

### ***Eafixa***

The “original” has a typo. It says that iar is “ea fixa”, which means “(a) river of fishes” or “(a) fishes’ stream”. Of course, that is nonsense, for the íar is not a body of water.

So the expression is typically changed by modern editors. For examples: “íár is (a) river-fish” (“byþ eafixa [sum]” — Kemble, 1840) or “íár is one of the river-fish” (“byþ eafix” — Dobbie 1942).

Grienberger (1921) recommends saying that the íár is of the river fishes (“eafixa”), which he says is like saying that the character Hygelac in *Beowulf* is “of the Geats”. I would prefer the example that it is like saying your twelve-year-old son who swims well is “like a fish in the water”. The poem is merely saying that beavers are similar to fish in the sense that they are very comfortable and proficient in the water.

The run-together word is probably what was originally intended, since there is no inflexional ending on “ea”.

### ***A Brúcep***

In line 1a, the original says “abrúcep”. In 2000, I edited this to “a brúcep” for metrical reasons only. I was uncharacteristically following all the other editors of this stanza at the time (Kemble, 1840; Dickins, 1915; Grienberger, 1921; Dobbie, 1942; Shippey, 1972; Halsall, 1981; Osborn and Longland, 1982; Thorsson, 1993; Worsmith 1989 in Wódening, 199a; Pollington, 1996). However, a detailed analysis leads to the same conclusion.

We lack a lexical reason to reject “abrúcan”, although at least one other student said that there is no such word “abrúcan”. He claimed that the word does not appear anywhere else in the surviving corpus (Grienberger, 1921). But Toller and someone in the crew at the Dictionary of Old English Project found it in a note someone wrote about the Genesis character, Adam. Adam ate (“abreac”) an apple because of the “deceitful serpent’s” teaching. So that means the word would appear in the corpus twice. And the meaning that fits both uses is “to eat” (Dictionary of Old English Project, 2008; Bosworth and Toller, 1921: 4).

Jones (1967: 112) claimed that the initial vowel should be separated into another word because “the alliteration requires a stressed vowel”. This is based on the

idea that the initial letter “a” would not be stressed, as in Modern English “aback” or the American dialectical expression, “a-walkin’”. If we did not separate the initial “a”, there would be only one stressed syllable, and it would start with “b”.

But if the stress is on a word for “always”, then half-line 1a only has that one stressed syllable. The solution to this is to count the secondary stress on “brúcep” as a primary stress or -- this is preferable -- for the speaker to put more slightly more stress than usual on the first syllable in “brúcep”.

This edition makes a subtle difference in translation of the title word. If the original says “always eats on land”, then strictly speaking no animal fits the description. But beavers store food to eat in their lodges when their ponds are frozen over, and if we slightly stretch our definition of “land” to include the floor of a lodge, “beaver” fits. This stretch would be unnecessary if the focal word were “abrúcep”.

The “stretch” to justify translating “íar” will come into play at relatively abstract levels of interpretation. That is, a certain kindred between land and lodge will be of symbolic significance.

### ***On Foldan***

The original says “onfaldan”. That is an error, since the original intent was obviously to say “on land”. Moreover, there is no such word as “onfaldan”.

Since at least as early as Kemble’s (1840) edition, every editor whose work I studied has separated the preposition from the verb. Since at least Dickins’ (1915) edition, every editor whose work I studied has corrected the spelling of the verb to foldan. Grienberger (1921) and Halsall (1981) offer good explanations for the corrections.

***Critique of Translation B***

The “perfect” translation preserves the word-sense, alliteration, and rhythm patterns of each line closely, with only minor deviations. But there is a subtle imperfection in a failure to replicate a pun.

In the first line, verse 1a says that the mammal is like a fish in the water slightly more directly than does the original, but the variance is insignificant. The second half-line is a perfect match in word sense and pattern of alliteration, but the rhythm is a six-syllable type A, whereas the original is a more subtle five-syllable type C. (This assumes, of course, that one puts extra stress on the first syllable in “brúcep”; otherwise the original verse 1b is unmetrical.)

Line 2 is perfect except that a pun is weakened in the “perfect” translation. In Old English, “eard” denotes both “earth or soil” and “home”. In Modern English, we cannot say “lair” and “home ground” in one word.

Verse 3a has single alliteration and reverses the order of ideas, moving “surrounded” before “water”. I considered “water enwrappéd”, which is a perfect match except for the single alliteration. But the adjectival phrase “water enwrappéd” just sounds too strange in Modern English even though -- or perhaps because -- it is exactly what the original says.

In the translation of verse 3b, a seven-syllable A verse is offered for the original’s 6-syllable type A. Otherwise, the match is perfect for that verse.

The last half-line, as is the case in most stanzas of the *Old English Rune Poem*, is highlighted by a different style of speaking than that used for the other verses. In this case, the highlight is not so much slowing down and softening the volume of speaking as switching to prose after the final caesura. In both the Old English original and Translation B, the last verse sounds like prose to the present author, even though both versions meet the formal criteria for a traditional poetic verse.

In Translation C’s third line, the dual meaning of “eard” is included, but the tease is gone. The expression “lair...home ground” says the same thing in an

objective sense, but the emotional and intellectual tension of the original ambivalence could not be translated.

There is an interesting contrast between the "perfect" translation and the modernized translation. The "perfect" translation does not sound awkward and forced, but asyndetic parataxis just is not as cool in Modern English as in Old English. Indeed, the surprise here and in most chapters has been how agreeable-sounding and close to perfect the "perfect" translation can be when making a Modern English version of an Old English work.

Also, although the original setup is best recited with a pause and then a slightly more relaxed vocalization in the last line, there is no hint of this in the original. Direction depends on the reader's or reciter's understanding of the composer's intent. Translation B has punctuation indicating a parenthetical phrase, and that indicates a change in vocalization. But in Translation C, both punctuation and rhythm disruption in the line alternation lets the speaker know what to do.

Alterations in rhythm in the modernized meter version are intended to highlight originally-intended contrasts between land and water. Although the original author(s) stated this contrast twice, most interpreters of the poem seem more concerned with other issues. The meter of Translation C is 4-stressed dactylic line, then a 3-stressed iambic line twice. To highlight the conclusion, the final line is 3-stressed dactylic line after a pause to start a new sentence.

## *Discussion*

This is definitely a strophe about functioning in different modes, zones, or realms. "Íár" delves into the mystery of layers of existence and the mystery of adaptation to separate realms or zones. In one sense, there are two realms: the ecosystem of the pond and the ecosystem of the forest on dry land. In another sense there are three realms: land of work, water of play and work, and lodge of residence.

Page (1999: 75; 1961: 70-72) wonders why the Anglo-Saxons would need a rune for the diphthong “io” (or in this case, “ia”). I have two suggestions, neither subject to proof but each stimulating in its own way. (1) Of course we have all observed that often the most verbally aggressive persons are that way because they do the least hesitating to think; such persons are constantly degrading languages. That would be random behavior. (2) But a more interesting suggestion is that rune names were coordinated with wisdom poetry like this very poem, and some philosophers wanted a rune stanza about operating in two or more realms successfully. So they shoe-horned an extra letter into most English Pagan alphabetic lists. And that innovation caught on because the poetry (almost all of it now lost) was good enough art to interest audiences, not because the extra letter was helpful. Actually, it would only take one excellent poet to make this happen, with others falling in behind.

An aspect of beavers left out of this stanza is their busy-ness, especially frequent and energetic gnawing. They are hard-working animals, almost constantly repairing or expanding their dams and lodges, and they are fat. But they get their nutrition from eating wood. That requires that they spend a lot of time eating. If this were a poem about gaining material prosperity or security in everyday life, the beaver’s bustling or its poor choice of victuals would be a big deal. Instead, industriousness is a background issue, and the rodent’s compulsion to gnaw is omitted from consideration.

Instead, the emphasis here is on consumption, not productivity. In this stanza, the chief stave in the first line does not refer to humans as earls, hominids, or in any other aspect. The key word is “eats”. And the strophe closes with the idea of living happily.

### *Happy Amphibious Consumer*

The beaver is much like the fresh-water fishes, but it always obtains its food on land. It has a pleasant home surrounded by water (for protection and recreation), and there it lives happily. Notice that the beast is not going to another realm because it hates home or does not know where it belongs.

***Ideal Commuter***

This metaphorical stanza is not strictly modern, although commuting to and from work is different nowadays. The Early Medieval author(s) lived in a different world than most modern Americans in regard to commuting. In England at the time, village-residing farmers commuted from their homes out to the fields and woods where they did most of their work. Manufacturers in those days often resided in the second floor of the buildings where they made things. Also, the commutes would not have been as crowded as in all the highly urbanized countries of modern times. In the USA and Canada, farmers typically live on their farms and manufacturers (and merchants) commute to their workplaces.

Thus, the original author or authors probably did think of ordinary people leaving their villages to make a living while having happy homes surrounded by the flow of human society.

***Religious Amphibian***

Consider the beaver as a metaphor for a person who, though happily adjusted in his or her home realm, visits another for nourishment. This is what the healthy mystic does. The mystic neither destroys nor builds the forest, but she or he gains psychological strength from that other realm. This is a depiction of mystical work not as escape, but as something that makes the home-realm a happier place for the practitioner.

Like the air-breathing beaver, the mystic is not exactly as happy and at ease on land as at home or in the pond. But also like the beaver, the mystic does not have to waste emotion terrified of other realms, for he or she learns to be quite comfortable and proficient in other worlds.

***Three Zones of a Balanced Life***

The animal that lives in three zones or realms: lodge, liquid, and land. It is therefore analogous to humans living in work, play, and home. A balanced and

varied life is characteristic of the well-balanced and therefore happy, well-nourished life.

This seems to be a criticism of workaholic behavior and loafing.

### ***The Beaver Is an Amphibian***

The main ideas of this implicit stanza revolve around a ladder of three contrasts. This is “contrast”, not “conflict”. (1) At the bottom of the ladder, there is a contrast between the two realms — a body of water and dry land. (2) An implicit contrast is between the amphibious beaver and creatures who are less versatile. (3) Beavers actively construct lairs and are famous for altering their environments by building water empoundments. Therefore we find another implicit contrast, one of passive versus active adaptations.

There is also a theme of consistent enjoyment, which is highlighted by chief staves. They are: eating, beautiful/pleasant, and joyfully (abruceþ, fægerne, and wynnun). This theme is to be interpreted in view of the contrasts, for active exploitation of three realms or zones of operations helps the beaver achieve a consistently pleasant living.

### ***One Can Be Happy in Various Realms***

In this stanza, the beaver represents people while land and water represent distinct cultures or subcultures. Notice that water is almost as much the beaver’s native element as dry land, at least according to line 1. This is a land animal that skillfully enhances and intentionally exploits a liquid environment.

Hence, the major point here is that versatility and variety can be quite comfortable, for we can be aware of and involved in the ways of another person, another group, or another “reality” and still happily retain a separate and stable identity.

The contrast between the two ecosystems is analogous to many contrasts that we encounter in our lives. The boundary between these two realms — the surface of

the water — is readily penetrated by many types of beings, but requirements for being at home in each realm are practically contrary to the requirements for being at home in the other. Each realm is only vaguely visible from the other, and it is quite possible for beings native to one realm to ignore or avoid the other realm. Similar contrasts occur between human geographic communities, gender identities or preferences, ethnic subcultures, religious systems, and divisions of very large organizations. This sort of contrast also applies to institutions, for many of us live highly compartmentalized lives. Many of us spend our time so differently at work and at home that it is as if we had two personalities. Likewise, our behavior in hobby, religious, or political realms may contrast markedly with our behavior elsewhere because we are in markedly different environments. Doing well in one type of setting does not necessarily mean that we cannot do well in another, and being well adapted to different compartments of our lives can be a contributing factor to overall happiness.

The most refined and well-rounded persons learn languages and cultures to which they are not native, and in other ways broaden their perspectives. While it might be efficient for us to be creatures of habit and at home with the familiar, we can also profit from branching out.

Just as the beaver still gets its sustenance on land and is happy in a home out of the water, we can be quite comfortable and proficient with others' ways and retain our identifications with our own groups. One does not necessarily deny or destroy one's own precious roots by adapting to another group's way.

Of course, you can get cut off from your home. You can branch out well or poorly. But that is a topic for another time and place.

### ***Learning and Layers of the Psyche***

In this metaphorical stanza, eating is a metaphor for learning. For purposes of this implicit stanza, we will assume that the beaver resides in a beaver-built pond.

The basic idea is that learning takes place in a structure of psychic layers and involves an active agent. This is the most important of the metaphorical stanzas of “Íár”. In some ways it is similar to the much-later phenomenological school of philosophy and social science, but that similarity is beyond the scope of this book.

Just as modern psychology has theories of psychological structure, ancient Teutonic religion had a sophisticated lore of the soul or psychic structure. Here we see three psychic layers that are metaphorically represented by the land, the water, and the lodge. And the beaver represents one more psychological factor -- an active agent within all this structure.

Outside the three layers, the forest is an overall environment. The forest land is where subsistence is obtained, and it corresponds to outer empirical reality.

Inside the forest is the dry-ground zone of mental operations. This is where the beaver most intimately interacts with the forest, exploiting resources, so it is a metaphor for a vivid awareness of outer empirical reality. The fodder found in this zone is a metaphor for information. Certainly, ideas and data from outside are required.

Further inside this reality is the pond, a psychic layer which is constructed by the beaver. The pond is not an arbitrary construction, but a very creative rearrangement of things that reflects a standard model. The model for the pond is simultaneously in the beaver’s own nature and its environment. Essentially the beaver has redirected flows into canals (for floating logs to the pond) and has dammed up flows to make a pond.

The pond is fantasy and subconscious psychic defense, an inner reality that is a protection from the outer reality. Within water, vision is distorted, and this is analogous to distorted imagery and story lines we get in dreams. We all experience this zone of mental functioning in sleeping dreams, lucid dreams, and flashes of intuitive insight or premonition.

One swims in this zone by means of imagination, meditation, metaphor, simile, dance, play, music, ceremony, and other emotionally-oriented, subconscious-tapping means.

The pond is a fortification, reserve of resources, and source of joy. It is also in this surreal zone that creativity is stimulated. Creativity is symbolized by the beaver's construction work in the pond.

The lodge is the stable inner core. The inner mind is stable, comfortable, and safe partly because it is protected against excessive stresses. This protection comes from sound construction, but partly from the psychic layer that surrounds. Like the pond, the lodge is made from materials at hand and reflects a standard model that is built into the beaver and its environment. Lodges represent the subjective in that they are made by specific beaver individuals and groups, but lodges also represent the objective reality of one's inner core, which comes from a common model and commonly available resources.

Some information is consumed in the outermost layer, some in the innermost layer. Some is exploited in the intermediate layer, but it is not eaten there. It is used to create.

Observe that all the consuming, traversing, building, and enjoying is done by an active agent. Like "wyrd", the word "soul" is not explicitly in the *OERP*, but it is here. (In Old English: sawol, sawul, or sawl). However, there is no hint of an immortal spiritual essence, such as one finds in some religions. But there is a conscious will here.

Not restricted to staying in its innermost core, the beaver thus corresponds to the conscious, analytical, will-having, and psychologically motile aspect of a person. This is because the beaver is dynamic and moves about in this complex freely. Exploitation of these different realms helps in achieving a more consistent level of pleasantness and joy.

***Individual Use of the Surreal Realm***

This is an extension of “Learning and Layers of the Psyche”, for the metaphors are the same. The message is different because here the concern is with gaining self-knowledge. The dreamlike realm can be of benefit only if we relax, adapt, and have skill. We never see as clearly in it as we see in a more mundane realm. Many people are unaware of that other realm or try to deny its objective reality, but we all experience it.

The main idea in this implicit stanza is that, just as the beaver lodge can be entered only by going swimming under water, the stable inner core of personality can only be accessed by becoming thoroughly immersed in the surreal. This can be done by means of religious myth and ritual, in addition to the means listed in “Learning and Layers....”

***The Sacred Community***

Beavers commonly reside in groups, for a lodge usually houses a family or more than one family. Considering that fact and “Individual Use of the Surreal Realm” leads to an implicit stanza referring to group life of a certain kind.

A feature that distinguishes a temple group is its use of the surreal realm as a place to play and create structure. Most temple groups have real estate including a temple building, and the physical sanctuary of a building or an isolated grove is important to a temple group. But more important is the attitudes, customs, solidarity, and dedication of the community.

This implicit stanza therefore implies that myth, liturgy, and other symbolic communication function to protect the happy home -- the inner core of practice -- from potential threats and inconveniences large and small. For literal beavers, the water protects the lodge from bugs and predators.

For a sacred community using the surreal realm allows people to hide messages from those who would discomfort and thwart the group’s intent. Indirect expressions thus are analogous to using the surreal realm to by pass

psychological defenses. Of course, symbolic discourse can also help defend against the group's enemies by providing a means of deniability.

### ***That Which Is Sacred***

This perspective is based on “Religious Amphibian” and “The Sacred Community”

Part of the balanced life is something that is sanctuary-like. An idea present in this derived stanza of “Íár” is sanctum or holy sanctuary. You cannot see it in the words, but you can see it implied, for the “fairness” of the beaver’s home is an emotional consequence of the three qualities mentioned in “Learning and Layers of the Psyche” (stability, comfort, and safety). Beyond this is the idea of the sacred per se.

In “That Which Is Sacred”, the poem is telling us that the sacred is distinct as a layer of ritual, belief, and symbols. It is a condition or quality that is very real, but also protected by the fantastic, the play-like, and/or by esoteric otherworldly experiences. The sacred quality of symbols is often not directly accessible, but like the beaver lodge it requires a trip through the surreal realm. As words are not quite sufficient to describe the otherworld, they are even less sufficient to describe the quality of the sacred itself. However, to achieve an advanced mystical understanding, you have to also achieve a balance among the environmental, fantastic, and inner core of life.

The beaver thrives in the surreal realm and in two realms of reality that seem separated by that surreal realm. The inner stead is a functional or physical core. It could be a time/space set aside for meditations, a temple, an inner sanctuary or altar, or a group (such as a temple membership or staff). The outer stead is the wider world or environment in which the person has to live. The beaver is adept and comfortable with the otherworld aspect of life, but takes sustenance from a firmer reality and takes pleasure and sanctuary in its own inner core. This inner core is of a firm and less surrealistic nature, akin to the mental zone of operation symbolized by the land beyond the water.

### ***Allowing Complex Expression of Inner Nature***

This implicit stanza is derived from “Religious Amphibian”, “Use of the Surreal”, and “The Sacred Community”. The notion here is that the sacred is artificial but based on species-specific behavioral tendencies.

We cannot tell to what extent this is a matter of direct genetics, as is the case with lower-animal instincts, and to what extent the tendency is mediated by social, mental, and physical characteristics of humans. But somehow an active inner agent brings about similar psychic structures in people and similar subcultures to temples.

This is where we encounter in the *OERP* a concept similar to collective unconscious.

### ***Learning Religion***

This implicit stanza is derived from “Learning and Layers of the Psyche” and “Use of the Surreal”. In learning religion, one consumes some material from the outermost zone of the psyche, but one brings some of it back through the surreal zone to build up an inner core and a surreal zone.

This is not a quotidian point. If you were in a group using this “Íar” as a topic, this would lead to people discussing superficial versus profound religion and what this means to them. The discussion could be quite useful and enjoyable.

## ***Themes***

### ***Simple Themes***

Layers of existence  
Psychic layers  
Distinct realms  
Surreal quality

Versatility  
Sophistication  
Adaptability  
Skill in social situations  
Happiness  
Imaginative creativity  
Land  
Water  
Home  
Sustenance  
Core self  
Pleasantness  
Attractiveness  
Beaver  
Amphibiousness  
Security  
Balance

***Contrasts***

One-realm versus two-realm (or many-realm) adaptation  
Mystical versus nonmystical  
Water versus land  
Home realm versus “away” realm  
Outer versus inner versus core  
Two-way versus three-way contrasts  
Surreal versus mundane or common  
Passive versus active adaptations  
Versatility versus limiting specialization

***Advice for Living***

The effort to understand and take part in other subcultures than our own can be worthwhile, even while we retain our identities. Being skillful and comfortable in more than one milieu can (ironically) help you attain consistent delight and

contentment. The well-adjusted person is sophisticated but enjoys a cultural home and a core sense of self that contributes to comfort and very healthy functioning.

The advanced mystic is a skillful and strong-willed person who comfortably and creatively negotiates the inner mind, the mystic aspects of the universe, human cultures, and everyday life. An important religious goal is to achieve wholesome balance.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	D1	5
1b	C	5
2a	A	5
2b	B	6
3a	A	5
3b	A	6

Line	Syllables
1	10
2	11
3	11
Total	32

## Twenty-Ninth Stanza: The End But Not the Completion<sup>33</sup>

éar byþ egle · eorla gehwylcun;  
 ðonn fæstlice · flæsc onginneþ;  
 hráw sceal cólían · hrúsan céosan  
 blác tó gebeddan · bléda gedréosaþ;  
 wynna gewitaþ · wéra geswicap.

### *Translations*

#### *(M) Transliteration*

{ground; soil; grave} is {aversive; very aversive}  
 (to, for, in the view of) {nobleman of high rank, earl, ealdorman; man; brave man, hero, warrior; a person of high (government) authority, chieftain, leader} each  
 (for, because) {then; wherefore} {unstoppably, irresistibly, surely, certainly, inevitably; enduringly}  
 {flesh, meat; corporeal body} {proceeds to}  
 (as a) {body, carcass — dead or alive} must {cool, become cold}  
 {earth, soil, ground} {to choose; to accept}  
 {colorless, pale — means colorless (carcass) or pale (one)} {for, as}  
 {someone one goes to bed with, bedmate, bedfellow}  
 {riches, successes; things produced} {disintegrate; fail; perish; become weak}  
 {joys, delights} {go away, depart}  
 {covenants, agreements; pledges} {are not fulfilled as duties or normal customs should be; are neglected; cease; desist}

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<sup>33</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000d).

**(B)**

Dust is dreadful • to ev'ry duke-man;  
 immutably • meat beginneth  
 (soma chilleth) • soil to choose as  
 pale one's bed-partner. • Products will rot then.  
 Pleasures depart then. • Promises fail then.

**(C) *Modernized Meter***

Grave is egregious to ev'ry earl;  
 for surely then does the flesh begin as corpse to cool,  
 and the pallid bod must choose the soil as bedmate.  
 Products will perish then.  
 Pleasures depart then.  
 Pacts are abandoned then.

**(D) *Traditional Meter, Imperfect Match***

Death is dreadful • to ev'ry duke-man,  
 for then immutably • meat beginneth  
 (as the soma must chilleth) • soil to choose as  
 pale one's bed-partner. • Products will rot then.  
 Pleasures depart then. • Promises fail then.

## ***Issues in Edition and Translation***

Several issues are discussed in detail here. (1) The first, the title word has been a puzzle — as the title words of runes so often are. (2) The second issue is that verse wa does not meet traditional metrical standards. (3) Verse 3a has a severe typo that no previous editor has fully corrected. (4) There is a minor controversy over the meaning of the word “blác” in the last half-line.

(5) The contrast between the complex sentence in the first part of “Éar” and the simple “failure” verses of the conclusion is important for understanding the stanza. This matter has not previously had attention. And (6) there is a minor controversy over “wéra” in the last verse.

The second issue is the translation of one word in the next-to-last line, *blác*, a word that can have only one of two opposite meanings.

### ***The Title Word***

It is obvious from the context in this stanza that the title word refers to death. It does this indirectly.

In this stanza the title word has a denotation — grave for a corpse — that it does not show elsewhere in the corpus of Old English. *Éar* usually means “ear”, as in ear of barley. *Éar* may also refer to water, as in “wave, sea, ocean”. In the present context, some translators render *éar* as “dust”. The earliest translation as “soil”, implying “grave”, in turn implying “death” is Dobbie’s (1942:160). However, Page presented the detailed justification in his (1961) paper, almost twenty years after Dobbie’s remark. This is analogous to the situation in other issues, where someone made an assertion long ago, but the actual case is initially made in this book, in the late 1990’s or in 2012.

In ancient Teutonic societies, burial of physical remains seems to have been the normal means of disposing of a corpse, whether intact or cremated. Some few cadavers were burned in ships afloat (for example, King Haki in Chapter 26 of *Yinglinga Saga*, see Hollander: 1964), but the ancient Germanic peoples would not have been able to spare a ship for every person who expired. Scattering ashes appeared to be unheard of (Davidson, 1968; Kvilhaug, 2004).

### ***Donn Fæstlice***

As this line appears in Hicckes’ copy, it is unmetrical, and in Translation B I matched the original. Following a rule of editing conservatively, I took note that “*ðonne*” is contracted in other places in this poem, so this is likely not a typo by some copyist or typesetter (Halsall, 1981: 163). This is the prosodic analysis of the verse (and translation) as given:

x	/	\	x
ðonn	fæst	lic	e

x	/	\	x
im	mut	ab	ly

However, if we expand the contracted word for “then” a change occurs in the way we pronounce the line, adding a stress at the beginning more or less to allow for an un-stress on the next syllable. This makes for a pretty D1 five-syllable verse as shown in the following table.

/	x	/	\	x
ðon	ne	fæst	lic	e

/	x	/	\	x
then	im	mut	ab	ly

So that is the difference between what we have and what we could have.

### ***Hráw Sceal Cólían***

In the original, “hráwcólían” is run together in verse 3a, and editors of the OERP are rightly unanimous in separating “hráw” from “cólían”.

However if that is all we have, the original is unmetrical. So I emended the verse further to insert “sceal” (must). This is logical because the idea of inevitable necessity is consistent with the obvious intent of the author(s), and the edit makes for a traditional type A rhythm.

No other student of this poem makes this change nor even discusses the issue. Even I ignored it in the first edition of this book.

In addition to adding a syllable in amidst the half-line, the original seems to have an excess syllable at the end. The solution to that is to slur the last two syllables together, so that “cólían” is pronounced “cólýun”.

So this is what we see at first glance:

/	/	x	x
hraw	cól	i	an

The following table shows how the verse should be recited along with the translation.

/	x	/	x
hraw	sceal	cól	ian

/	x	/	x
so	ma	chill	eth

It is possible to add a definite article (sé) to the start of the verse, making a type C possible. However, the OERP never uses the definite article this way anywhere else. But does have a lot of absolute and imperative statements, so using “should” here makes sense.

The (implausible) alternative to adding a short word to the half line is to mispronounce “hráw”. There is an analogy in Modern English, for many Americans mispronounce a large proportion of their words by double-pronouncing a vowel. When doing so, they sing the first vowel at a relatively high pitch and the second vowel at a relatively low pitch, while holding volume constant. For example, this is often heard in “DAY-ay” (for “day”), especially when spoken by women in America. Sometimes (again I only hear this from Americans) a more complete ghost syllable appears, as in “coo-wul” (for the monosyllable “cool”). But all philological scholarship of Old English ignores this possibility with good results. Singing words in normal speech by materializing ghost syllables was probably never done by the Anglo-Saxons.

***Blác***

The question here is whether the focal word refers to the corpse or the soil, and for grammatical reasons it must refer to the corpse.

Halsall (1981) noted that blác is nominative singular, and she claims that therefore refers to flæsc or hráw. The strong accusative ending for the modifier of a neuter noun is “-an”. Thus, she is saying that Dickins (1915), plus by implication Osborn-and-Longland 1982) and Wódening (1996a), err in translating blác as a modifier of the accusative hrusan (earth, soil). They are seeing something like: “flesh begins...to choose soil black for bedmate.

But does the word modify a noun so far away as “hráw”? If it did, it would make an unusually twisted grammatical construction.

To figure it out, we have to regard “blác” as a substantive instead of strictly as an adjective. This is analogous to calling a bridal suite in a hotel a “bridal” or a Google search a “google” or a White person a “White”.

Then we would have literally: “flesh begins...to choose soil (as) pale (one’s) for bedmate”. I smoothed this out in translation.

So the word does not refer to the dark earth. Instead, it refers to the lack of blood or blood circulation, hence the lifelessness, of the corpse. The palest of white people normally have multi-hued complexions showing subtle reds, blues, and greens from underlying circulatory tissues. The appearance is sometimes a “peaches and cream” complexion (in the least pigmented skins) and is definitely in contrast to the plainer complexion of a dead carcass lacking circulation, and possibly even having substantial blood drained out prior to death.

The way the second and third lines of “Éar” in the original struck the ears of a Dark Ages audience was a lot clearer than way they strike the ears of modern scholars. You can perceive more clearly what they would have heard in Translation D, which less closely mimics the original prosody and has words that are merely implied in the original and Translation B.

The convoluted grammar that causes this issue with “blác” was artistically intended to set up the failure verses. They are called “failure” verses because they list phenomena that fail after one’s final moment. The transition to these final verses is discussed in the next subsection.

### *The Failure Verses*

The last three verses in “Éar” serve the same artistic function as the last one verse in the three-line stanzas. The contrast between the sentence ending with “blác to gebeddán” and the next 3 half-lines has the same function as the pause followed by softer vocalization and slower talk (or singing) for the last half-line in most stanzas of this poem.

Thus, a very stark contrast in nonverbal communication marks off the final part of “Éar”. Verse 4a looks like a mistake at first glance. But it marks a boundary. It is the end of one complex sentence and the beginning of three sharp, short, statements of failure.

After the first three whole lines, the stanza shows four contiguous half-lines repeating the same beat. In the first of these, the word sense muffles the effect of the beat compared to the word sense in the parallel constructions of half-lines 4b through 5b.

The transition is easier to see in the modernized-meter translation, because both the ancient scribe and the composer or composers were restricted by traditional rules. They depended more on the understanding of the reader or reciter to get the strophe to sound right. The “perfect” translation benefits from modern sentence punctuation, but the structure there is still not as clear as in Translation C.

The failure verses all have end-rhyme and they all have the same rhythm (a ONE-two-three-FOUR-five pattern). The message of those last three verses is

make the stronger by short, complete sentences contrasting with the convoluted sentence that precedes it.

The convoluted sentence in the first part of “Éar” says rather verbosely that death means you completely loose control.

Then the three failure verses all give the same message. And the message of the failure verses is simple. Life -- with all its engaging joys and tensions and all the commitments you have to friends and relatives -- will have permanently stopped for you.

### ***Wéra***

This is the word for “covenant”, not for “men”. The spelling difference between “covenant” (feminine wér or wær) and “man” (masculine wer) is an accent mark over the “e” as a pronunciation guide, but this would not be shown in an early medieval manuscript.

Albertsson (2011: 190-189) and Kemble (1840) translate this as “men”, so that the last half-line refers says that “men cease to be” or “it parteth from men”. If this were “men”, the plural would be “weras” (as those who cease to be) or “werum” (as those who are parted from). But if this were “men” the translation would more properly be that “men are neglected”. Such a rendering would be equivalent to the idea of covenants not kept if we ignore the possibility of commitments to women and children.

### ***Critique of Translation B***

The “perfect” translation is a very close rendition of the original. As regards word-sense and alliteration, only trivial differences exist. Rhythm is perfectly matched all the way through. Even the end-rhyme occurs in Translation B.

In line 1b, the order of ideas is reversed, with “each” moved to a spot before “earl”. Otherwise, the match is perfect. The first half-line of Translation B is a direct quotation of the first verse of Osborn’s and Longland’s (1981) translation.

Line 2 is an are exact match to the original. In verse 2a, the translation says “chilleth” because sound alliteration is the rule for the translations here, although the tradition was spelling alliteration. Depending on the weather, a corpse would well get that cold in Northern Europe.

In line 3, the idea of “must” was not translated. To do so would have put an extra syllable in verse 3a, and the rhythm seems more important than the exact word-sense. The idea of the imperative nature of the transition is expressed in the verse just above 3a.

Line 4a is a perfect match only if “bed” is not given secondary stress, as the present author is strongly tempted to do.

The “failure” verses not only match on the three official criteria for this study, but also replicate the end-rhyme of the original. However, the effect of end-rhyme achieved by repeating a word instead of merely a word-ending is not the same as the original.

Line 3 would be more transparent to the modern listener or reader if the translation were not so perfect. Because of the custom of poetic parataxis, the conjunctive “as” is omitted from the start of line 3 in the original. Because of the custom of omitting definite articles, “the” is also omitted from the original. Indeed, line 2 could also benefit from a coordinating conjunction. And the line would still be up to traditional standards if the idea of necessity were translated in verse 3a. So here is what the first sentence could be in a not-so-perfect translation:

Death is dreadful • to ev’ry duke-man,  
 for then immutably • meat beginneth  
 (as the soma must chilleth) • soil to choose as  
 pale one’s bed-partner.

Since the not-so-perfect translation is at least as consistent with the traditional standards of meter as the original while also being more pleasant and

understandable to the modern ear, a Translation D is included in this chapter. And that is the translation inserted into Appendix G.

The comparison of Translations B and C was begun above to explain the nonverbal aspect of the “failure” verses. In addition, in Translation C the modern listener finds a pronounced musicality in the first 3 lines of the modernized-meter translation which we do not detect as readily in the original.

To nonverbally communicate a certain attitude in Translation C, the first sentence of the original has been translated freely. To get internal rhyme and a catchy rhythm, the flesh is not said to begin to choose the earth, but instead is said to cool, and the pallid corpse is separately said to choose the soil as bedmate. But this causes the speaker to slow and tend to gradually decrease his or her pitch as the sentence ends.

Also, with “bedmate” out at the end of a physical sentence and a relatively pronounced transition after that, the notion of sexual deprivation is easier to see than it is in Translation B.

### *Discussion*

This stanza is very unusual. (1) It is the only strophe in the poem that seems to have been deliberately composed so as to depress the reader or audience. (2) It is where verbosity has penetrated the defensive line and struck hard, making a set of verses about fifty percent longer than the norm for this poem.

Most of all (4), this stanza is unusual for the view of death it presents: when you die, you become dead meat. In a time that we are told was characterized by deep religiosity, in a poem that touches on religions repeatedly and (at higher levels of abstraction) sometimes profoundly, most of the standard religious ideas about death are ignored. “Éar” is not concerned with the possibility of a supernatural afterlife, nor with reincarnation of the soul.

But this is the same attitude we find in *Sayings of the High One*, stanzas 76 and 77 in the Neckel (1936a) edition of the *Poetic Edda*. In Norse religion, the High

One is Oðinn, more or less the counterpart to the English Wóden, so these are supposed to be His words.

Deyr fé, • deyia frændr,  
Deyr sjálfr it sama;  
En orztírr • deyr aldregi;  
Hveim er sér góðan getr.

Deyr fé, • deyia frændr,  
Deyr sjálfr it sama;  
Ek veit einn • at aldri deyr;  
Dómr um dauðan hvern

This is Bellows' (1923) translation (Bellows labels these stanzas 77 and 78):

Cattle die, and kinsmen die,  
And so one dies one's self ;  
But a noble name will never die,  
If good renown one gets.

Cattle die, and kinsmen die,  
And so one dies one's self;  
One thing I know that never dies.  
The fame of a dead man's deeds.

In short, there is no life after death except for one's reputation. In a way, this looks like a subtle advertisement to hire a poet.

But the more interesting philosophical implication is that you only get one pass through, so live the best you can and hope some of the living give you credit for it.

*The Christianization Issue.* Certainly, the association of death with burial in the ground does not make this stanza Christian. Halsall (1981) thinks that the association of soil or dust with death refers to a passage in Genesis, where Yahweh sentenced Mankind to mortality as punishment for Original Sin. However, the association of morality with soil is not strictly Biblical. This stanza also refers by implication to the pointlessness of grave goods, and the practice of burying corpses and cremation ashes with grave goods was not specific to Paganism nor to Christianity at the time of the *OERP*. Also evidence regarding the Christianization issue is the strictly elegiac tone of this stanza at the lowest level of meaning. Biblical religions (at their lowest level of meaning) strongly emphasize that believers should look forward to Judgment Day or to their immediate reward in Heaven (depending on which version is preferred at the time of speaking).

Christian variety in afterlife beliefs is minor compared to Pagan. For the curious, there is a brief postscript on that topic at the end of this chapter.

### ***Death Is Odious Even to the Highest of Us***

The grave is odious to every high noble. There the colorless flesh inevitably proceeds to cool as a body and to accept the soil as a bedmate. Artifacts disintegrate, joys go away, and promises are abandoned. You lose everything you have, everything you are, and your friends and relatives lose you.

And high status does not give any special privileges. The stoppage is sudden and complete for everyone.

Another way to analyze this explicit stanza is to examine the chief staves. They are: *eorla* (to earls), *fléasc* (flesh, meat), *hrusan* (soil), *céosan* (to choose), *bleda* (artifacts), and *wéra* (covenants). Although “Éar” has five lines, it has six chief staves because of double alliteration in the third line.

The major themes implied by these chief staves are: power, nature, and human and social artifacts. The chief staff in the first line implies that the main topic is the meaning of death to earls. We see a contrast between the power of the elite

and the much greater power of nature. This power prevails against every physical thing they have, every social arrangement they make, their physical freedom, and what they are physically.

### ***Death Is Odious Because Life Halts***

Indirectly, this explicit stanza says that life per se is a treasure. In other words, death is odious because of zest for life and all it has to offer.

For the person contemplating his or her own death, it is the ultimate disruption: total and permanent, physical and social. The metrical or musical disruption symbolizes this. The strictness and repetitiveness of the cyclical meter in the last two lines also symbolize the irresistibility and regularity of our final transition and of the power and lawfulness of nature.

Notice that the stanza diagnoses aversion to death not as fear of afterlife punishment nor unjust condemnation nor fear of the unknown. Nor is it because of cowardice nor anxiety that the earls in this poem dislike death.

### ***Critique of Burial Customs***

This explicit stanza iconoclastically and unsentimentally critiques burial customs that prevailed in Pagan and mixed-religion times. It is an explicit stanza because it depends on no metaphor, although it is something one has to think a little to find.

“Critique of Burial Customs” says that at some psychological level we all know that grave goods do not benefit the deceased, but we leave those deposits as if they were for the deceased anyway. So they rot away and no one enjoys them.

What is found in Anglo-Saxon graves? In England before 1000 CE, intact corpses were commonly buried in good clothing. Cremation ashes or intact corpses might be buried with equipment or supplies. Grave goods and clothing varied in financial value and type depending on the family’s wealth and current fashion. Commonly included would be pottery, sewing equipment, edged

weapons, or food. Weapons were more common than were more constructive implements, and even people too lame to use a weapon were sometimes buried with one. Jewelry might be worn on the corpse. Horses, dogs, or livestock were sometimes included. The practice could become extremely extravagant. Even slaves or seaworthy ships might be included. (Davidson, 1992; Dickinson and Speake, 1992; Geake, 1992; Härke, 1992, G. Halsall, 1992; Halsall et al, 1992; Davidson, 1968; Davidson, 1992; Richardson, 1992; and Welch, 1992).

There is mythical support for grave goods in Teutonic religion. In the Myth of Balder, Oðin places his magical ring on Balder's funeral pyre, but Balder sends back the ring via an emissary. Balder's wife dies of grief and is added to the pyre, and she sends linen and gold gifts for other goddesses from her residence in Hel. Balder's horse is put on the pyre fully fitted out, but there is no sign that Balder gets any use of out of this in Hel. The burial mound of the divine Swedish King Yngvifrey was left partially open and people threw in coins as sacrifices, but perhaps these were sacrifices to a god and not true grave goods. The first divine Swedish King was the god Oðin, and He ordered cremation of all the dead along with "their possessions". Oðin decreed that those who went to Vahalla would have use of the goods burned on their pyres and also of all the wealth they had buried. There is no explicit statement of what use grave goods would have had for those in other after-death sanctuaries, but we must infer that the gifts Balder's wife sent to Asgard from Hel were things she had buried or that had been thrown onto Balder's pyre with her. In one of the sagas, Oðinn is said to have decreed that everyone would have use "of what he himself had hidden in the ground". Therefore it is reasonable to infer that those in other after-death abodes would have use of grave goods and other buried treasures.

However, in descriptions of realms of dead persons, there is no sign of any use of strainers for beer, horses, crosses, or any other equipment or supplies. (Hollander, 1964: *Yinglinga Saga*, Chapters 8 & 10; Young, 1954: 80-83)

Obviously, people leave grave goods for other reasons than merely to satisfy religious belief. For example, consider modern American burial customs. One thing that is striking about modern American burial customs is the lack of religious doctrine to support what a future researcher would find in our graves.

There is nothing in *The Bible* that calls for embalming a corpse for indefinite preservation, dressing it up in formal attire, and putting it in a hermetically sealed steel casket with some favorite keepsake. Survivors engage in these practices to express deeply-felt sentiments and to heal themselves emotionally in ways that are not supported by authentic myth of the religion they espouse. Early medieval English Pagans, Christian, and syncretics probably also often left grave goods wihjotu believing in any justifying doctrine.

Therefore, one can be a whole-hearted practitioner of any religion and be ambivalent about (or opposed to) the leaving of clothing, equipment, and supplies with a dead corpse. The leaving of grave goods may occur even though it might be consistent with some — but not all — of Pagan religion.

The mythical support for wasteful and sentimental burial practices seems contrary to the core tendency to value rationality, awareness, and self-control. Clearly, there are other human needs that must be served, and Teutonic, Christian, and mixed religion address those needs also.

### ***Contradictory Notions Held***

This implicit strophe is supported by the explicit stanza, “Critique of Burial Customs”. Here, funereal customs are a metaphor for any highly charged emotional experience. “Critique of Burial Customs” reminds us that in highly emotional situations, we often act as if we held two contradictory beliefs or attitudes. Another message of that implicit stanza is that we often do things that are important to us and that are superficially religious — but that are irrelevant or contrary to important characteristics of our personal religion.

This is also an indirect comment on religion per se. In the life of an individual or community, a religion often exists as two or three autonomous systems. Here in “Contradictory Notions Held”, we are reminded that the exoteric and esoteric versions each serve normal human needs and after an individual has entered the more advanced stage, he or she will still be partly in the other stage.

Therefore, “Contradictory Notions Held” tells us that a coherent, esoteric religion by itself is not sufficient for all human psychological needs. The well-rounded and deeply religious person will have to participate in non-religious and in exoteric religious practices, and he or she will have to manage the contradiction as a creative dialectic.

### ***Spiritual Value of Life***

From a strictly progressive-mystic point of view, death means that we lose our divinity when our lower animal aspect becomes overly dominant and betrays us.

Consider the shifting balance between the lower animal and the divine. In the beginning of an individual life cycle, the lower animal nature of mankind prevails. Then gradually one builds talent and predilection for conscious self control and socially valuable action. One’s skill at living in society tends to continue to increase as one ages, and this would be especially the case for an esoteric adherent of a religion of advancement. But at the end, all this progress is disrupted and much that has been accomplished is negated, as one’s lower animal aspect inexorably and more or less suddenly takes greater precedence than ever.

Conscious participation in dialectical conflicts and exchanges is a key to the well-lived and much-enjoyed life. It is the ultimate fun.

An implication of this is that a treasured aspect of human life is the dialectical process between our lower animal and divine aspects, for the egregious nature of death is ultimately that the lower animal aspect eventually dominates to such an extent that the dialectic is ended.

But in the meantime, the struggle is one of the joys of life.

This implicit stanza is derived from “Contradictory Notions Held” and “Death Is Odious Because Life Halts”.

***The Dreadful Marriage***

Hall (1977: 457-458) writes of the irony of a cold corpse going to bed with the earth. Instead of pledging faith, joyful anticipation, feasting, partying, and having sexual intercourse, everything stops except rot. It is the opposite of a wedding ceremony.

This implicit stanza is also based on “Death Is Odious Because Life Halts”.

***Great Transition***

In this implicit stanza, death is a metaphor for a fundamental transformation of one’s personality. The failure are as a metaphor for giving thing sup to make that transition.

To perceive “Great Transition”, it also helps to esoterically understand a stanza from another rune poem. In the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme*, the strophe “Man” says that “Man is the increase of dust / Mighty is the talon-span of the hawk” (Thorsson, 1993). An implication is that each person must die (“increase dust”). But the hawk of death flies away with meat in its grasp, and this implies that there are possibilities of rising above the fall. Thus, we can see that in the *ONRR* a soil/death symbol is associated with fundamental transformation.

While most fundamental transformations are not as destructive as death, a fundamental transformation by definition involves a final and drastic departure. To make a great transition in one’s life, one must give up hang-ups, fears, and fascinations that may be dear to one’s soul and heart. Outgrowing some things can seem dreadful, so it is sometimes hard for us to give up habits or relationships that are self-destructive or that hinder us more than they help. (That is certainly the present author’s experience!) It is work to make the transition from the homeland of stasis, rootedness, and community — to the homeland of infinite progression.

In addition to giving up old habits, fundamental transformation also involves transforming or departing from relations with other people. For example, people on the edge of esoteric religion may be afraid to take the plunge because they

will then be with the less enlightened but separate from them. This is an interesting kind of loneliness, felt most strongly in a crowd.

***Make the Most You Can of Life***

This implicit stanza is derived directly from “Death is Odious to Even the Highest of Us” and “Death is Odious Because Life Halts”.

What counts is not a final outcome, but what we do between our long initial growth and the relatively sudden end of our mature growth. During that “in between”, we must make the most of what power we have and of what beings we are regardless of our origins and without pinning our hopes on an afterlife. We must do what we can with that dialectic process between our lower animal and divine selves.

***Legacy is Inevitable***

Please excuse the pun, but no life is a dead end. This stanza is suggested by “The Dreadful Marriage” and “Make the Most You Can of Life”.

Just as marriage leads to children, which represent a deposit of the parents in their next generation, going to bed with soil leaves a legacy. The deposit of a person is analogous to depositing something of one’s own life for subsequent generations. The consequences of a whole life’s actions and inactions provide a basis from which new lives grow.

This implicit stanza is a socially-aware or less egoistic counterpart to “Make the Most You Can of Life”.

***Remains***

This implicit stanza is supported by the implicit stanzas below it.

At first glance, all the translations of “Éar” imply ultimate termination. However, if we look a little closer we can see subtle implications of a less ultimate end.

A major reason for our funeral customs is a feeling that the deceased has left something behind “Critique of Burial Customs” makes the point that physical artifacts and social honors ostensibly for the deceased have no value for that person. “Contradictory Notions Held” implies that even the most accomplished seekers commonly do irrational things to meet profound psychological or social needs. These needs would arise because death disrupts survivors, leaving them with unmet social obligations. Since a grave gift or devoted costuming of the deceased corpse implies some kind of indebtedness, we see the implication that something important does remain for survivors.

The metrical transition to the “failure” verses (discussed previously) communicates disruption, but repeated cycling of the beat in the last few half-lines also symbolizes the cycle of generations and natural cycles generally. Both the rhyme and the steady beat in the last two lines give a subjective sensation of a rolling cycle. Therefore, the metrical transition communicates a return to a regular, recurrent, and powerful cycle. And the “failure” verses do double duty, communicating leaving things behind and yet making a deposit for the future.

In other words, this refers to the cycle of human generations and to cycles of nature in general. As the implicit stanza “The Dreadful Marriage” emphasizes that the whole is vulnerable to rot in its components, and there is no way we can prevent that rot, we must do what we can to leave good cultural soil. After all, some kind of “Legacy is Inevitable”.

Thus, we arrive at the poem’s suggestion that we do not just rot to dust and blow away. The corpse becomes one with the ground, and the ground is the basis of human life. Likewise, that which is most valuable about our lives becomes a humble contribution to a vast and powerful cultural soil that originates before recorded time and will feed the roots of later generations.

## *Themes*

### *Simple Themes*

Death

Grave

Burial

Burial customs

Grave goods

Emotional healing

Contradictory belief systems

Contradictory values

Sentimentality

Finality

Aversion

Ultimate dominance of lower-animal needs

Struggle to be divine or enlightened

Material wealth

Joy

Social connections

Loss of material wealth

Loss of social nexuses

Loss of joy

Loss of power

Loss of freedom

Disruption

Marked transition

Legacy

Forces of nature

Cycles of nature

Life cycles

The human body

Lack of choice

Futility

Need to give to survivors to have a meaningful life

***Contrasts***

Exoteric versus esoteric

Power versus powerlessness

Futility versus efficacy

Wyrd versus conscious control

Termination versus continuity

Linear versus cyclical chains of events

***Brief Summary of Advice for Living***

It is normal to dread death, and for good reason, for it disrupts holy processes. There are things about death that do not make sense or are very uncomfortable for us, but it is wyrd and need not make sense or be beneficial.

Dialectical processes and vitality are married. Just as the most advanced exoteric practitioner must accept and cope with his or her lower animal nature, even the most accomplished esoteric religious practitioner must also remain in part an exoteric religious practitioner.

Entry into esoteric religion is a radical departure, and is not necessarily comfortable for everyone who would try it.

We need to give to those who will live after us to live meaningful lives. Although death is inevitable, it is part of natural cycles. The most that life can offer us is the chance to do the best we can with the lives we have, for we know that afterward is too late. Part of the living the best that one can live is leaving the most positive contribution to the collective legacies that one can leave.

*Statistical Analysis*

Verse	Verse Type	Syllables
1a	A	4
1b	A	5
2a	unmetrical	4
2b	A	4
3a	A	4
3b	A	4
4a	A	5
4b	A	5
5a	A	5
5b	A	5

Line	Syllables
1	9
2	8
3	8
4	10
5	10
Total	45

## Postscript: Afterlife Abodes in Teutonic Polytheism

Teutonic polytheism has offers several conflicting ideas about the afterlife.

The Gylfanning, or Deluding of Gylfi, lists several abodes for people after death. These abodes do not fit into a single, coherent system. Of course, the most famous is Oðin's Valhalla. The battle heroes are also divided equally between Oðin and Freya, who puts up all of her share in Fólkvangar (Field of

Warriors). Óðin also has Vingólf, where in one account half of his heroes go. Vingólf is also the name of a sanctuary of goddesses. Thor shares Bilskirnir (Strong), with serfs and peasants. Unmarried women serve the goddess Gefjon. After Ragnarok, all the “good and righteous” will reside in Gimlé (Lee of Fire), except those who go to Sindri. Hel’s residence (Damp with Sleet) is for those who die of disease or old age, or maybe just anyone who dies. All perjurers and murders are to be tortured in a hall flooded with poison (Larrington, 1996: Harbard’s Song, Str 24; Young, 1954: 47, 48, 50, 53, 56, 59, 90). In other places, Old Norse sources present the notion of reincarnation of at least part of the soul. For example, see the prose at the end of The Second Lay of Helgi the Hunding-Slayer (Hollander, 1964). As Davidson (1968) reports based on several sagas, it was commonly thought that people live in their graves, and that sometimes they leave and walk about at night as zombies and have to be killed again.

Surviving Old Norse literature also tells us that people could pass on bits and pieces of themselves, especially their “luck” (*hamingja*), which meant a combination of luck and behavioral tendencies. The inheritance would accompany inheritance of a name or even getting a name that alliterates with that of the legatee or dead person. This would not be what we usually mean by soul reincarnation, but sometimes the resemblance of the course of two lives would be quite strong (Davidson, 1968).

Comparing Christianity and Germanic Paganism on this one issue -- life after death -- gives one a clue to the appeal of Christian doctrine to the English Pagans of the Migration Age and Early Medieval Age. The Christian doctrine of the time, while not completely consistent, was much more coherent than was the Pagan religion.

However, it is not clear that the *OERP* presents a complaint about incoherence in polytheist philosophy as opposed to a critique of practices which were outside formal Pagan religion.

## Appendix A: The old English Rune Poem in Early Medieval Format<sup>34</sup>

This section presents simulations of the unedited medieval manuscript of the *Old English Rune Poem* and some discussion of tasks needed to present the poem in a modern format. The ancient manuscript was destroyed in a fire in 1731 (Jones, 1967).

In the web edition of this book I included a photocopy of the “original” from which we are working. In the web edition, the photocopy is a separate file and not an appendix. This book was formatted to be read on six-inch e-reader or computer display; the photocopy is in US letter size pages. But you can see the source of the photocopy if you can find it in a library. The source is a reprint of George Hickes book *Linguarum Vett. Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archaeologicus*, originally published in 1703-1705. The reprint was produced in 1970 by Georg Olms Verlag, with offices in Hildesheim (Germany) and New York. (As you can tell by the title, the book was published in Latin.)

The photocopy of the “original” is available on the Runic Wisdom web site: “<http://runicwisdom.info/rwtoc.htm>”.

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<sup>34</sup> A previous edition was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999b).

## ***Issues with Ancient Documents***

Ancient documents often have damage to the writing or the documents written upon. Some of them have been carefully and successfully preserved in libraries for centuries. Some have been eaten by bookworms. Some have simply rotted in casks until only fragments remain. Fire safety is much better nowadays than before 1900 CE, and many libraries have been accidentally burned. Robbers and revolutionaries have deliberately burned books.

In addition to damage in storage, copyist errors and intentional editing occur. With documents copied manually, a scribe working in the cold, in candle light, at the end of a long day, or perhaps after a couple of beers might be expected to get a letter or even a word wrong here and there. Bright people are often tempted to correct what they see as errors. Sometimes, the copyist is not familiar with the language of the original or with the document's subject matter.

Ancient scribes commonly abbreviated words, and this can present a problem in understanding for scholars many centuries later. In the case of the runic letters shown in *Old English Rune Poem*, the use of the runes as abbreviations for their names in this poem and other documents is an important clue. It tells us that literate people were expected to know the names of the runes. Consensual scholarly inference has it that the names of the runes were not included in the original poem and were added by before publication in 1705.

Another issue is punctuation and page layout. Paragraphs were not habitually started on new lines. Sometimes scribes put in punctuation to show the ends of sentences, sometimes not. For example, classical Greek was written by the ancients in all caps (Greek small letters were invented in the Middle Ages) with no punctuation at all. With Old English, it is sometimes hard to tell if a passage is suppose to be poetry or prose, because almost all poetry was written in-line like prose, instead of in short lines.

The effect of not laying our poetry in a distinct matter can be illustrated from content of this book. On the tenth page of the introduction, I have "How do we know that this inferred structure was intended? The validity of the inference is

based on how well it explains a puzzle.... Surely, it seems, that not so shallow could have been the content; and a reason to write can be found.”

The alliterative poetry is easier to recognize like this: “How do we know that this inferred structure was intended? The validity of the inference is based on how well it explains a puzzle....

Surely, it seems, that not so shallow could have been the content; and a reason to write can be found.”

Anyhow, it is necessary for philologists to edit their materials. In the main body of this book, there are discussions of numerous editing issues that in regard to the *Old English Rune Poem*, but these same issues occur throughout philology.

### ***Sources of the OERP***

The poem studied here has been documented back to discovery in a book of the lives of saints. It is not in the same hand as the pages on saints’ biographies, and the content is probably completely unrelated to the rest of the book. Hence, the *OERP* was probably written by a different person and slipped into the book.

*The Old English Rune Poem* probably dates from around 750-950. The present author does not accept the often-offered opinion that the poem was composed or even the opinion that it was copied by a monk: maybe, maybe not. Not all the literate people in England during the Early Middle Ages were monks. A monk who composed this poem would need a better story to go with it than “Os is the source of every speaking”.

The original manuscript was destroyed in a fire in 1731, but by then hundreds of copies had been printed (Hickes 1703-1705). For a more extended discussion of the sources of the poem and its place in Old English culture, see Maureen Halsall’s book and Fredrick Jones’ dissertation (Halsall, 1981: 21-81; Jones, 1967).

### *The Style of the Staves*

Rune staves (letters) shown here approximate the shapes of the staves in the “original” as best the present author could draw them. They are close enough approximations to help the reader get a good notion of the appearance of the original.

George Hickes shows us rune staves (letters) that are probably as exact copies as he or his co-worker Humphrey Wanley in the early 1700’s. However, the original had only one runic letter for each stanza, and Hickes shows alternate forms for the rune staves for several stanzas. This complicates producing an exact reproduction of each stave.

In Hickes’ printed copy, the each stanza starts on a new line headed by a drop-capital version of a rune. Jones (1967) inferred that Hickes or Wanley extensively re-formatted the poem. His inference was based on the fact that normally, Early Medieval scribes normally wrote poetry entirely in-line. The stanzas would have been marked off, but not by the page layouts used in modern poetry. If the poem had been written in-line, only the rune staves (always the first word in each stanza) and the punctuation (three dots at the end of each paragraph) would have shown where the stanzas began and ended.

However, Page (1998) shows that the Old Icelandic Rune Poem was formatted in an ancient scribal manuscript just as Hickes’ shows. Therefore

The entire “original” (Hickes’ copy) is posted on the following web site: “<http://runicwisdom.info/rwtoc.htm>”. Scroll down to the link entitled “The Poem in Hickes (sic) Thesaurus”.

### *Omitted Items*

In addition to giving us alternate forms for the runic letters, Hickes or Wanley added spelled-out names and Roman-letter values for each runic letter. In some

cases, the “original” includes more than one rune name and/or Roman letter, showing indecision on the part of whoever added the names in the 1700’s. These additions and the discrepancies they show are discussed by C. L Wrenn (1932) and Fredrick George Jones, Jr. (1967).

Of course, the rune names and Roman-letter values are omitted from the simulation of the Early Medieval copy.

However, there is a photocopy of all the rune staves, spelled-out rune names, and Latin-letter equivalents that Hickes published in Hempl’s (1904) article, which you can see at this URL: “<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=vvQNAAAAYAAJ&num=9&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA137>”.

### ***The Roman-Letter Font***

The font used to simulate Early Medieval handwriting is an insular minuscule based on handwriting in surviving manuscripts. It is called Junius, was created by Peter Baker, and is distributed in a freeware package accessible from a University of Virginia web page (“<http://www.engl.virginia.edu/OE/>”). The font used by Hickes’ printer was the famous Junius font created in 1655. We do not know exactly how the original handwriting looked, but Peter Baker’s Junius is very similar to the Junius used by Hickes’ printer. Unlike Hickes’ printed version of 1703-1705, there are no capital Roman-style letters in this edition (Hickes, 1703-1705).

### ***The Scribe’s Gift***

The original was an ancient work of manual art. The manuscript would have been on a page size larger than 8 ½” by 11”, and it would have covered almost two full pages, written on both sides of the page (Jones, 1967: 5-8; Halsall, 1981; Hickes, 1703-1705: 135). The page would have likely been made of vellum, using ink applied by a quill pen or brush. The scholar would have practiced the staves and minuscule characters many times in addition to having

experience at producing manuscripts, but the pages might have shown some corrections anyway. The scribe would probably have had to work in daylight coming in through windows (without glass) or in candle light, and without central heating or good insulation. Merely writing the letters would have been tedious, skilled work and a thing of pride. (Unless, of course, the scribe thought pride of accomplishment a sin).

The punctuation is as Hickes showed it. The three-dot pattern you see at the end of each stanza was often used to in medieval manuscripts indicate the end of a sentence, paragraph, or stanza. The dots were sometimes used to indicate ends of sentences or half-lines in poetry -- here they would be half-lines. There might appear to be a large number of punctuation errors if you expect the ancients to take punctuation as seriously as we take it today. As noted in the analyses of the stanzas, some of the punctuation oddities in this poem were not errors. They are clues to help the reader looking who is looking afresh at the poem many generations later.

### *Minuscule*

A little coaching on how to read minuscule is in order. Medieval European writing had different priorities than we are used to today. For one thing, medieval European scribes usually did not use diacritical marks to help with pronunciation, so the accent marks you see below are visual art, not pronunciation clues (Quirk and Wrenn, 1958).

In addition, English minuscule letters differ from those we use today. The s's look like our r's – for example, see the word “sceal” (“shall”) in the first stanza below. The r's look like our n's. For example, the first stanza says “Feoh byþ frofur” – with two r's in “frofur”.

The scribe would not have used g's nor j's – instead the letter yogh would have been used. This is what a yogh looks like in the manuscript below: g

The most difficult letter in minuscule is their w, which was wynn (w). You can see that wynn looks like our p – and it looks like the minuscule p also.

Medieval scribes abbreviated frequently. In addition to using runes as abbreviations for their names, there are two other abbreviations in this document that might be cryptic to a modern observer, although they were obvious to the ancients. The character that looks like a 7 is the medieval equivalent of an ampersand – it means “and”. For example, there is one of their ampersands in the second stanza: “Ur byþ anmod & over hyrned”. Often, the letter thorn (þ) is used instead of writing out “þæt” (that). You can find an example of that in the second stanza, “þ is modig wuht” – for “þæt is modig wuht” (“that is (a) brave being”).

### *The Simulation*

Now let us see the written poem as it might have looked in the days when European Pagan religion – and runic lore – were fading from view but still well known by a substantial minority. This is as close as we can get to a direct display of the physical evidence.

F	byþ frowur. fira gehwlcum. fceal ðeah manna gehwylc. miclun hýt dælan. gif he pile. for drihtne domef hleotan:·
N	byþ anmod. 7 ofep hyrned. fela fpecne. ðeor feohteþ. mid hornum. mápe mor fcafa. þ if modig muht:·



𐌲 𐌹 byþ nearu on bneortan peorþeþ hi ðeah ort  
niþa bearnum to helpe and to hæle ge hþá  
þne Ʒif hi hir hlýrtaþ áror:

𐌹 byþ oþer cealdunge metum flidop Ʒlirnaþ Ʒl  
áƷ hluttur Ʒimmum Ʒelicurt. flor forrte  
Ʒe popuht fáƷer anƷýne:

𐌹 byþ Ʒumena hiht ðon Ʒod láteþ halig  
heofoner cýning hruþan Ʒyllan beorhte  
bleða beornum and ðearfum:

𐌹 𐌹 byþ utan unŷmeþe tpeop. heard hruþan fárt  
hýrde Ʒýner. þýrtumun underpreþýð  
þýnan on eþle:

𐌹 byþ Ʒýmble pleƷa. and hlehter plancum ðar  
riƷan riuttaþ on beor ŷele bliþe átt romne:

𐌹 reccard hártþ orturt on ŷenne. pexeð on  
pature. pundaf Ʒrimme. blode þreneð  
beorna Ʒehþýlcne ðe him ániƷne onŷeng  
Ʒeðeð:

𐌹 re mannum Ʒýmble biþ on hihte ðonn hi  
hine ŷeriaþ oþer riŷer beþ oþ hiþrim  
hengert þringeþ to lande:

↑ biþ tacna ſum healdeþ trýpa pel. riþ á  
þelinzar a biþ onfárylde. ofer nihta  
zenipu. náſſe riſceþ:

Ɓ byþ bleða leaſ. bereþ efne ſpa ðeah tanar  
butan tudber. biþ on telgum plitiz. þeah  
on helme hrýrteð fázere. zeloden leaſum  
lýrte zetenge:

M byþ ſor eorlum áþelinzar pýn. horſ hoſum  
planc. ðár him háleþe ýmb. peleze on  
riczum riixlaþ riſſáce. 7 biþ unſcyllum  
áſſe ſroſur:

M byþ on mýnſþe hiſ maſan leoſ. ſceal þeah  
anra zehpýlc oðrum ſrican. ſor ðam  
ðrýhten pýle ðome ſine þ earne flárc  
eoſþan betácan:

Ʀ byþ leodum langrum zeþuht zif hi ſculun  
neþun on nacan tealum. 7 hi ſá ýþa ſpýþe  
brezaþ. and ſe bſum henzerſc bſidles ne  
zým:

X U páſ áreſc mid eaſc ðenum. ze ſepen neczun.  
oþ he riððan eſc. ofer páz zepat pán  
áſter þan. ður hearðinzar ðone hále  
nemðun:

- byþ ofere leorþ. ághpýlcuim men. ȝif he mot  
 ðáþ. rihter and ȝerýrena on brucan on  
 blode bleaðum oftaft:
- byþ drihtnes fomb. deore mannum. máre  
 metodes leoht. mýrȝþ and to hiht  
 eaðȝum and earnum. eallum bruce:
- byþ on eorþan. elða bearnum. flárcer  
 fodor ferfeþ ȝelome ofere ȝanoter báþ  
 ȝarrecȝ fandaþ. hráþer ac hábbe áþele  
 treore:
- byþ ofere heah. elðum dýre. fciþ on fcaþule.  
 fcede rihte hýlt. ðeah him feohtan on  
 firaȝ monige:
- byþ áþelinga ȝ eorla ȝehpárf. pýn and  
 pýnþmýnð. byþ on fice fáȝer. fárflic  
 on fárelde. fýrð ȝeacepa fum:
- byþ ea fíxa. and ðeah abruceþ. fodrer  
 onfalðan. hafaþ fáȝerne earð. pátrre  
 beroppen. ðáþ he pýnnum leoraþ:
- byþ egle eorla ȝehpýlcun. ðonn fárflice fl  
 árc onȝinneþ. hrafcolian hruȝan ceoran  
 blac to ȝebedðan bleða ȝedreoraþ. pýnna  
 ȝerifaþ pera ȝerfícaþ:

**Following is the unedited poem in a modern font, with rune names spelled out, separated into stanzas.**

Feoh byþ frofur. fira gehwylcum. sceal ðeah manna gehwylc. miclun hyt  
 dælan. gif he wile. for drihtne domes hleotan:  
 Ur byþ anmod. & ofer hyrned. fela frecne. deor feohteþ. mid hornum. mære  
 mor stapa. þ is modig wuht:  
 Thorn byþ ðearle scearp. ðegna gehwulcum. anfen-gys yfyl. ungemetun reþe.  
 manna gehwylcun. ðe him mid resteð:  
 Os byþ ordfroma. ælcra spræce. wisdomes wraþu. and witena frofur. and  
 eorla gehwam. eadnys and to hiht:  
 Rad byþ onrecyde. rinca gehwylcum. sefte and swiþhwæt. ðam ðe sitteþ  
 onufan. meare mægen heardum. ofer mil paþas:  
 Cen byþ cwicera gehwam cuþ on fyre blac and beorhtlic byrneþ oftust ðær hi  
 æþelingas inne restaþ:  
 Gyfu gumena byþ gleng and herenys. wraþu & wyrþscype & wræcna gehwam  
 ar and ætwist ðe byþ oþra leas:  
 Wen ne bruceþ ðe can weana lyt sares and sorge and him sylfa hæfþ blæd &  
 blysse and eac byrga geniht:  
 Hægl byþ whitust corna. hwyrft hit of heofones lyfte. wealcaþ hit windes scura.  
 weorþeþ hit to wætera syþþan:  
 Nyd byþ nearu on breostan weorþeþ hi ðeah oft niþa bearnum to helpe and to  
 hæle ge hwæpre gif hi his hlystaþ æror:  
 Is byþ ofer cealdunge metum slidor glisnaþ glæs hluttur gimmum gelicust. flor  
 forste ge woruht fæger ansyne:  
 Ger byþ gumena hiht ðon god læteþ halig heofones cyning hrusan syllan beorhte  
 bleða beornum and ðearfum:  
 Eoh byþ utan unsmeþe treow. heard hrusan fæst hyrde fyres. wyrtrumun  
 underwreþyd wynan on eþle:

Peorþ byþ symble plega. and hlehter wlancum ðar wigan sittað on beor sele  
bliþe æt somne:-

Eohlhx seccard hæfþ oftust on fenne. wexeð on wature. wundað grimme.  
blode breneð beorna gehwylcne ðe him ænigne onfeng gedeþ:-

Sigel se mannum symble biþ on hihte ðonn hi hine feriað ofer fisces beþ oþ  
hibrim hengest bringeþ to lande:-

Tir biþ tacna sum healdeþ trywa wel. wiþ æþelingas a biþ onfærylde. ofer nihta  
genipu. næfre rwiceþ:-

Beorc byþ bleða leas. bereþ efne swa ðeah tanas butan tudder. biþ on telgum  
wlitig. þeah on helme hrysted fægere. geloden leafum lyfte getenge:-

Eh byþ for eorlum æþelinga wyn. hors hofum wlanc. ðær him hælepe ymb.  
welege on wicgum wrixlaþ rpræce. & biþ unstyllum æfre frofur:-

Mann byþ on myrgþe his magan leof. sceal þeah anra gehwylc odrum swican.  
for ðam dryhten wyle dome sine þ earme flæsc eorþan betæcan:-

Lagu byþ leodum langsum geþuht gif hi sculun neþun on nacan tealtum. & hi  
sæ yþa swype bregaþ. and se brim hengest bridles ne gym:-

Ing wæs ærest mid east denum. ge sewen secgun. oþ he siððan est. ofer wæg  
gewat wæn æfter ran. ðus hearingas ðone hæle nemdun:-

Eþel byþ ofer leof. æghwylcum men. gif be mot ðær. rihter and gerysena on  
brucan on blode bleadum oftast:-

Dæg byþ drihtnes sond. deore mannum. mære metodes leoht. myrgþ and to  
hiht eadgum and earmum. eallum brice:-

Ac byþ on eorþan. elda bearnum. flæsces fodor fereþ gelome ofer ganotes bæþ  
garsecg fandaþ. hwæþer ac hæbbe æþele treowe:-

Æsc byþ ofer heah. eldum dyre. stiþ on stalþule. stede rihte hylt. ðeah him  
feohtan on firas monige:-

Yr byþ æþelinga & eorla gehwæs. wyn and wyrþmynd. byþ on wicge fæger.  
fæstlic on færeldre. fyrd geacewa sum:-

Iar biþ ea fixa. and ðeah abruceþ. fodres onfaldan. hafaþ fægerne eard. wætre  
beworpen. ðær he wynum leofað:-

Ear byþ egle eorla gehwylcun. ðonn fæstlice flæsc onginneþ. hrawcolian  
hrusan ceosan blac to gebeddan bleða gedreosaþ. wywna gewitaþ wera  
geswicað:-

## Appendix B: Methods

This study tests a hypothesis about the *Old English Rune Poem*, and its analysis is different prior analyses of the poem in a few major technical ways. The hypothesis that the poem is strictly Pagan is tested by the following methods. A perfect translation is attempted for each stanza. In addition to the words and syntax, punctuation and “chief staves” are analyzed for clues. The search for meaning is not restricted to a simple translation into Modern English nor an attempt to find a metaphorical implication; instead a complex of varying metaphors and derived implications is examined. And nonverbal clues are also examined.

### *Hypothesis testing*

#### *The Hypotheses*

The present project is like a test of three hypotheses: (A) that the poem is predominately Pagan, (B) that the poem is theologically sophisticated and liberal, and (C) that the poem presents a version of progressive mysticism.

The result of the test is determined by how well assuming these things to be true advances our understanding. That is, if we look at the poem as consistently Pagan and theologically liberal, (A) is this at least as consistent with the evidence as any other view, and (B) does this view seem to enhance our understanding of the poem?

What I mean by “Pagan” is that the poem reflects a traditional (but mature and as opposed to highly superstitious) Teutonic polytheist religious philosophy. This philosophy is recognizably distinct from Christian and other religious philosophies, but it overlaps other religions where all religions have common concerns. This is not to say that the poem reflects every absurdity or superstition that might have been current among Teutonic Pagans.

What I mean by “theologically liberal” is that although deities are taken seriously and regarded reverentially, there has to be “a moral to the story”. Deities are not useful merely to do magical deeds, nor to absorb our adoration, nor to listen to our demands or begging. Deities are important as aids in improving one’s character. They inspire, stimulate, and teach by example. Deities are not seen simply as independent, sentient beings but also as archetypes of human psyches.

The theologically liberal view of the nature of deity is important to finding the store of wisdom in each religion, helps to justify inter-religious understanding, and contributes to the practice of progressive mysticism.

“Progressive mysticism” is discussed in Appendix F, an essay on religious mysteries. A simplified definition is that it is the use of mysticism for personal growth.

### ***Prior Examinations***

Prior to this book, two implicit tests have been made of contrasting hypotheses. In 1981, Maureen Halsall analyzed the *OERP* as a strictly Christian poem, although she did not indicate how it could be used homiletically or in some other sort of Christian-study program. In 1982, Marijane Osborn and Stella Longland showed how the poem could be interpreted and used in a half-and-half mix of Christianity and Germanic polytheism. From their page 113: “a brief era when the Pagan and Christian world-views maintained an uneasy co-existence, neither one dominating the other” approximately accounts for the system they describe.

So the present analysis departs from and is built on those two works.

### ***Theoretical Derivation of the Hypotheses***

Briefly put, the theory is as follows. In the contact between cultures, religious awareness increases. A large proportion of the public -- not merely a few adventurers -- becomes aware of one or more other religions. Many of the things “we” take for granted are contradicted by the customs and mores of another

culture, and they get along just fine anyway. This helps people recognize moral and technical aspects of their religion which had been taken for granted. Also, those who were simply held in by a desire to not be “different” are shaken loose.

Even where religion is established, an underground of the minority religion develops; also undergrounds of relatively liberal religious practitioners of all religions. Underground movements at least sometimes try to leave some kind of written record or other monument, if they can safely do so.

Not every literate person in Dark Age England was a monk or nun.

Hence, It is possible that a liberal pagan would have left one poem. This poem would be aware of religions other than English Paganism, but it would still fit into an English Pagan tradition.

The poem would have been concerned with the conduct of an enlightened and coherent religion, but the composer or composers would have been constrained to speak indirectly.

So the OERP might not have been the best or most famous English rune poem, but it was the one some nonconformist or group -- perhaps desperately -- successfully stowed where it would be found later.

### ***Results of the Tests***

The present author is disappointed that the poem turns out to be slightly more liberal than hypothesized. You can see what this means in the appendix on mysteries, where there is an example of using stanzas of the *OERP* ritually. The finding is disappointing because it seems to reflect the author’s bias as an American UU.

But at least the results shown in this book are more convincing than are those of the previous studies. Of course, this is partly because the present work is built on previous works. But this is also partly because the present analysis involves

better translations, a more thorough examination of the evidence, and more use of social science of religions.

### ***Methods of Examining the Data***

The methods used in this study differ from previous methods in two general ways: (A) an ultra-thorough translation, and (B) a search for complex meanings. Following is first a description of how the present author searched for complex meanings, and then a description of translation work.

#### ***Contrasts***

Germanic religion, tends to see creation in the play of opposites. Thus, fire and ice combined to make the world. These creative bipolarities (Garman Lord, 1996b) are important in mundane affairs, for the story of the beginning of the world is intended to tell us of the nature of all things and events. The rune poems also tell us that bipolarities or contrasts are important. To understand the runic system, you have to study the contrasts and their roles as creative bipolarities. The OERP Book is the first book on runes that deals with this level of complexity.

#### ***Three-Level Search For Meaning***

Different valid substantive interpretations (and sometimes different translations) can be made for each of the stanzas. Those ambiguities fit into a system. The system of each stanza is a hierarchy of explicit and implicit stanzas.

I started looking for von List's layers of meaning, but found something else. Von List suggested that ambiguities in "holy signs" (that is, the names of runes) would correspond to three levels of interpretation. There is a most literal level, then a level of "lower symbolism", and then a level of exoteric symbolism. Von List posited that the lowest level of meaning was intended for those outside the poets' guilds, the second level for apprentices, and the third for the fully

initiated. The layers of meaning are defined by degrees of abstraction (or arbitrariness) in interpretation. All of these layers are based directly on the words of the literal level (Flowers, 1988:78-80).

Von List's idea was a useful inspiration, but the layers in this poem are very different. Instead, this poem would have had two levels of security. Once a person began to look beyond the first level on his or her own, or once a person was formally encouraged to look beyond the first-level implicit stanzas, then someone who practiced what I am calling progressive mysticism would have coached the learner to go further.

It turns out that what makes the implicit stanzas fit into a system is how one or a combination of them leads to another implicit stanza. Thus, each stanza contains a tree of implicit stanzas.

Each stanza is found to have these levels. (1) An explicit, or non-metaphorical level. At this level, interpretation is dependent on knowledge of topics which are literally presented. (2) A metaphorical level based partly on the non-metaphorical level. In some strophes there is more than one explicit-level interpretation. (3) Third-level stanzas are derived or inferred from first- and second-level stanzas. Most of them are not apparent without a consideration of metaphorical implicit stanzas.

First-level implicit stanzas are designed to make sense and seem complete. These stanzas function to satisfy the curiosity of people who are not ready for profound study of religious lore or of poetry.

Second-level implicit stanzas function also to veil and reveal. The unguided will likely infer that they have looked at the deeper meaning of the poem after finding just one metaphorical implicit stanza.

Layering implicit stanzas does more than help protect the naïve reader and the lore from each other. This layering allows the poem to be densely packed with meaning.

### *Chief Stave Analysis*

In well-composed Teutonic poetry, the leading letter alliterating syllable in the second verse of each line is the chief stave. This is discussed in the appendix on Anglo-Saxon prosody.

If the chief stave's word is more important metrically than the first alliterating word, then it may also be substantively more important. Furthermore we might hypothesize that the first line in stanzaic poetry sets the stage for a few lines following.

For convenience, in this book the whole word including a chief stave is often called a “chief stave” instead of the correct “chief-stave-syllable word”.

Therefore in runic poetry, the chief stave of the first line might be more important than the name of the rune. For example, consider the 12<sup>th</sup> stanza, “Ĝér”. In the first line of “Ger”, the alliteration uses “g”, and the syllable bearing that alliteration in the second half-line is the word “god”. Therefore, the stanza emphasizes the role of “god” by stressing that word above all others in the first line. Hence the stanza might be more about God — or what we think of God — than it is about “year” or “New Year’s Day”.

Moreover, the chief stave words in each line of the poem might somehow give us a clue to the theme of the stanza that we would never get by focusing on the rune name.

This leads us to chief stave analysis. In this analysis, we examine chief staves of each strophe for clues to the esoteric meaning of the strophe and paid particular attention to the chief stave of the first line.

In every chapter, it is quite clear that the topic of the stanza is given by the chief stave and not the rune name. In several of them, taking all the chief staves into account provides a helpful clue to what is being said about the concept represented by the chief stave in the first line.

***Punctuation Analysis***

After I had worked on this poem for about eight or nine years, I began to wonder if the numerous punctuation irregularities were really all errors. Therefore, I critically examined clauses the punctuation irregularities created. This did not produce new insights into the substance of the stanza I was on at the time, but the apparent clues agreed with conclusions I had already reached. It was apparent that analyzing the punctuation irregularities near the beginning of an analysis could speed things up.

Some students of this poem might be skeptical that all the apparent errors were left behind as intentional clues. Ancient documents are replete with punctuation, grammatical, and spelling irregularities that appear to experts as random error. Of course, some apparent errors in this poem were simply errors. The method I used was simply to analyze apparent mechanical errors to see if I could get insights, not to assume that every apparent error is a cryptic clue.

But keep in mind that at least some Early Medieval scholars were well aware of issues in translation. Many of them did a lot of work in translating between languages. They were also aware of the tendency of languages to change over long periods.

Hence, we should not be surprised if the author(s) knew that someone in another contemporary culture or someone decades or centuries later people might have difficulty with the highly inflected Old English or the dialect of the poem. Also, the author(s) or redactor(s) must have figured that later generations would struggle with ancient traditions of verse structure. Concomitant with variations and changes in the language, one could also observe losses in knowledge of traditional prosody, esoteric religious practice, and exoteric Teutonic religious lore. (See Faulkes, 1987; Hollander, 1964; Mitchell and Robinson, 1994).

Why use apparent errors as hidden clues as opposed to using marginal notes as obvious clues? The author(s) wanted a document that would be physically compact, highly readable, and stimulating. In addition, whoever composed this

poem did not want to spell everything out. The indirect method of learning is common in mystical study, and perhaps best known in the Buddhist use of koans. Indirect learning may encourage unconscious adaptation of content and conscious perception of universal meanings. There was also a threat of violence from Christians.

### ***Nonverbal Experience***

Almost all poetry is composed to be experienced aloud in speech or song. Hence, the meaning of a poem can include messages not apparent from verbal content alone, and the verbal content must be understood in nonverbal context.

Variations in pace, volume, and pitch are necessary to communicating this poem. For example, in recitation, all the three-line stanzas are more powerfully communicated if the last verse in each is spoken slower and softer than the rest. This is discussed in the substantive chapters.

I studied four recorded performances of the *Old English Rune Poem* (Ælfric, 2002; Hodge, 1996; Lord, 1993, Thorsson, 1993). None of them corresponds to the present author's conception of how the poem is best performed. They are cited here to give the performers credit for their interesting work and for the background they offer. Ælfric's theory that the poem was sung to harp accompaniment is interesting, but the present author has so far been unable to figure out how that would be done. His own recording seems unsatisfactory.

### ***The "Perfect" and Modernized Translations***

The usefulness of nonverbal communication is one of the reasons for this book's Translations B. But a more important reason is to thoroughly understand the composer's or composer's artistic intent.

"B" translations capture as much of the nonverbal message as the present author could at the time of writing, and place critical words in the same metrical place as in the original.

The present author used three objective rules as criteria for a “perfect” translation. (1) The word-sense of the original should be replicated. That is, each word in the translation should have exactly the same denotation(s), including the same ambiguity as the original. And the ideas should be in the same order as in the original. (2) Alliteration should be the same. This does not require that the same letter be used, but that the same pattern show. For example, if two syllables in the first verse of a line alliterate with one in the second, the translation should show that pattern. Also, the same word-senses are in the alliteration -- that is, the same ideas are emphasized by alliteration. (3) The rhythm should be the same in translation.

These standards produced a close mimic of the original in Modern English for each chapter. Of course, these standards are not enough for a genuinely perfect translation, and in a few chapters, this fact is noted. Translating half-line by half-line and preserving the original structure can sometimes hinder communicating the intent of the composer or composers, even if the translator deviates from the original in minor ways here and there. On the other hand, a freer translation in which one tries to express the ideas and emotions of the original can be quite efficient.

However, the present author was shocked at how often it was possible to make a practically perfect translation in this project. It worked most of the time.

In the first edition of this book, I used around six to fifteen translations to tease out all the ambiguities and implications of each stanza. It turns out that usually just one is fine. Moreover, it turned out that some of the stanzas were not actually as ambiguous and a less sedulous effort made them seem.

In every chapter, a modernized-meter translation is offered. In many cases, it is not a significant advance over the “perfect” translation. But it turns out that making such a translation, even where this was not artistically necessary, helped understand the original intent. And in some cases, one gains understanding by comparing a relatively free translation with one that is constrained to mimic the structure of the original.

It should also be noted that the free translations sometimes present a more faithful representation of the original artistic intent than does their corresponding “perfect” rendition. This is partly because the ancient rhythms do not have the same meaning in modern culture as they did in early medieval England. Also, parataxis does not sound as “cool” in any culture speaking Modern English as it sounded to the Anglo-Saxons in early English culture.

The modernized-meter translations here are never unrhymed iambic pentameter. The reason is that iambic pentameter often comes out sounding like prose. This is a problem with some others’ translations of the *Old English Rune Poem*, and the present author had the same problem. (We philologists are not a bunch of Shakespeares.)

Designing the rhythms of the modernized-meter translations helped the present author understand the intent of the Early Medieval composer(s). The original authors varied their rhythm structure from line to line and from stanza to stanza. So the modernized-meter translations have varied rhythm from line to line and the structure is not the same in every stanza. I was unable to figure out a system in the detailed rhythm alterations of the original, but reasons for the details of rhythm in the modernized-meter translations are noted in some chapters.

## ***Comparisons With Old Norse Poems: Rejection Of The Asatrú Method***

This study rejects the Asatrú method of studying Teutonic religions in favor of Grimm’s method. The Asatrú method is to combine data from various Germanic cultures as if there were no differences, or to ignore non-Norse sources. *The Nine Doors of Midgard* (Thorsson, 1991) is one of several examples.

Jacob Grimm’s method is to recognize the greater completeness of Old Norse sources on Germanic religion while expecting to find denomination-like differences between Paganism in the various Germanic societies. After studying

Teutonic religions in their severality, Grimm would infer the features of Proto-Germanic religion, and use this inferred system to refine his understanding of the Germanic religions. This is the same method Grimm and other used in studying languages (Stallybrass, 1966).

To use Grimm's method of studying rune lore and Teutonic religion in general, one must ask if each of the ancient rune poems represents a different system.

### *Delays*

Radical study takes time, persistence, and a tolerance for not having one's work accepted. The student has to overcome his or her own perceptual biases. The perception of that which has been hidden for centuries does not come on a publish-or-perish schedule. Perhaps this is particularly true for studies of art and esoteric religion, where emotional and "spiritual" meanings have to be perceived and somehow at least mentioned in words.

Sometimes you can get ready for an activity by orbiting it for awhile, just as a space vehicle might orbit the earth before entering its atmosphere at a chosen spot. Experience studying the poem contributed to the present author's scholarly and personal maturity, so that the methods of study tended to change during each pass through the stanzas. I repeatedly found that I my previous "brilliant" understanding was not good enough and that the first few stanzas were not written up in quite the same way as the last few.

So the time elapsed from the beginning of this study to the completion of the first volume of the second edition of the book has been 23 years.

## Appendix C: Analysis of the Lore of Týr<sup>35</sup>

The task at hand is to examine comprehensively and in detail the evidence regarding the god called Týr or Tiw. I examine first the Eddas, for they are our main primary source on the Teutonic high deities. The Eddas give more detailed and explicit information than any other source, and data from other sources must be evaluated in large part on the basis of Eddaic knowledge. Subsequently, I analyze other the other evidence of all types. After going over the evidence, I discuss prior analyses in *Teutonic Religion* (Gundarsson, 1993a) and *Myth and Religion of the North* (Turville-Petre, 1964). I show that those works, which are among the better analyses by Pagans and academics, leave a need for the present essay. Finally, some conclusions can be reached.

On the whole, the evidence shows Tiw's widespread importance and His deep emotional impact on at least the Norse and English peoples in Pagan times.

### *The Poetic Edda*

In the following sections, I summarize briefly the sections of three poems that relate directly to Týr. Translations I am using for the analysis of *The Poetic Edda* include: Bellows' (1923) Hollander's (1962), Larrington's (1996), and Thorpe's (1906). The edition I used for examination of the Old Norse is Neckel's (1936). Larrington's translation is based on Neckel's edition as revised by H. Kuhn in 1983. Hollander says he "followed Sophus Bugge's text in the main", making a few emendations of his own.

#### *Hymskviða*

In *Hymskviða*, let us start with Strophe 4. This is Neckel's (1936) edition, Stanza 4, Lines 3 & 4:

“unz af tryggðom • Týr Hlórriða  
ástrǫð mikit • einom sagði”.

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<sup>35</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1998c).

In context, we are told that Týr gave Thor advice on where to get a cauldron out of faithfulness/fidelity. This tells us that not all the deities were equally interested in the project of getting an ale-brewing cauldron for Ægir. Moreover, Týr's participation, out of his loyalty to the community of Asgard, indicates that Asgardian loyalty exceeded his loyalty to (undesirable) kin. This is not the relatively simple characterization of Tiw as “næfre swiceþ” in the OERP — until you realize that Tiw “healdeþ trywe wel” (keeps faith well) with “æþelingas” (noble ones), not just with everyone. You have to *deserve* his unswerving loyalty. This is an important insight in interpreting the OERP stanza.

Other stanzas give further information. Týr's biological father was the giant Hymir. Hymir was ugly, mean, and stingy. He was physically huge and frosty (as in frost giant). Hymir was generally hostile. Týr's grandmother was a nine-hundred-headed monstrosity and not much of a hostess. His mom was beautiful and socially gracious.

This poem tells us that Týr was not as physically strong as Thor, though Týr was strong.

### ***Lokasenna***

In this poem, Týr's handicap and the way He got it (Fenris-binding) are mentioned twice — in the introductory prose and in the dialog. The story follows. To trick the monster wolf, Fenris, into allowing himself to be tied up, Týr put His hand into the wolf's mouth. When the deception was revealed, Fenris bit of Týr's hand. This heroism of Týr's is a major emphasis of the religion.

We certainly seem to be dealing with a non-medieval frame of mind. In the dialog, we see that Týr regarded the loss of his hand as less than Fenris' loss of freedom. This means that freedom is also one of his concerns. This point is also

brought out by Týr's mentioning the issue of freedom as he praises Frey as a liberator.

Týr lost his right hand to the wolf. The significance of which hand was lost is not evident. However, there might be some significance, since the issue is mentioned. We do not have evidence that this god was left- or right-handed.

In this passage, Loki taunts Týr by saying that He has some flaw in dealing with people. In this context, Týr seems to be trying to make peace by calming Loki -- He is telling Loki that Frey is the best-behaved of the deities, implying that Loki's hateful remarks are improper. Here is the strophe (# 39) from Neckel's 1936 edition followed by a transliteration:

Þegi þú, Týr! • Þú kunnir aldregi  
bera tilt með tveim:  
handar innar hægri • mun edk hinnar geta,  
er þér sleit Fenrir frá

Silent you, Týr! • You never approach understandings with  
Right hand forward; • remember that which Fenrir tore off!

The general idea is clear. You have to realize that the other stanzas in *Lokasenna* are unified — they present one or two sentences in a tightly-knit paragraph. Thus, the stanza in question seems to say that Týr is unable to bring about peace between persons because of his physical handicap, which is a sign of his adherence to the Æsir. He is not a god of balance, but of action. From this and a passage in *Hymnaskviða*, we see that his loyalties are clear and undivided.

Stanza 39 of *Lokasenna* implies an unpleasant attitude toward left-handed people. Something like this can be found in the Greek myth of the castration of Uranus, which explains why the left hand is the hand “of ill omen” (Graves, 1960: 37). However, we see that only Loki is prejudiced against left-handed people, not the true deities. In Teutonic Pagan religion, the left hand is not a hand of ill omen.

Stanza 40 shows a humiliation of the mighty god of victory. His wife bore Loki's offspring while married to Týr, and no compensation was paid. Týr had no comeback for this. It shows Loki's power or Týr's lack of legal or political talent. This contradicts the notion of Mars Thingus, but it is consistent with the idea that Týr is not good at building coalitions. . (See Faulkes, 1987; 126; Larrington, 1996; Neckel, 1936).

### ***Sigrífumál***

Týr is mentioned in a series of stanzas following a narrative-prose resume of the character Sigrífa. Most translators show these as Strophes 6-19, but Hollander has an additional stanza where others have prose above this point and has this series in 7-21. This is a series of rune magic stanzas, so Týr is associated with rune magic. Moreover, in this passage only Týr and Mimir are mentioned explicitly, so this is quite an honor and statement of function. Týr is mentioned here instead of Óðin, who is widely regarded in modern times as the Norse god of magic and patron of rune use.

Tiw is the god of victory — that is made quite clear by Stanza 6 (or 7, depending on whose edition you use). And He is specifically the god of victory in armed combat. He is strongly associated with swords, although He might also be associated with other weapons.

Tiw is not invoked by a runic spell or by sigils. This is also clear from the same stanza. But He is invoked in conjunction with “victory runes”. These “victory runes” are perhaps an organized formula showing a pronounceable phonic unit or small group of phonic units, not necessarily words of a natural language. They go on the blade, scabbard (or guard), and hilt —the major parts of a sword and its major accessory. Týr is invoked “twice”. It could be that the poem says to invoke Týr twice because the Old Norse word for “twice” alliterates with the god's name, thus giving the proper poetic meter. However, if we may assume that there was some other way for a hard-working poet to get the meter right, then there would likely have been two distinct purposes served by the two

separate invocations. Perhaps the two purposes were victory and courage, or perhaps courage and helpful purpose.

## *The Prose Edda*

The *Prose Edda* is in part Snorri Sturluson's interpretation and paraphrasing of poetic myths. Thus, it is not surprising that the *Prose Edda* is congruent with the *Poetic Edda*. However, Snorri went beyond the poems in the *Poetic Edda* to get his sources, so that we can profit by comparing the two *Eddas*.

On page 281 of the Blackwell translation, there are a couple of paragraphs about Týr. This passage pretty well agrees with the same passage in the Young (1954: 53) and Faulkes (1987: 24-25) translations. This is a god of heroes. In the *Prose Edda*, Týr is "the most daring and intrepid", "bravest and most valiant", or "boldest and most courageous". He is the patron of the surpassingly brave, and it used to be customary to say of an exceptionally brave man that "he is Týr valiant". He is the patron of men of action as well, for he does not hesitate to act heroically. Proof if this is the Fenris Myth.

In addition, Týr is much-knowing or clever. It was customary to say of a very "wise" man that he is "Týr-wise." Faulkes interprets "wise" as "clever", Young has it "well informed", and Blackwell splits the difference with "wise".

Týr is not a peacemaker, writes Snorri. This reinforces the impression that He was a god of war and that He was not a god of the þing. Also, one of his kennings was "Battle-God" (Faulkes, 1987: 126).

Týr is one of the highest gods. He is named as one of the twelve male judges (with 8 goddess judges) (Young, 1954: 97). However, also named as among those judges was Loki. Not named was Oðin, but Blackwell (1906: 209) tells us that Oðin sat on a throne apart from, and implicitly over, the judges in Gladsheim (which is one of Oðin's residences).

He was the bravest and most altruistic of the deities, based on the Fenris Myth. This myth shows most of Týr's outstanding qualities. He participated in the tricking of Fenris, doing the unexpected to trap the wolf in a magic rope. This shows His tactical cleverness, determination, and skill. This is the only god who made the sacrifice, so He was also the bravest in being the only one willing to approach the wolf and feed him. (Oðin foolishly decided to raise the wolf "at home" in Asgard despite divinations revealing the ill outcomes from all three of Loki's children by Angrboda.) By caring for the wolf, Týr showed a humane aspect. Týr is the most community-minded or public-spirited of the deities — the others laugh at Fenris' misfortune, but Týr suffers the loss of his right hand. We are not told if He has misgivings about His betrayal of Fenris, since they were friends, but this god is quite decisive and does not waver when He finds a course of action to be right. And He does not hesitate --- His judgment is quick and sure. He did not try to smooth things over or find a compromise everyone could live with — He brought victory to one side. This myth contrasts Týr's courage, which is productive, with Fenris' foolish urge to show his courage by submitting to the magical bondage. (See Young 1954; 55-58; Faulkes, 1987: 27-29.

It seems significant that at Ragnarok Týr and Fenris do not fight. Instead, Týr fights Garm, the Hound of Hell. The fight ends in a tie, with both Garm and Týr dying. Fenris sequentially fights Oðin and Viðar; all three die.

### *Summation of the Eddas*

Týr represents qualities highly valued in a warrior, policeperson, or emergency worker. He is a god of heroes. In these poems, I see a god characterized by fierce and highly selective loyalty. He does not waver, compromise, nor equivocate. He is a god of action where others hesitate. He is decisive. He is not as powerful in brutish terms as Thor, but Týr is nonetheless quite effective because He is clever, determined, and courageous. He sees the overall, the Big Picture, where others might be more shortsighted. Týr's partisanship is symbolized by his one-handedness — and this in turn is connected with a myth

in which he loses his hand by betraying a friend (Fenris) out of faithfulness to his own community. His one-handedness is also a pun, for it shows an imbalance. Of course a god of action would be off-balance more than others, for He would be boldly on the move.

This is a god of mental abilities. The Eddas are ambiguous as to the nature of these mental abilities, leaving us to interpret “wise”. Both “shrewd” and “knowing” are plausible in context, and like both are equally applicable.

Týr is the most humane of the male deities. His caring for Fenris shows more kindness and responsibility toward someone who is not his offspring than we see from any of the female deities.

Týr shows that we can rise above our beginnings. This god comes from mixed and unlikely parents: ugly & obnoxious on the one hand, beautiful and very pleasant-mannered on the other.

He is a god of decisiveness. His origins are not noticeably heroic, shrewd, nor well-informed. He seems to have made a conscious choice to be an Asgarð deity, and he carried that decision out firmly and consistently.

Týr is a god of magic, although not necessarily any more so than any other high deity. His association with magic in the rune poems and *Sigdrifumal* does not show that rune staves were used by people to invoke Him nor used by Him to exercise His powers. He is not specialized in rune magic. He is associated with the hidden meanings in the rune poems, but not in the way that Oðin is associated with the hidden meanings. That is, Oðin *is* a hidden meaning in the rune poems.

Týr is exalted among deities.

Because of His partisanship, Týr is not a peacemaker nor coalition builder. He is decisive in a narrower way – by taking sides.

It might seem ironic that a god of victory would experience occasional humiliation, as Týr does when facing Loki in verbal struggle or frustration, as He does when trying to lift the cauldron in *Hymaskviða*. However, the deities of Teutonic polytheism are not absolute powers. This is a very different perspective on divinity than one encounters in the Jewish-based religions. The lack of conscious, absolute power anywhere is an important emphasis of this religion.

This is a god who values freedom, as is shown in Lokasenna, but not necessarily freedom for all.

His fighting is in favor of enlightened wights, hence of enlightenment. Such factors as military discipline, self-discipline, government, and rules of conduct come to mind.

Most of this deity's outstanding qualities are shown in the Fenris Myth. That myth seems to have been very important to the ancient Norse if repeated references in other myths are a clue.

## ***The Rune Poems***

Evidence other than the *Eddas* includes the medieval rune poems, other philological evidence, archeology, history, folklore, and place names. I present evidence of each type in a separate subsection. On the whole, the evidence of these six types reinforces the impressions we get from the *Eddas* and helps build a more comprehensive picture of the focal deity.

Only two deities are mentioned by name in any of the rune poems from the the period prior to 1500: The *Abecedarium Nordmanicum*, the *Old English Rune Poem*, the *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme*, and the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*. Tiw is in all four, and Ing is in the *OERP*. This is quite an honor for Týr, for Oðin is the god of the runes.

The *Abecedarium Nordmanicum* is the oldest of the rune poems, but it does not say much. Following is the entire poem.

“Wealth first;  
 Aurochs after;  
 Giant the third letter;  
 Os (Pagan god) is following it;  
 Write riding at the end;  
 Ulcer cleaves next.  
 Hail has need, ice, harvest, and sun.  
 Tiw, birch, and man in the middle.  
 Water the clear;  
 Yew concludes the whole.” (Halsall, 1983)

It appears Tiw, Birch, and Man are in the middle. Thorsson (1987: 104-105) interprets “in the middle” as meaning in Midgarth. We can only guess that this means that deities intervene in human affairs, that constellations are part of the natural world, or that a specific male deity is always with us. All three of these statements could be the case, but the last is consistent with the *OERP*’s “a biþ on færylde ofer nihta genipu”.

The *OERP* emphasizes Tiw’s reliability and partisanship. There is a detailed discussion in Chapter 17 of the present book.

The *Old Norwegian Rune Rhyme* stanza “Týr” emphasizes His heroism and relates this to everyday life. Thorsson’s (1993) translation: “Týr is the one-handed among the Æsir/The smith has to blow often.” This verse juxtaposes two notions of sacrifice. On the one hand, there is the partial self-sacrifice of himself to the Æsir, and on the other hand there is the exertion by the smith under trying circumstances (of smoke, heat, and physical exertion). So the major emphasis of this verse is sacrifice on one’s own part for gains that are shared with others. This stanza reminds us that there is profit in exertion and constructive sacrifice. We are reminded that investment of oneself which is per se unpleasant can be apart of very useful social life. There is an implication that this kind of

investment is necessary, for the smith's products were necessities of life. We are told that hard work is analogous to heroic acts, for hard work is also valuable to the community, although sedulousness might not be glorified as is dramatic heroism.

The *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*'s stanza reminds us of Týr's exalted position as "ruler of temples", of all that the Myth of Fenris says, and of this god's resemblance to Mars (Thorsson, 1993). Being ruler of temples seems more a description any popular deity than a nickname for Týr alone. For example, *Vafðrunismal* also refers to Njorð as ruler of "hofom ok horgom...hunnmorgon" (temples and altars innumerable) (Neckel, 1936).

### ***Other Philology***

There are three issues here. (1) It is necessary wrestle with the Týr-Mars relationship. Then, (2) I consider the Týr demotion hypothesis. Finally, (3) there is evidence of Týr's popularity and the importance of his role in the Fenris Myth.

### **The Týr-Mars Relationship**

Although we cannot infer Týr's characteristics from what we know about Mars, there are philological associations between the two deities. Hence, we can infer roughly equivalent levels of importance between Mars and Týr.

Týr's name was used to translate the name of Mars to Teutonic audiences. Týr was used to gloss Mars in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*. In the form "Tiig", His name was used to gloss Mars in Old English glosses (Halsall, 1987; Turville-Petre, 1964: 182). The use of His name to gloss Mars long after official conversion to Christianity implies that He must have been familiar to literate people on a very enduring basis.

In addition, Day-of-week evidence implies approximate correspondence between Tiw and Mars. Tiw's name is on the third day of the week in most Teutonic languages. For example, it is called Tuesday in Modern English or Dienstag in Modern German. Anglo-Saxon Tiwesdæg meant Teusday and Tiwesniht meant Monday night. This same day of the week is named after Mars in Latin countries, for example Mardi in Modern French or Martedì in Modern Italian. (Davidson, 1964; Hall, 1960; Owen, 1985).

There is a major difference between Týr and Mars. Mars was an agricultural deity, but Tiw is not associated with agriculture (Wiegell, 1973).

## The Týr Demotion Hypothesis

Now I turn to the Týr demotion issue. The case is presented in several places, but the most competent presentation in Modern English is Brian Branston's (1974: 72-91). Branston's discussion consists mostly of side matters, but at least he also handles the main issue.

### *Description of the Hypothesis*

Týr's name is etymologically related to \*Tiwaz (Proto-Germanic), Zeus (Greek), Jovis (Roman), Dyaus (Sanskrit), Deus (Latin), \*Djevs (IE) or \*Deivos (IE). There must have been a Ziu or \*Ziu in there somewhere in a Germanic language also. Tiwaz was the chief god of the Proto-Germanic peoples. We know this because his name in Old Norse certainly meant "god". Also, deities with etymologically related names from observed languages were all chief deities.

Tiwaz was Sky God. This is inferred from other deities' having been sky gods.

Týr was the Allfather of Snorri's myths. Óðin could not be the Allfather because He was not present at the beginning of time. That must have been someone else. It must have been Týr. (See Branston, 1974; Gundarsson, 1993a).

### *Evaluation of the Hypothesis*

The case is pretty flimsy. Fantasy is substituted for data as speculation is assumed to be fact. In some cases, data are contradicted. For example, in known myths, Tiw was not present at the beginning of time — he has a father, who would be either Óðin or Hymir depending in which ancient story you use. Is the original version that which holds that the Allfather exists before Hymir and Odin, or is the original version that which posits that no diety was present at the beginning of time? Also, the reliance on etymology is excessive, for words commonly undergo radical changes of meaning through time and space.

In Old Norse, His name meant “god”, but Frey's name meant “lord” and Freya's name meant “lady”. These names cannot be taken to imply “supreme deity”.

There would surely be vestigial functions to support the assertion of His having been a sky god weather god if the case were true. In the known myths, there is direct reference to Him as a god of many things but never as Sky God. Nor is anyone else referred to as a sky, field, wind, fire, nor rain god. In the Teutonic system, giants represent unthinking natural forces (Stanfield, 2003). Moreover, Kveldulf Gundarsson (1993a) admits the ancients did not equate Týr with Jupiter, but with Mars. Since Jupiter was a sky god and Mars was not, it would appear that Gundarsson us reason to disagree with the alleged academic consensus that Týr was once a sky deity.

It is logical to regard a Sky Father-Earth Mother pantheon as a *different* pantheon in *another* religion entirely than to claim that the same deities appear in these pantheons and in Teutonic religion. Also, it seems reasonable to infer that deities with radically different characteristics and functions are different deities regardless of etymological considerations. (Yes, in this sense, very different Christian denominations could be seen as referring to different deities by the same name). Those who make the Týr demotion case ignore the fact that

they are discussing different deities in different pantheons in different religions for different cultures.

And lastly, what is the profound importance of the Týr demotion hypothesis to Teutonic religion reconstruction? If it were true that Týr was once a Sky Father or once the chief deity or only deity, what would that prove? What would this tell us about Teutonic religion? There is no open question which would be addressed by Týr's demotion from head god if He no longer has the slightest resemblance to an Allfather or Sky God.

## **Popularity and the Fenris Myth**

The Fenris Myth is mentioned several times in surviving Old Norse literature. It appears to be referred or alluded to more often than many of our recorded myths, certainly more often than any myth centering on Óðin.

## *Archeology*

Philological use of a stone inscription (from the 200's CE) has been possibly mistakenly used to link Týr with Mars and hence with Þingán. The expression "Mars Thingus" is found on a stone found beside Hadrian's Wall. This is often taken to mean that Tiwaz is the God of the Thing, worshipped at a votive stone (Davidson, 1964: 57-58; Gundarsson, 1993a; Turville-Petre, 1964: 181). This assumes that a thing was only a legislative or judicial assembly. However, if a þing in the language of the soldiers at Hadrian's Wall could have been any major council, "Mars Thingus" could have indicated a place for a council of war, military staff meeting, or corps headquarters. A þing in Old English could be any meeting or discussion (Hall, 1960). Other evidence shows that Tiw is not a god of coalition, compromise, debate, majority votes, nor due process. He is a god of clever intentions and therefore of fine planning. Týr is a god of Military deliberation, not of parliamentary processes.

## *History*

Historical literature does not provide much material on this deity. There is speculation associating Týr with human sacrifice and a pillar or some pillars (for example: Branston, 1974; Davidson, 1964; Gundarsson, 1993a). For the most part, his stuff is very speculative.

On the other hand, Turville-Petre (1964) does cite some evidence that human sacrifices were offered to Tiu. This evinces His popularity and status as a high deity.

## *Folklore*

Folkloric evidence reinforces the impression that ancient Teutonic peoples recognized an association between Týr and Mars. Folklore also implies that Týr was a very popular deity.

Over 50 spiritual wights are named in the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*, but only 7 have weekdays named after them.

Other evidence sometimes given is relatively ambiguous. Owen (1985: 28-30, 57) says that the symbol ↑ is the most common sigil on Anglo-Saxon cremation jars, and he claims that the sigil's use often suggests invocation of the god. Owen also says that a horse sculpture on a hill indicates Tiw worship, but that is pretty far-fetched. The horse is known to be associated with Frey/Ing, but not known to be especially associated with Tiw (for example, see Turville-Petre, 1964).

The data show no evidence of festivals, no personal names, few myths and no folk stories. Given the status of surviving evidence, the non-evidence of worship

and personal attachment cannot be allowed to devalue the other evidence of Týr's importance.

### *Place Names*

Place name evidence indicates widespread worship, although His importance varied from on region to another. There were many place names referring to this god in areas now in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, and one in Norway. There was none in Iceland (Branston, 1974: 74; Turville-Petre, 1964: 181).

At least nine place names in England evince this god's importance there. I derived the following list from scholarly books and a road atlas Keep in mind that a variant of Tiw's name in Old English is Tig.

Tysmere (Tiw's Lake)

Tislea (Tiw's grove or open space) — based partly on *se Leah*, "piece of ground, meadow".

Teusley (Tiw's grove or open space), in Surrey

Tysoe (Tiw's spur of land), in Warwickshire and near a red horse sculpture on a hillside.

Tirley (Tiw-Leah), about 5 miles north of Gloucester as the crow flies.

Tisbury (Tiw's burh), 10 miles east of Salisbury, close to the heart of West Saxony.

Tigley (Tiw's Leah) — about 7 miles NE of Dartmouth as the crow flies, in Devon.

Tifield — (Sussex)

Tewin (Hertfordshire)

By comparison with other wights, Tiw's place name frequency implies a high level of awareness on the part of the ancient English people. Owen (1985) shows 11 place names associated with Thor (I would make that 12), 7 associated with Frigga, 16 associated with Woden, 2 associated with Grendel, and 3 associated with evil giants (I would make that 2). Associated with no particular deity but

implying a place of worship are 32 place names. (See Bartholomew, 1997; Branston, 1974: 74; Davidson, 1964: 60; Hall, 1960; Owen, 1985).

### ***Summation of Non-Eddaic Evidence***

Tiw's importance to the ancient Germanic peoples is shown in many ways. We see the presence of His name in place names and a day of the week, we see mention of him in rune poems, and we see implicit assertions that He was as important in the Teutonic system as was Mars in the Roman pantheon. Also, He was one of the deities who received sacrifices of animals or people. Tacitus mentions him as being among the three most-worshipped gods of the Germanic peoples.

Despite His relatively exalted position, this was a god very relevant to the everyday lives of people. The Eddas and the *OERP* agree that this was an unusually reliable guide or ally.

### ***Overall Summary***

The lore emphasizes Týr as representing the most highly valued qualities of a soldier, emergency workers, medical care personnel, or close friend.

His altruism, courage, and decisiveness make Him a god of heroism.

The lore relates Týr to more mundane pursuits. He is a lofty but attainable example to all who must work hard or to anyone who seeks enlightenment. He values freedom more than health or beauty. He is consciously selective of his friends. He is a god of cleverness, of strategy, of knowing. His decisions under pressure are shrewd. He is a warrior who did not come to negotiate, but he is a very kind and caring individual. Týr's hostility is not the hostility of blind rage. His awareness of others' worth is a basis of his loyalty.

His importance seems to have been regional, but his region included a very large proportion of Teutonic peoples and those who left us much of our Germanic medieval literature.

He is not a god of balance. He is not a god who had to be demoted from supremacy. There is no pictorial evidence that the ancients associated Him with any special symbols, as Óðin would have been associated with the spear or raven. He is not a bachelor god. He is not a god of electoral politics nor of negotiations. He is not a god of rune magic.

## Appendix D: Lore of Frey / Ing<sup>36</sup>

Frey is a complex deity. This is a review of the lore of Frey to enhance the analysis of the stanza “Ing” in the *OERP*. Any relation that might exist between the stanza and the lore of this god is less evident than when the rune poems were young, so an extensive and thorough examination of Frey’s lore is necessary.

The first section briefly discusses some issues motivating this essay. This is followed by a discussion of His names. Then there is a study of Frey’s level of prominence. Following that is discussion of the specialties and jurisdictions of this god, in turn followed by a section on His worship. Finally, overall conclusions are presented.

Other students of the *OERP* have opined that Ing is the god Frey, but no previous student of the *OERP* has offered a cogent case in support of this opinion. Regarding the *OERP*, there are certain questions to be answered by a comprehensive search of the lore of Frey. (1) Is Ing the same as Frey? (2) What has the wain (vehicle) got to do with Ing the hero or Frey the deity? (3) Does the stanza “Ing” include a reference to Frey? To answer the second and third questions, three more questions must be posed. (3a) What are Frey’s functions and jurisdictions? (3b) What symbols invoke or point to Frey? (3c) Is there a relation between the stanza and the general style of worship or followership of Frey?

### Issues

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<sup>36</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1999C).

The myths are absolutely clear that Frey is a god's name, and we are supplied with plenty of information about His characteristics to indicate that this is a god. Considering the names of Frey, it seems likely that he was known in England as Ing.

Evidence implies that Frey was very prominent in Teutonic myth, and in certain ways that make it likely He would have been well known in ancient England. In addition, Frey was very popular among people; place names, personal names, and the *Gesta Danorum* indicate that Frey / Ing was one of the most widely-worshipped of deities in England as well as in Scandinavia.

## Ing Is Frey

### Names of This God

Of course, there could have easily been more than one wight in the pantheon known as Ing, just as there was more than one Mimir, but the mythic evidence implies a single identity for the wight known as Ing or Frey. The evidence also shows that Frey was known as Ing.

Several names are clearly associated with Frey. In the *Saga of the Yinglings*, we are told explicitly that Frey was also known as Yngvi, Yngvifrey, and the God of the World. He is also Yngvi in strophe 55 of *The First Lay of Helgi the Hunding Slayer* and strophe 14 of *The Lay of Regin*. In strophe 43 of the *Lokasenna*, Frey is called Ingunar-Frey. In *Skáldskaparmál*, He is clearly referred to as Ingi-Frey and as Atridi (Faulkes, 1987: 88; 136; Hollander, 1962; 1964: 14).

Nowhere in the ancient texts are we explicitly told that Frey is called Ing. Some scholars claim that in Old Norse, the “y” is pronounced the same as “i”, but some claim that the “y” is always pronounced like a Modern French “u” or Modern German unmlauted “u” (Glendening, 1993: 90-95; Jónsson, 1927: 1-8). In Modern Icelandic, the “y” is pronounced as the modern (and ancient) English pronounced “i” (Taylor, 1990: “Approximate Pronunciation”). Thus, Yngvi and Ingvi might have sounded quite similar or quite distinct. Therefore, it is important to note that ancient sources include names such as Ingunar, and Ingi-Frey. This increases the probability that Ing is a name for Frey. Thus, there is an etymological relationship between most of Frey’s names and Ing.

Thus, we can infer that Ing was a god’s name. We can infer that He was Frey for two reasons. (2) The use of the name Ing in ancient documents implies a god by that name.

## **Prominence**

It is unlikely that any Germanic people would have ignored Him or would have regarded Ingi-Frey as a minor deity. Mythical and other literary sources, plus legal, place-name, and archeological evidence show that He was very prevalent in clergy, temples, and followers in general. Place name evidence in England also implies that He was known there primarily under the name Ing. He was widely associated with social prominence itself. Evidence examined under the heading “Specialties and Jurisdictions” also implies a very major deity. Moreover, He was clearly known in England in the 900’s, and known as both Ing and as Frey.

## **Status in the Pantheon**

In this section, I examine the myths. Three issues are considered: (1) the degree to which Frey was honored by other deities, (2) His official rank in divine society, and (3) the statuses of His relatives. Examinations of all three issues give an impression of one of the highest of the high deities. In addition, the

sheer frequency of His mention in surviving Nordic Pagan religious literature gives weight to our impression of His status.

### ***Popularity among Deities***

Both the Prose and Poetic Eddas tell us that Frey is one of the most honored deities. For example, in *The Flying of Loki*, 15 wights share 65 spoken lines, and Frey speaks in 8 – about twice the average – and other speakers only praise Him, although the poem is filled with denunciations. Stanza 35 of that poem states outright that He is popular among the deities of Asgarð. *Voluspá* (*The Prophecy of 90the Seeress*) includes mention of Frey as Frigga’s “beloved” or “delight”, along with Oðin – implying sexual intercourse between Frey and Asgarð’s queen (Hollander, 1962; Larrington, 1996; Neckel, 1936a and b). Other evidence of His popularity among deities is given in the next section.

### ***Political Status in Asgarð***

In addition to being popular among gods, Frey is politically elite. This is evident in several places in the surviving Nordic literature.

In both *Grimnismál* and *The Deluding of Gylfi*, we are told that Frey is Lord of the Light Elves. He was awarded Elf-Home as a teething gift by the male deities. In the Nordic system, light elves are prestigious wights (it is a compliment for a man to be called elf-like). This indicates not only lordly status but also having prestige among deities (Hollander, 1962; Faulkes, 1987). His thorough integration into Asgarð is indicated by a kenning in *Poetic Diction*, where the Asgarð-dwellers are referred to as Ingi-Frey’s kin (Faulkes, 1987: 88).

The *Saga of the Ynglings* also tells us that at the end of the war between Asgarð and Vanaheim, Frey and His father were the “most outstanding men” of the Vanir. Frey and His father were sent to Asgarð as hostages to insure the peace. In Asgarð Frey became a *diar*, who similar to the Icelandic *goðar*, secular judges and chieftains as well as priests. Unlike the Icelandic *goðar*, the *diar*

were also “songsmiths”, (highly skilled in “runes and...magic songs”), and practitioners of *seið* (divination and magic). (See Hollander, 1964: 7-14; Byock, 1988).

Frey is also a select judge. Snorri’s *Poetic Diction* also indicates that Frey was among the 20 judges of Asgarð (Young, 1954: 97). The total of judges is well below the 51-55 high-level wights mentioned in the mythic evidence. In *The Deluding of Gylfi*, Frey is one of only three judges to determine Loki’s fate when Loki tries to make amends to having destroyed the hair of Thor’s wife (Young, 1954: 109).

We know of Frey as a military general among deities, for in strophe # 3 of *Skírnismál* He is referred to as *folkvalki goða*, “army-leader of gods” (Neckel, 1936a). At Ragnarök, Frey fights Surt, who rides foremost in the giants’ rebellion (Young, 1954: 87-88). It is not clear whether Surt is supposed to be the leader of the Southern giants or merely taking point. If Surt were the leader of a major group of attackers (Loki and his offspring arrive separately), then Frey-vs.-Surt would appear to indicate a match of generals. We know from other sources that ancient Germanic military leaders did sometimes go out in front to lead attacks (for example, see Tacitus, chapter 7 in Mattingly and Hanford, 1970: 107).

### ***Prominence of Relatives***

In pre-industrial times the characteristics of one’s relatives were more attended to as clues to one’s nature than is the case nowadays. For examples, look at the genealogical lists in the sagas or the *Bible*.

This god’s close relatives were quite prominent. His sister is Freya, who is among the highest of the goddesses in the Nordic pantheon in terms of political status and in terms of popularity in Miðgarð. His father, Njorð, is also a major deity. Freya is a priestess in Asgarð and Njorð is a *diar*. His remarkably beautiful wife (Gerð) enjoyed too much prestige to be a giant. Although she is of giant parentage, so are many other Asgarthian deities. In the *Saga of Harald*

*Graycloak* (Chapter 15) and in *Saga of Harald Sigurtharson*, we find Her name used in these kennings for woman— Gerð-of-gold-rings and gold-ring-Gerð. (See Faulkes, 1987: 31-32; Hollander, 1962: Hollander, 1964: 143, 589).

## Prominence in Miðgarð

Although deities' theological prominence varied from district to district and over time, overall Frey was in the elite of His pantheon. In *The Deluding of Gylfi* we are told outright that Frey is “an exceedingly famous god”, just as his sister is “the most renowned of the goddesses” (Young, 1954: 52-53). Apparently the level of His prominence varied from one district to another and from one time to another, but in general He was always as popular in Miðgarð as his status in Asgarð suggests.

## Prevalence in Temples and Clergy in Scandinavia

The sagas, the *Gesta Danorum*, modern place and personal names, Icelandic law, and *Beowulf* make it clear that Frey was among the most popular of deities in Iceland and Norway.

He must have had a large grass-roots following to support His clergy and temples. Frey had a disproportionately large share of temple buildings. Frey had an even larger share of clergy than of temples, at least in Iceland and Scandinavia. (See also the sidebar “Only Nine Deities Were Worshipped in Scandinavia”.)

In many cases in the sagas, a temple is dedicated to Frey alone, and it is less common

### Only Nine Deities Were Worshipped in Scandinavia

Just having any temples or clergy is a distinction. There are over 50 wights mentioned in the *Eddas*, but not all of them were celebrated or worshipped publicly in Scandinavia. Consider these examples: Balder is dead; Dvalin is not a deity; Loki is not even a sympathetic character. By having any surviving evidence of worship, Frey ranks among the nine most important. The others were Njorð, Freya, Oðin, Thor, Frigga, Skaði, Wuldor, and Tiw (Turville-Petre, 1964). This is related to the subsection “Prevalence in Temples and Clergy in Scandinavia”.

to find mention of a single-deity temple dedicated to anyone else. Also, where there is a multiple-deity temple and deities are named, Frey is usually prominent. For example, Adam of Bremen left behind a detailed description of the national Swedish temple at Uppsala, revealing that only three deities of the pantheon were represented by idols: Oðin, Thor, and Frey. Another instance is in Chapter 14 of the *Saga of Hakon the Good*, where there is a description of a drinking ceremony at a heathen temple in Norway. In that ceremony, three deities were toasted: Oðin, Njorð and Frey. This evinces that Frey was one of the three top deities at least for the families in that district. On the other hand, Frey is not always the most honored in a temple. For example the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* shows an example of a multiple-deity temple in which Thor was “the most honored of the gods” (Ashliman, 1998; Faulkes, 1987; Hollander, 1962; Hollander: 1964: 107; 207-208; McKinnell, 1997a; Porter, 1997b; Turville-Petre, 1964).

We frequently read of Frey-priests (and a Frey-priestess) in the sagas, but we less often find clergy clearly dedicated to any other deity or to all deities. For example, there are two Thor priests in as compared to six Frey’s clergy in the sources cited in this paragraph. (See Pálsson and Edwards, 1989: 28, 38; McKinnell, 1997a and b; Pálsson, 1971; Porter, 1997b; Wawn, 1997).

## Place Names In England

Place names imply dedication on a permanent basis and a major scale, and therefore they can be important supplements to other evidence. If it were just for Old English non-official literature, we could infer that Frey was known to the English as another nations’ god, but names of towns give a different picture. Evidence of surviving town names and contents of medieval official documents show that Frey was known in England, and that He was known as Ing more than as Frey. His popularity was less than that of Woden, Tiw, or Thor and about the same as that of Fríge.

No previous work mentions place names in England indicating connections with Frey. Therefore in what follows I will go over the evidence of holy place names

at some length, because I want to show that the evidence of Frey worship in England is stronger than it looks to most students of England's villages (Owen, 1985; Turville-Petre, 1964; Þórunn, 1997).

Turville-Petre indicates that several place names in Scandinavia and Iceland indicate worship of Frey. He has 20 place names in Norway alone! Most of these place names refer to field, meadow, grove, or other geographic feature – especially common are productive grain fields called Freysakr. However a couple of places are named Frey's Temple (Freyshof or Freysvé) (Turville-Petre, 1964: 165-168).

Neither Turville-Petre (1964) nor Owen (1985) mentions place names evincing worship of Frey in England. However, an examination of place name data shows some possibilities. (1) I will show that other deities from the Asgarð pantheon have place names in Their honor in England. Not only do They have place names, but names referring directly to towns – this is unlike Scandinavia. (2) Then I will show that Frey is characterized by names referring specifically to towns more than to geographical features. This will support inferences not only that Frey was known in England, but that He was seen as having an especially humane character. Evidence of His humaneness will be corroborated in another section on that topic.

In considering English names, be aware of certain suffixes. These suffixes help explain the name of a town. In addition, they give us a clue as to whether the settlement was predominately Norse or English. The Old English leah has led to many words ending in -ly, and leah referred to a piece of ground. A leah might have been a grove or clearing, but definitely some kind of an area in which humans could congregate or work. The Old English hám and tún referred to a village, hamlet, or homestead, and that suffix led to many English places with names ending in ham, ton, or tún. English place names ending in hám are considered especially old, because hám went out of style in the early years of Teutonic settlement of England. Also significant is the suffix -ing, which means something like “people of”. The Scandinavian settlers left their mark on the land's names, and the Old Norse -by referred to the same sorts of things as the Old English -tún, and there are many English towns with names ending in -by.

Also, the Scandinavians left us with a lot of settlements called “-thorpe”, since thorp was a common Scandinavian word for a hamlet or village (Copely, 1968).

Some authors have hesitated to interpret a prefix “Ing-“ because of the meaning of the suffix “-ing”. Surely it is not too liberal an interpretation to say that the focal syllable has markedly different meanings as prefix and suffix. Otherwise, the personal names with the prefix “Ing-“ would be nonsense. An analogy in modern language would be the suffix “-ian”. This suffix has a clear meaning to us in a word like “Rooseveltian” (follower of a person named Roosevelt), but we would not perceive that meaning with the same syllable alone (as in the personal name Ian) or in a prefix position (such as in the hypothetical word “Ianville”).

There were probably more Pagan place names prior to official national conversions. But the fact that many Pagan place names survived official conversions in many Germanic countries is pregnant with meaning. This implies sentimental attachment to the people’s roots — or perhaps passive resistance.

### ***England’s Pagan Holy Places in General***

First, let us consider religious place names which do not indicate a specific Pagan deity. Both Copely (1968:149-150) and Owen (1985: 40-42) indicate many English village or town names which indicate places of temples, shrines, or idols without mentioning a specific deity. This is quite ordinary Pagan practice, for I will show in a later section that Teutonic Pagan deities were often worshipped in combination. Most of these town or village names refer to geographic features. For example, there are two towns named “Gadshill” (God’s Hill), and there is a Weely (idol or temple piece of ground). Many of these places associate worship directly with human habitation. For example Alkham combines the Old English ealh (temple) with the Old English word hám. Wyham refers to idols or perhaps to a holy facility such as an altar or temple. Likewise Weedon combines wig (idol) with tún (Eckwall, 1951; Copely, 1968).

Specific deities were commonly referred to. Woden’s popularity shows in town names such as Wodnesfeld or Grim’s Dyke. Also, His popularity is

unequivocally shown in town names specifically referring to habitation, such as Wednesbury or Woodnesborough (both names meaning Woden's fortified town). (See Copely, 1968; Owen 1985: 7-8).

In Hampshire, Freefolk seems to indicate absence of medieval authority, but in the 1086 census reported in the Doomesday Book the town is called Frigfolc (Ekwell, 1951). This is could be a reference to the goddess Fríge and to people who lived as Her kin (Owen, 1985: 22-23).

Thor is definitely invoked by town names. Mainly in the Danelaw and in Cumberland, two regions which were relatively heavily settled by Scandinavians, there are towns such as Thorston (Thor combined with tún), Thurstanfield (Thors' Stone Field), and Thorsby. Of course, there are Thor-named towns outside the Norse-settled areas, such as Thunerleaw in Kent, with its purely Old English name. (See Bartholomew, 1997; Copely, 1968; Owen, 1985: 23-25). I have also listed several Tiw-related names of communities in Appendix C, the review of His lore.

Old Norse Pagan place names such as Thorsby tell us that the English would have been reminded of ancient Pagan ways a few hundred years after official conversion. Therefore, a large part of the population of England at the time the *OERP* was written would have been aware of the Pagan roots of their culture – including the Pagan names of their settlements.

### ***England's Holy Places for Frey***

It is very likely that the English knew of Frey, and that they knew of Him primarily as Ing. Overall I find 8 villages surviving from early medieval times which imply land or people dedicated to Frey: Freges, Fraisthorpe, Freistún, three Ingham's, Ingworth, and Ingapenn. Comparing this to the statistics I reported in Appendix C, places Frey in the top five of English Pagan deities (Woden – 16; Tiw – 11; Thor – 12, Frigga – 7).

The Old English cognate for the Old Norse Frey is Fréa or Fréo, and documents from the 1000's and 1100's indicate that the town of Fring was called Frenge, Frenge, Frainges and the like – Fréa's People. In the former Danelaw, we find Old Norse name of Fraisthorpe. (Copely's 1968 inference that this name refers to Frisian inhabitants is unlikely). The ancient Anglo-Saxon name of Freistún lies behind the modern village of Freiston in southern Lincolnshire. There are three Ingham's, and Ekwall's (1951) efforts to explain these as "Inga's Town" suffer from the rarity of people named Inga in ancient England (Copely, 1968). The –hám suffix implies that the towns were named in Old English and prior to large-scale Scandinavian immigration during the Viking age. There is also a modern village called Ingrow (Ing's row). There is a very small town in Cumbria called Ings. Ingworth combines His name with a word for a curtilage, farm, courtyard, or enclosure. Ingworth could be named for an open-air temple, or it could be a place where sacrificial animals were kept or slaughtered and butchered. The earliest references to Ingworth call it Inghewurda or Ingewurde. Inkpen was called Ingepen in a legal document of 931. This seems to combine the instrumental or dative of Ing with a word for pen, fold, or enclosure. This could also indicate an open-air temple or a place where livestock were kept prior to sacrifice. An analogous place name is Wyfold, which originally meant Wigfold, or an enclosure for idols. (Wyfold is the name of two modern English towns). (See Bosworth and Toller, 1898; Bartholomew, 1997; Copely, 1968; Ekwall, 1951; Elton, 1905; Garmonsway, 1972: 269, footnote; Hall, 1960).

It must be admitted that there are possibilities that turn out not to imply worship of Frey. For example, there is Ingmire Hall. Ingmire Hall is difficult to figure out, since it combines Ing and a derivative of the Old Norse mýrr (bog), and Frey is not especially associated with bogs in other sources. Moreover, personal names associated with Ing were common among Old Norse nobles (for example, see the *Gesta Danorum*), so that Ingmire Hall probably refers to a Scandinavian person. As another example, Ingrave just does not have the pedigree – it was Gynges Rad in medieval times. Gyng is just not quite close enough to Ing. (See Bartholomew, 1997; Copely, 1968; Ekwall, 1951; Elton, 1905).

## Human Names

In Scandinavia and England, it was common for persons to be named after this god. A personal name associated with Frey could imply religious adherence, or it could be merely a word from a traditional hoard of personal naming words that has lost its substantial meaning and instead points to a human ancestor or just someone the parents wanted to honor. Nonetheless, the prevalence of names related to Frey / Ing in times of mixed religion implies frequent dedication to this god in Pagan times. (See also the sidebar “Modern Religious Naming”.)

### Modern Religious Naming

Analogies exist in our time, for many people in the modern Spanish-speaking world are named for Jesus. Also many persons in modern America are named for Old Testament characters or original Christians such as James or John. These names may indicate current religious intent, but seem to more commonly indicate religious predilections of generations long past. This is related to the subsection “Human Names”

There were many persons in Scandinavia with Ing-related names. Some of these people seem to have been named after Frey and some not. In the sagas and the *Gesta Danorum*, the male personal name Ing and related male personal names such as Ingi, Ingjald, and Ingild appear frequently, as do female names such as Ingibjorg and Ingunn. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* indicates that there was a King Ingeld reigning in Wessex royal line until 718. (See: S. Anderson, 1997a; Cleasby and Vigfusson, 1957; Elton, 1905; Faulkes, 1987: 17; Garmonsway, 1972: 4, 42, 43; Hollander, 1962: for example, *The First Lay of Helgi the Hunding Slayer*, stanza 52; Hollander, 1964; Magnusson and Pálsson, 1960; Magnusson and Pálsson, 1969; Pálsson and Edwards, 1976; Porter, 1997b; Wawn, 1997; Whaley, 1997b; there are too many sources to list).

America is mostly Germanic in cultural origin (although it is a very polyethnic society). Therefore, it is interesting to look for Frey-related names in an American phone book. Many people in America are surnamed Frey, Fry, or Frye, and attempts to explain these names as meaning “very small person” or “non-serf” are less plausible than tracing those names to Pagan origins. Let us

consider a few other samples. Freberg is from Swedish and means “Frey’s Hill”. The surname Free is related to the Old English fréo, which is related to Frey’s name. The attempt by some authorities to explain this as “not a serf” is understandable, but it ignores the frequent ancient practice of naming infants after deities. Consider Freegard: Hanks and Hodges find this name of “uncertain origin”, but fail to compare it to the Old Norse Ingvarr meaning “Ing + Guard”. Inger is the American surname deriving from Ing-Guard. Likewise, Hanks and Hodges secularize Freestone by inferring that it derives from “Free / Generous / Noble + Stone”, but it is more likely analogous to the English place name of Thurstone (Thor’s Stone). The names Ingle, Ingoll, and Ingall are derived from the Old Norse Ing + Gialdr (Ing-Tribute). The surname Ingoldsby derives from the Old Norse Ingjaldr and bý, and refers to Ing-Tribute-Habitation. Of course, there are also surnames that look like they have Germanic Pagan origins but do not. For example, Ingres and Fremantle derive from Old French. (See Brown, 1967; Hanks and Hodges, 1988; Robb and Chesler, 1995).

It is interesting that Ing’s showing in personal names occurs under a handicap – it cannot occur as the last element in a name. For example, Thor’s name appears as either prefix or suffix in many Scandinavian personal names (for examples, see Chapter 10 of *Ynglinga Saga* — Hollander, 1974: 11). The name of Ing can appear only as a prefix or standalone word in personal names because of possible confusion with the suffix -ing as “people of”.

## **Ing and the Danes**

In Pagan times He might have been the most popular of the Danish deities. A special relationship between Ing / Frey and the Danes is evident in lines 1044 and 1319 of *Beowulf*. Danes as an ethnic group are referred to as Ingwine (Alexander, 1995). This would mean “Ing-Friends”, or “Friends of Ing”. Frequent mention of Frey in the *Gesta Danorum* also evinces His popularity among Danish people (Elton, 1905). It is quite possible given Saxo’s implicit account of Frey’s following and the Old English label of the Danes as Ing-Friends, that Frey was first known among some of the Danes and later became more widely followed.

However, counterbalancing this is the Swedish Bronze Age painting of a figure with an erect phallus and a sword, and accompanied by a boar (Gundarsson, 1993a: 92-93). This implies that Frey might have popular among Swedes during Teutonic pre-history.

## **Icelandic Law**

Frey's popularity in Iceland is also indicated in the initial constitution, or law code, of that land. *The Tale of Thorstein Bull's Leg* tells us that in Pagan times, the law code specified a legal oath that was taken to three deities. Those deities were "Frey and Njorð and the all-powerful God" (Clark, 1997: 340).

Let us consider why just these three deities are in the oath. Simply for brevity in a legally mandated oath, only a couple of the most popular deities were invoked. The deities would have been chosen to remind the oath-takers that they would be subject to heavy fines or compensatory legal awards for violating their oaths. Since (as I will show below), Pagans acknowledged a broad range of deities even if they were dedicated to just one, every Pagan would have seriously regarded an oath to any one or two wealth deities. Hence, two givers of wealth were selected out of the pantheon.

However, an oath has most effect if it refers to one's patron deity, so Frey and Njorð must have been patron deities to many Icelanders. Since a large proportion of the population was Christian, the oath also mentions their wealth-giving god, who is "named" simply God, but qualified here by "all-powerful" to make a distinction from the other gods.

## **Association with Prestige**

Frey is associated with prestigious persons, with prestigious status as a condition, and with prestige itself. Of course, any deity would be prestigious, but this deity seems far above the majority of His pantheon in this regard. The

evidence on this head is both linguistic and genealogical. It also implies particularly strongly that He was well known in every Teutonic culture.

Linguistic evidence clearly shows that lordly status in both secular and religious institutions is indicated by His name. The implications are that this god was known in all Teutonic cultures, and in all of them He was associated with exalted power and wealth. Frey is Old Norse for “lord”. In addition, Jacob Grimm pointed out that the cognates of “frey” in other Germanic languages were used to indicate members of the feudal political elites. In Christian times, Germanic people used these words to denote the Christian God. In Old English, *fréa* (sometimes spelled *fréo*) was commonly used in poetry to denote “lord”. A similar adjective in Old English was *fréo*, which was used in poetry to mean “noble”. (See Hall, 1960; Hollander, 1964: 14, footnote; Stallybrass, 1966: 209-219).

In accounts of human ancestry, the god Yngvi is associated with high levels of human leadership and political authority. In *The Deluding of Gylfi, Poetic Diction*, and in the *Saga of the Ynglings*, it says that Yngvi was a King of the Swedes and the ancestor of the Swedish royal line. Of course, the saga of the Ynglings is a saga of Scandinavian rulers and their ancestors. Saxo specifically mentions one Swedish noble named “Yngwe” who was a follower of Frey, and in his Book Eight he refers to the Swedish nobles as “sons of Frey”. In the sagas, kings of Norway and Sweden, and the Norwegian Earl Hákon are “Frey’s Offspring” or “Kinsman of Yngvi”. In *Reginismál* (stanza 14) the hero Sigurth is called “Yngvi’s kinsman” to reinforce the idea that he is a worthy noble. Likewise, in stanza 52 of *The First Lay of Helgi the Hunding-Slayer* Helgi is called “Yngvi’s scion” to indicate that he is worthy of noble status. The *Skáldskaparmál* informs us that the name Yngvi was both a kenning for king or a title meaning king. Yngvi was also the personal name of some of the kings of Sweden. An Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that Ingui is among the ancestors of a king of Northumbria. Either the Northumbrian royal house was claiming divine ancestry through Frey (they also claimed Woden as an ancestor), or one of the early Northumbrian kings was named after Frey. (See Elton, 1905: especially Book 8; Faulkes, 1987: 148, 150; Garmonsway, 1972: 16; Hollander,

1962: 99; Hollander, 1964: 14, 23, 33, 69, 99; Scudder, 1997: 157; Young, 1954: 27).

## Days of the Week

In several modern, predominately Germanic countries, a few Teutonic deities have days of the week named for them. Having a day of the week can be taken as evidence of worship, but Frey does not have a day of the week in any modern Teutonic-language country.

However, there are two criteria that determined whether a deity got a weekday: popularity and correspondence to a Roman deity. The Teutonic peoples began to name their weekdays under influence from Roman culture, and the Romans named their days after deities. Thus, in some Latin countries of our time Tuesday is Mars' Day, Wednesday is Mercury's Day, etc. As Saxo noted long ago, the Nordic deities are not the same as the Roman deities with corresponding weekdays. However, there was at one time an erroneous notion that Tiw was equivalent to Mars, Oðin equivalent to Mercury, Thor equivalent to Jove, etc. Moreover, correspondence to Roman deities was probably a more important criterion than being worshipped, since Teutonic religion did not necessarily include worship of the sun or moon. (Elton, 1905: Book Six; Mattingly and Hanford, 1970).

Therefore, Frey's lack of a day of the week is probably because no Roman said that He corresponds closely to a Roman god.

What does Frey stand for? Among other things, of course, He stands for much the same things as any other first-rate deity.

## Specialties and Jurisdictions

Three of the themes in this god's specialties are: self-discipline, moral excellence, and efficaciousness.

Mythic evidence of these attributes can be found in Stanza 52 of the *Prophecy of the Seeress*. That passage says that at Ragnarök, Frey fights Surt, who is a fire. Since a basic principle of Ragnarök is the clash of opposites, this implies that somehow Frey represents the polar opposite of Surt. Thus, if Surt is disorder, severe destruction, willful harm, mindless attack, and vigorous threat to many of the things or principles that people most cherish; then Frey would seem to stand for the desirable and enlightened polar opposites of those qualities. (See giant (Hollander, 1962; Neckel, 1936a).

## Respectability and Power

“Nobility” has two meanings, and both are relevant for Ing / Frey. Evidence cited in the sections “Status in the Pantheon” and “Association with Prestige” implies that Frey is a patron god of persons of high status and of high status itself. But Frey also represents nobility in a profound moral sense, for Frey lore also tells us that one should be generous, helpful, honest, and fair.

It is significant that Týr is the one who remarks on Frey’s high character in stanza 37 of *Loki’s Quarrel*. There are particular emphases on Yngvi’s concern with fairness and freedom. Thus, He is associated with respectability in general. (See Larrington, 1996; also Appendix C of the present book).

In Iceland, Frey seems to have had special significance for oaths, as shown by the comments on Icelandic law in *The Tale of Thorstein Bull’s Leg* (Clark, 1997). Taking as a clue the description of a legal procedure in Chapter 56 of *Egil’s Saga*, lawfulness in general seems to have been sacred to the whole Pantheon (Pálsson and Edwards, 1976: 136-139).

The moral lessons in this lore are twofold. (1) You tend to have more power if you act respectably. (2) There is a moral requirement to act respectably if you are entrusted with social power. Two sagas illustrate these lessons: *Hrafnkel’s Saga* and the tale of Hadding and the Sea Animal.

## Lessons of *Hrafnkel's Saga*

*Hrafnkel's Saga* (Pálsson, 1971) tells us that it is more important to be morally straight than to make superficial demonstrations of loyalty to Frey's name. In that story a Frey priest was a bully and guilty of an important lack of self control, despite his many good qualities. Hrafnkel, the priest in question, was an Icelandic *goði* (the word means "priest"). Icelandic *goðar* were lords in addition to — or perhaps more than — priests. It was not deficiencies in Hrafnkel's maintenance of a temple nor problems with his liturgy that alienated many in his region. What alienated people was his unfairness as a businessman and as a secular government official.

One of the main character's atrocities stood out and finally brought him down. Hrafnkel shared his most treasured possessions with Frey, including a prize stud horse named Freyfaxi. Eventually, Hrafnkel regretfully killed a young employee of his to satisfy an oath to kill anyone who rode Freyfaxi without his permission. Even Hrafnkel thought this a bad act, and it led to his being exiled from his home district with the loss of his estate and power. Hrafnkel then forsook religion — or rather, religionism. But he also reformed his character in other ways, and eventually became wealthier and more powerful than before. In the end, Hrafnkel took back his old estate and combined his former chieftainship with his new one. Reduced to "lower than ever" was the man who had taken Hrafnkel's old chieftainship and then destroyed the temple, its idols, and Freyfaxi.

At first glance, this looks like a story with an atheist moral. This is because in this story benefit and harm are not related to holy sacrifices in particular or piety in general.

However, the real lesson is that to Frey the quality of one's life is more important than one's outward dedication to Him. In the story, the beginning of Hrafnkel's downfall is the young man riding the sacred horse Freyfaxi in search of lost sheep. If one reads the story closely, it seems that Freyfaxi and his mares conspired to get the employee to ride Freyfaxi. It also seems that the sacred horse intended to reveal the event to Hrafnkel, eventually causing his fall. The

turn of events implies that Frey would rather not have a temple, other material wealth, nor followers if the price is persistent, inhumane misbehavior.

A main point of this story is the contrast between empty religiosity and a deep-seated dedication to enlightenment. In the end, Hrafnkel is more into what religion is really all about, even though he rejects the misguided version of religion that he knows. (See also Chapter 20 of this book). We can also see that it was necessary for Frey to act in His own defense, for Hrafnkel's constituents would not have risen against him simply because their *godi* was not quite good enough to be a priest.

## Hadding and the Sea Animal

The story of Hadding and the Sea Animal has a moral similar to that of *Hrafnkel's Saga*, although this story seems a little closer to Biblical thinking than is *Hrafnkel's Saga*. The source of this tale is Saxo Grammaticus (Elton: 1905: 115-118).

First, let us briefly recapitulate the story. The Danish King Hadding comes upon "a beast of unknown kind" while relaxing at a sea shore. King Hadding wantonly kills the sea animal. A "woman" appears and curses Hadding for the killing of a god in disguise. She says that he will have to assuage the anger of "heaven" by "prayers". To end his bad luck, Hadding "sacrificed dusky victims to Frey". Then the king made the propitiation by sacrifice into an annual public ceremony to be followed for generations to come. The Swedes followed this custom also, calling it "Frödblod", or The Sacrifice of Frey. We are not told what the Danes called the ceremony.

The moral of the story is that Frey opposes wanton killings of lower animals, and that He wishes people to engage in holy rituals to remind themselves of the rules of good conduct.

Let us consider an aside here. Certainly, it would appear that if Frey opposes the wanton killing of lower animals, He would also oppose killing humans simply

for fun, and in turn it would appear that He would not be a god whom the vikings followed.

## Power and Subtlety

In certain cases, we see that very important power is exercised but it seems mysterious, indirect, and hidden. Without anything as dramatic and openly magical as the parting of the Red Sea, fundamental changes are worked in people's lives. This paradox teaches us to look for miracles in slow changes and in hidden things, not just in the sudden and overt.

You can see this in *Hrafinkel's Saga*, discussed a couple of paragraphs above. In addition, Frey's subtle but powerful workings are shown in *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal*, particularly Chapter 12. In that saga, Frey caused an amulet to be lost by apparent accident and allowed it to be found where He wanted to have a temple built. You can also see that in *Glum's Saga*. Glum's luck simply seems to run out after one of Glum's enemies prays to Frey (with a sacrifice) for Glum's downfall and Glum offends Frey's principles at least twice. On the other side of the coin, Glum's father lived well in Frey's manner and had good luck all his life (McKinnell, 1997a; Pálsson, 1971; Wawn, 1997).

## Productivity and Wealth

Frey shares with His father the functions of bringing productivity and wealth to humans, and Frey lore brings us a subtle moral instruction. These functions are related but are not necessarily the same, for wealth can be had without being very productive. Indeed, the myths present an interesting paradox that while productivity seems not highly thought of, productivity and wealth are intertwined in divine jurisdictions. For example, the productive wights are dark elves – small, ugly creatures not able to live in the light of day. By contrast, the light elves seem to toil not and yet they prosper and are beautiful (Hollander, 1962; Young, 1954). It is as if the myths were trying to reinforce the lesson that

we do not necessarily get rich by working for a living, yet they also offer subtle moral instruction that the two can and should go together.

The combining of productivity and wealth is communicated in two ways. There is, of course, the combining of both functions in one deity. Also, the surviving lore sometimes presents these functions juxtaposed. For example, *The Deluding of Gylfi* tells us outright that this Yngvi “decides...the fruitfulness of the earth...He also brings about the prosperity of men”. Among the standard nicknames for Frey listed in *Poetic Diction* are “Harvest God”, “Wealth-Giver”, and “Bounteous Son of Njorð”. In Chapter 10 of the *Ynglinga Saga*, the prosperity of farmers during Frey’s reign as King of Sweden is due to good harvests and peace. The major aspect of Frey as a god of attaining wealth is His relationship to fertility, and especially to agricultural fertility. Place name evidence associates Him with grain productivity. In addition, the association of this god with a prominent phallus in a major Scandinavian religious center implies that He is a god of reproductive fertility in animals and humans (Ashliman, 1998; Faulkes, 1987: 75; Hollander, 1964: 14; Young, 1954: 52-53).

What we do not see in the lore of Frey is people praying to get rich by stealing or by cheating business associates. Nor are people expecting to get rich by magically finding a pot of gold (or winning a lottery).

Basically, the lore of Frey shows us that wealth is sought after, but that it is sought after well. This literature does not extol working hard per se; but it does ask for a certain level of energy and responsibility. From a moral perspective, we see an attitude that helps protect a person from being unfairly exploited by others and does not encourage unfair exploitation of other people.

## **Clergy and Formal Religion**

Evidence in several places implies that Yngvi was more strongly associated with formal religion and with clergy than any other Teutonic Pagan deity. Evidence presented in the section “Prevalence in Clergy and Temples” strongly supports

the notion that Frey was a god of formal religion. (This is a clue to the meaning of the stanza “Ing”.)

Mythic and quasi-mythic evidence also indicates an unusually strong link between this god and religious staff and facilities. Frey was among the clergy of residents of Asgarð. This implies that some deities specialized as patrons of priesthood, although such patronage seems not to have been a very exclusive function. There were at least 12 temple priests and an unknown number of priestesses in Oðin’s elite. However, it turns out that some of the other priests and priestesses are not as closely identified with formal religion and with clergyhood as were Frey, His father, and His sister. In addition, Frey is said to have erected the national “great temple” at Uppsala, and this makes Him the only deity to have established a temple (Hollander, 1964: *Saga of the Yinglings*, chapters 2, 4, and 10).

Clergy specializing in or emphasizing Frey in their practice seem not to have had to meet qualifications specific to His worship. Frey’s clergy seem to have often shared their personal and business assets with the god, as did Hrafinkel in *Hrafinkel’s Saga* and the Frey priestess in *Gunnar Helming’s Tale* (McKinnell, 1997b; Pálsson, 1971).

## Peace and War

In this case, we appear to have a pairing of opposites, and the intertwining is not so obvious. First, I will discuss these two apparently separate functions, then show how they are related.

### Lord of War

Several sources indicate that this god had a prominent martial aspect. In the *Saga of Harald Fairhair*, a piece of poetry shows the nickname for battle, “Frey’s game”. In *The Deluding of Gylfi* and *Poetic Diction* we see more evidence of Frey’s ties to war, for Yngvifrey is the general of Asgarð’s army

and is identified as “battle-skilled Lord”. Frey’s reputation in personal combat is that He could have killed a giant with His bare fists (not even Thor kills giants with bare hands). His influence on human wars is indicated by his being a deity “who governs hosts” (Faulkes, 1987: 75; Hollander, 1964: 72; Turville-Petre, 1964: 175; Young, 1954: 63).

## Prince of Peace

Yngvi-Frey was definitely associated with peace. Snorri tells us in Chapter 10 of *Saga of the Ynglings* that when Frey was King of Sweden, the Swedish farmers prospered owing to exceptional peace and good harvests and that people sacrificed to Him for peace and good harvests. In *The Deluding of Gylfi*, Snorri tells us that Frey “is good to invoke for peace”. Adam of Bremen wrote that the ancient Swedes invoked Him for peace and love (Hollander, 1964: 14; Young, 1954: 53).

Regarding the issue of peace, let us sort out the real evidence from the fallacious. Scholars often discuss a Danish king named Froði or Frode in connection with the peace aspect of Frey. This is because of a great peace that occurred during that king’s reign in Denmark.

Saxo speaks of four Danish kings named Froði, or Frode. Froði I personally avoided sensual pleasures in preference for martial preparations, and his reign was notable for war events only. Froði II was notable only for war and his personal combats. Froði III at first had trouble with peace, for his courtiers got into mischief for lack of work. Eventually, his commoners rebelled against his reign because of the courtiers’ behavior. Then Froði III campaigned extensively in Scandinavia, Central Europe, the Orkneys, and the British Isles. These campaigns brought him an extensive empire (not evinced by other historical evidence) and brought law and order to his own realm during a thirty-year interval of peace. Froði IV reconquered all the lands which had revolted against the Danes, then was baptized in England. (See Elton, 1905; Hollander, 1964: 14; Turville-Petre, 1964).

None of the Kings Froði or Frode shows us anything about Yngvi. It is clear that there is a parallel between Froði III and Frey, for Froði III brings peace through strength. That is, both characters are powerful war leaders. However, Froði III did not always find that peace “worked” for him. Moreover, the peace of Froði II is basically predatory and based on aggressive conquest, which is contrary to what we know about Frey from other sources.

## Intertwining

Frey’s peace is a peace combined with and probably attained through strength. First, it takes strength to achieve peace; therefore an important goal of preparations for war is to avoid being subjected to war. Second, the attitude toward war that is consistent with other facets of the lore of Frey is that war is undertaken and conducted responsibly.

## Physical Attractiveness

Ing / Frey is a deity of beauty just as He is a deity of wealth. (This is a common, but not universal aspect of Pagan deities.) We are told in *The Deluding of Gylfi* that Frey and his sister were “exceedingly beautiful to look at”. In addition, as Lord of Alfheim, Yngvi is associated with beings “fairer than the sun to look at” - the light elves. ( See Hollander, 1964: *Prophecy of the Seeress*, stanza 64, and *Lay of Grímnir*, stanzas 5; Young, 1954: 46-47).

Beauty, like wealth, is morally neutral. We all know that relatively irresponsible people can be physically beautiful. We would not regard with credulity the notion that a competent middle-aged person would become less moral as his or her quest proceeds through time and he or she ages. To be fair, we also must admit that physical beauty and strenuous physical culture are not within the reach of everyone.

The causal relationship between morale and beauty goes both ways. It stands to reason that good morals are easier if one has good morale, and that good physical appearance can contribute to good morale. Good morale and inner strength can also facilitate the effort to have excellent physical appearance. For an example of how this can work, see the story of Jamie and Meagan Brunner (David, 1999a). The spiritual effect of this sort of thing can be quite marked (Bridle et al, 1999).

However in terms of runic religion, the mythic literature makes a little too much of physical beauty. The *OERP* reminds us that physical beauty per se is not divine. This is discussed in Chapter 12 (“Gér”) and in other places in this book. In runic Teutonic polytheism — and perhaps in many other religions as well — divinity and enlightenment are matters of ferð (mind, intellect; person) and one’s own will, but appearance is superficial.

## Wisdom and Emotion

The interplay of wisdom and emotion is addressed by one of the myths in which Frey figures prominently, His wooing of Gerð through His assistant, Skírnir. Let us consider that myth for its deeper meanings. *The Lay of Skírnir* is one of two full expressions of this myth of Frey’s courtship of Gerð — the other is in *The Deluding of Gylfi* (Young, 1954: 61-63). In addition, the myth is referred to in *The Flyting of Loki* (Hollander, 1962).

In the first two stanzas of *The Lay of Skírnir*, Yngvi is specifically associated with wisdom, as he is called “The Wise” (Cleasby, and Vigfusson, 1957; Hollander, 1962; Neckel, 1936a). However, the broad thrust of the first several stanzas of that poem deals with His sickly infatuation with the fabulously beautiful Gerð. This raises an interesting and instructive paradox.

### ***Issues Regarding Translation of The Lay of Skírnir***

Larrington’s (1996) translation of *The Lay of Skírnir* associates Frey with fertility in the first two stanzas of that poem. However, the Old Norse source does not mention fertility in those stanzas. The confusion seems to result from speculation over the possibility of an unobserved Old Norse word fróði, meaning “fruitful” (Neckel, 1936; Turville-Petre, 1964: 170). This relates to the section “Wisdom and Emotion”.

The myth is about limitations. The major conclusion from this is how weakening uncontrolled emotion tends to be. His perception is distorted (“more pleasing to me is that girl than any girl to any man” — Larrington, 1996: strophe 7). This is a common opinion when we are in love, but we cannot all be right. The young Frey’s loss of self control first makes Him miserable, then causes Him to give Skírnir permanently a couple of wonderful resources — a sword that can fight on its own and a horse for making treacherous voyages into magically dangerous territory. Then He sends Skírnir to woo his beloved without restriction as to how she is to be won. His assistant resorts to bribery, then to extortion. Fortunately, the couple does not appear to be miserable afterwards. (See also the sidebar, “Issues Regarding the Translation of *The Lay of Skírnir*.”)

What causes the problem? In terms that we find in the *OERP*, this is the interplay of the divine and the animal in us. The god becomes infatuated, just as we often do, without apparent reason. The cause is hormonal influence over human behavior. Andrew Cohen has essays about this topic in *What is Enlightenment?* (Cohen, 1998a and b). He points out that most sincere spiritual seekers find sex more attractive than religion. In Cohen’s monotheistic terms: as long as sex is more important than “God...it will be impossible for us to...live a human life that expresses profound sanity”. Without the monotheism, this seems to be the point of view of *Skírnismál*.

This part of the lore of Frey has broader implications. For example, that which is said about sex or romantic involvement can also be said about substance addiction or habituation. In addiction and habituation, conscious thoughts become dominated by nonconscious mental processes in self-destructive ways. The interplay of the divine and the animal in human nature is a major theme of the *Old English Rune Poem* and of religion in general.

## Other Matters

### Freedom

For freedom to be deserved and well exercised requires a responsible attitude, and Yngvi-Frey is a god of freedom (and perhaps of justice). This praise is given to him explicitly by Týr, a specialist in ascetic conduct, who says of Frey “No girl He makes weep nor any man’s wife, and frees every man from his fetters”. (Dronke, 1997: *Lokasenna*, stanza 37).

### Humaneness

Place name evidence cited above indicates a tendency for Frey-related place names in England to refer to human settlements. Turville-Petre’s (1964) accounting for Frey-related place names implies that this does not hold in Scandinavia, where most Frey-related place names refer to cultivated fields, geographical features, or temples. This also seems to be what the Swedes meant when they called Frey the God of the World — that He is particularly concerned with mitigating or preventing inadequate harvest and of war (*Saga of the Ynglings*, Chapter 10 — see Hollander; 1964: 14). Perhaps in a more general sense the ancient Swedes were thinking of Him as the God of the World in averting or mitigating and disasters. Merely a direct consideration of the title God of the World implies that the ancient Swedes somehow found the god named Lord to be the deity most concerned with mundane life.

### Sexual and Conjugal Joy

He was a god of sexual pleasure aside from his role as a fertility god. Although Frey seems to be a pretty serious god in the myths and sagas, He is specifically associated with sexual joy and with the emotionally powerful symbolism of the phallus. The idol of Frey in the Pagan temple at Upsala has a large phallus. A man with an erection is usually having fun and eager for more; for a woman to find an erection under certain circumstances can also be a happy occasion. Very

little human sexual intercourse leads to pregnancy in modern societies, and even in technologically more primitive times the most coition was probably not intended be fertile. In any case, Adam of Bremen tells us that in ancient times the Swedes prayed to Frey for “pleasure in marriage” (Ashliman, 1998).

Frey is a god of sexual freedom, although not to the same extent as His sister. It is Thor and Óðin who are noted in the Eddas for one-night stands with giantesses. I noted above His mating with Frigga. In stanza 32 of *Lokasenna*, we are told that Frey had sexual intercourse with his sister (presumably as adults) at least once. Moreover, his mom is his father’s sister. It turns out that not only recreational, but procreational sexual intercourse between brother and sister is permitted in Vanaheim, so no sane resident of Asgarð holds this against Frey nor his family. Moreover, there are no terrible consequences of this sexual activity (Dronke, 1997: *Lokasenna*, stanzas 32-36).

The joy of sexual freedom is not just a simple primitive sexual joy or enjoyment of freedom. It is also the fun of being attractive to and joined with another human one loves.

## **Domesticated and Feral Animals and Plants**

Frey is a patron of agriculture, and to a lesser extent He is also associated with feral animals. He seems to favor fertility in domesticated animals and plants, or rather success in agriculture for humans. Regarding feral animals, He seems to favor nonabusive exploitation. In the surviving literature, He is not concerned with feral plants.

Yngvifrey’s is associated with domesticated livestock and artificially bred grains. He has horse herds and grain fields dedicated to Him. He is associated with a beast of burden, the swine Cutting-Tooth (or Golden-Bristle), whom Frey rides or who draws a vehicle in which Frey rides. In Hrafnkel's Saga, He is the half-owner of a stud horse. In *Gunnar Helming's Tale*, we are told of major public ceremonies in Sweden which focused on invoking Frey for good crops. *Killer-Glum's Saga* mentions a field called Sure Giver, which appears to have

been on temple grounds and might have been dedicated to Frey. Turville-Petre indicates that there were grain fields dedicated to Frey in the Scandinavian peninsula (Hreinsson et al, 1997d; McKinnell, 1997a; McKinnell, 1997b; Stallybrass, 1966; Turville-Petre, 1964: 165-166).

This god is also associated with feral animals. In *Hrafnkel's Saga*, He is an invisible force behind the protagonists' luck to have teeming trout in his district. This saga is discussed in the section above, "Lessons of *Hrafnkel's Saga*". The story of Hadding and the Sea Animal (also discussed above) shows Frey punishing someone for killing a feral animal just for the joy of killing. In *The Deluding of Gylfi* are told that Frey uses the antler of a large deer as a combat weapon, and this seems to connect Frey with deer. (Pálsson, 1971; Young, 1954: 62).

## Magic

All deities are magicians, but this god is specifically indicated as a songsmith and seith practitioner in *Saga of the Ynglings*. A songsmith was one skilled in magical uses of runes, songs, and poems. Seith involved divination and operational magic of various kinds, involving much less emphasis on vocalization than songsmithing. Since the *diar* of the *Saga of the Ynglings* were next to Oðin in their "knowledge and sorcery", it is possible that human clergy who presided at liturgies were expected to be miracle workers (Hollander, 1964: 9-10).

## Technology

There was neither a word for technology as a concept nor as a cultural factor in early medieval Germanic languages, but they certainly spoke of it. For example, you can see the topic of mankind's relation to technology is dealt with in the *Old English Rune Poem's* stanza "Sigel" (see Chapter 16 of the present work). The same topic is dealt with in fourteenth stanza of the Old Icelandic Rune Poem.

Despite the relative technological primitiveness of the culture that left behind Teutonic Pagan lore, the Asgarð pantheon included a god of transportation technology and of technology in general. The general thrust of Yngvi's relation to technology is that He is its owner, user, and controller. In the Teutonic system, it is the dark elves (dwarves), who are the patrons of creating technologies and technological devices. But the deities represent willful, conscious control.

### ***Skiðblaðnir***

An important possession of the god Yngvi is the ship *Skiðblaðnir*. This symbol is clearly a metaphor for high technology. Ships were the most technologically complex devices, nautical transportation showed the fastest progress, and nautical technology had a driving economic importance to pre-medieval and medieval European societies. Thus, ships were to the early medieval Teutonic peoples what the railroads once were to America or what computers are to most countries during the time I have been writing this book.

*Skiðblaðnir* was made by dwarves who were “sons of Ivaldi”. It is the biggest and best of ships. All the male deities of Asgarð can travel in it along with their weapons, and *Skiðblaðnir* would have room to spare. As soon as its sail is hoisted, a breeze automatically springs up to move the vessel in whatever direction is desired. When not needed for seafaring, it can be folded up and put into a pouch you can carry. Loki persuaded the dwarves to make the ship to get back in the deities' good graces after destroying the hair of Thor's wife (Young, 1954: 68-69, 104-110; Chapter 7 of the *Yinglinga Saga* says this ship belongs to Oðinn – Hollander, 1964: 11).

A clue that this is a metaphor for technology is that nowadays there are ships that more than meet most of the technical performance specifications for this magical ship. Of course, at this time even the inflatable vessels of large capacity cannot be folded into a pouch that one person can carry.

## ***Golden-Bristle***

Golden-Bristle —also called Cutting-Tusk — was a boar who was a major symbol of Frey. This boar could be ridden like a steed and go through the air and over the sea faster than any horse. No matter how dark the night, the animal’s bristles would light his course of travel. The boar could also tow a chariot or wagon (Young, 1954: 82, 108-109). Nowadays is that our technology provides vehicles which meet the performance specifications of Frey’s boar.

## **Travel**

In this section, I will first show that Yngvi-Frey is a god of travel or transportation, although other scholars do not depict him as such. Then I will discuss what the lore means in this regard.

No surviving myth depicts Frey as traveling. However, with all this association with means of travel and transportation, this god is firmly associated with travel. Frey’s ownership of the magic ship associates Him with sea travel, a jurisdiction He shares with His father. In addition, *The Poetic Diction* says that He owned the horse Bloody-Hooved, and *The Lay of Skírnir* says that He owned a horse capable of carrying its rider past mysterious dangers in mystical realms (Faulkes, 1987: 136; Hollander, 1962: Dronke, 1997; 378). Below, in the section “Procession in a Wagon”, I will show that He is firmly associated with land vehicles.

Moreover, Yngvi is sure to have traveled in at least one myth, for He is Slayer of Beli (Faulkes, 1987). Since no combat takes place in Asgarð other than the recreational fighting in Valhalla, Yngvi’s fight with Beli must have been an away game.

This association with travel over long distances would have an exoteric and an esoteric aspect. The exoteric aspect associates a patron deity with this important aspect of human life. The esoteric aspect of Yngvi’s relation to travel involves

metaphorical references to religious progress and to soul travel. The ship is organized and natural religion, in which all of those in a community can develop together and be transported to more satisfying and exciting lifestyles without feeling crowded or excessively restricted. The hog is a superficially unlikely means to enlightened and accelerated change for an individual, and it speaks to us of the benefits of religious knowledge and of the surprises that can await us as we develop and learn. The horse symbolizes our reliance on things outside ourselves, and Frey's giving it away to Skímir reminds us of sharing our powers to help others for mutual benefit. The wheeled land vehicle represents religion as a means for an individual to be united in community or to approach a more divine level of living.

## **Maturation**

Frey is the only Asgarð deity who is explicitly mentioned as having juvenile stages. He is also the only member of the Teutonic pantheon who experiences adolescent-style lovesickness. Since we see that on the whole, His functions imply a high level of self-control, it appears that this god goes through a process of maturity. This might or might not have been explicitly described in a lost myth.

The vehicle of religion — with which this god is particularly identified — can facilitate attainment of advanced maturity. But we see now that Frey is also a god of more basic development.

By associating a deity with this matter, Teutonic Polytheism suggests that religion can apply to growth of the immature.

## **Oaths**

I discuss Frey's concern with oaths in a section above: "Prominence in Miðgarð" \ "Icelandic Law". The matter is also discussed in "Worship" \ "Rituals".

## Weather

The identification of Frey as a weather god is quite clear, although He is not the only weather deity among the Æsir. *The Deluding of Gylfi* tells us that He “decides when the sun shall shine or the rain come down, and along with that the fruitfulness of the earth”. In the *Saga of the Ynglings*, Snorri tells us that Oðin was able to calm the sea or “turn the winds any way He pleased”. Adam of Bremen tells us that the Swedes regarded Thor as a god of the air, thunder, lightning, rain, and fair weather. He adds that the Swedes appealed to Thor if they felt threatened by epidemic or famine. In the *Saga of Hallfred the Troublesome Poet* there is the story of a ship’s crew that appealed to Oðin, Thor, and Frey equally to govern the wind at sea and thereby guide them to a destination. (See Ashliman, 1998; Hollander, 1964: 10-11; Whaley, 1997, Chapter 5, page 233; Young, 1954: 52-53).

In general, the functioning of deities regarding weather is that they mitigate it or bring it to more favorable conditions. Aspects of weather as mindless phenomena of nature are personified by giants (Stanfield, 1999e).

## Conclusions Regarding Specialtes and Jurisdictions

Despite the probable loss of some literature and oral tradition, we can see how complex is Yngvifrey. He has concerns that touch on a large proportion of human life. His lore shows contradiction and complementarity, and yet it seems to fit loosely into a system. By Himself, we do not see a god for every person at all times in one’s life. But we do see Someone just about anyone can relate to sometime.

The present discussion addresses public ceremonies to the exclusion of those performed by households or individuals. I found no literature relating Frey to solitary or household ceremonies, although we can be sure that such practices were more common in Pagan times than was liturgy.

## Rituals

Religious ceremonies involving Frey show substantial variety in form and purpose. These rituals include different kinds of sacrifices, drinking rituals, and oaths taken in legal trials.

Although the *OERP* stanza “Ing” mentions a vehicle, there is no other mythical or liturgical evidence that a vehicle was important to Frey. In the one source that connects Frey to a wagon, it is simply the most practical way to transport a man-size wooden idol to local feasts. It does not seem part of a ritual procession.

## Worship

Worship rituals include public ceremonies, private ceremonies, and smaller formulas that are part of various kinds of events. In this section, I discuss religious ceremonies under three headings: sacrifices, drinking rituals, and processional ceremonies involving a wagon.

In *Hrafnkel's Saga* and *The Saga of Hákon the Good*, (Hollander, 1964; Pálsson, 1971), temples are described. These temples contained idols, and the temple in *Hrafnkel's Saga* was used for the celebrating all the deities who were celebrated. Specific deities were not listed in either case, but Frey was favored in both of these temples.

There is mention of a feast “to celebrate the coming of the Winter Night” in Chapter 15 of *Gisli Sursson’s Saga*, and this celebration included a sacrifice to Frey (Regal, 1997). This raises the possibility that this ancient Icelandic holiday — occurring about the middle of October — was a time to honor this the God of the World. Several sagas tell us that clergy could specialize in serving a single deity, such as Frey or Thor (Pálsson, 1971), and it seems likely that single-deity ceremonies were also popular. However, we do not have an annual schedule of ceremonies from Pagan times other than Bede’s, and the only deities Bede mentions are Hreða and Easter (Brown, 1987; Jones, 1943).

## Sacrifices

Liturgical sacrifices in Nordic religion include at least three types: feast, living, and victim-only. In a feast sacrifice, food is shared by people and some food material is disposed of as if consumed by a deity or deities. In a living sacrifice, a being or object is set aside as devoted to divine ownership. In a victim-only sacrifice, the victim is not consumed by people.

Although I found a basis for charitable sacrifices in the *OERP* and elsewhere, there seems to have been no liturgy for them (see the chapters of this book on Feoh and Gyfu). The ancient Greeks formalized charitable sacrifice for travelers. A traveler would leave an offering on a rock for Hermes; another traveler would accept the item as a gift from Hermes. However, I found no parallel for this type of generosity toward travelers among Teutonic peoples.

### *Feast Sacrifices*

The description of the sacrifice in Chapter 14 of the *Saga of Hákon the Good* is one of our principle sources of knowledge about Teutonic Pagan sacrifices, describing a Heathen Yule ceremony. That ritual exemplifies the inclusion of more than one deity in liturgy. Although the ceremony could be criticized as unnecessarily unfocused, it is definitely polytheistic and also shows how a major ceremony was conducted on a recurring basis in the ancient religion.

In accord with “ancient custom”, the farmers brought to the feast all the food they needed — it was analogous to modern covered-dish feasts. For meat, any kind of livestock would do, including horses. The sacrificial twigs were dipped in blood of the sacrificed animals, and the twigs were used to smear or sprinkle blood on the idols, temple walls (inside and out), and persons in attendance. All the meat was cooked and blessed by the host, then served to the people. The host was the priest or “fender of the temple”. The ceremony described in the *Saga of Hákon the Good* was unusual in that the host paid for the whole thing himself — apparently the custom of the goði paying for temple operations was not observed in Norway as it was in Iceland. This Yule celebration was accompanied by a drinking ritual described in the next section (Hollander, 1964: 107)

We know also from several other sources that public feasts accompanied sacrifices, although those sources are not specific about the disposition of the victims. For examples see: Chapter 1 of *Brandkrossi’s Tale*, Chapters 68 and 69 of *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvasson*, *Hrafinkel’s Saga* and *The Tale of Ogmund Bash* (Hollander, 1964: 207-208; McKinnell, 1997b: 321; Pálsson, 1971).

It is possible that feast sacrifices had an important educational function in Nordic Paganism. For example, the story of Hadding and the Sea Animal (discussed above under “Respectability and Power”) seems to indicate a sacrifice as a reminder that Frey opposes wanton killing. It is quite likely that this was a feast, because a feast would give opportunities for the more religiously progressive members of the community to remind others what Frey wants. This would be done in large part by reciting some of His lore in poetic form.

Customs of feast sacrifices were also observed by other cultures. For example, in Greek religion cattle were often feast victims. The meat would be eaten by humans, and thigh bones wrapped in fat would be the burnt as sacrifices. In ancient Hebrew religion, food sacrifices may have been burnt or used for the support of the temple and priests (Butler, 1942; Catholic Church, 1987: 83-84, Exodus, Chapter 29; Leviticus, Chapter 22; Rees, 1991).

### ***Living Sacrifices***

Living sacrifices seem to have been used to express solidarity with Frey. Pálsson (1971) tells us that in one version of *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* there is a herd of horses dedicated to Frey. The sacrifice of a herd to Frey would not be contrary to the version presented in *Heimskringla*, but would be additional information. In *Hrafnkel's Saga* there is a stallion named Freyfaxi dedicated to Frey. Freyfaxi was sacrificed in that he was not used as a beast of burden nor as livestock to be slaughtered.

No other Nordic deity seems to have received this sort of sacrifice.

### ***Victim Sacrifices***

Victim sacrifices seem to have been commonly used as a form of prayer. In Chapter 1 of *Brandkrossi's Tale*, a farmer uses a sacrifice to Frey as a curse. The farmer, who felt he had been dealt with unjustly, laid out a banquet based on a bull he had slaughtered. The table was “laid out as if for our dearest friends”, said the farmer. And he added “I dedicate this whole feast to Frey, so that He will cause the man who supplants me here at [his estate] to leave it with no less grief than I leave it now.” The saga does not say how the curse turned out nor what was the disposition of the food. However, there were no human guests at the banquet (Porter, 1997a). Clearly, this is an instance of a head of livestock being slaughtered but not consumed by persons.

Another victim sacrifice is depicted in Chapter 9 of *Killer-Glum's Saga*, where Thorkel the Tall prays for vengeance against Killer-Glum. Thorkel the Tall said “Oh Frey...now I give you this ox, to the end that Glum may depart...under a compulsion no less than that by which I go now. And let there appear some token of whether you have accepted my offer...” At this point, the ox died. There was no feast in connection with this sacrifice, nor was there any benefit to a temple or clergy (McKinnell, 1997a: 282).

Victim sacrifices were at least sometimes done for public celebration, perhaps with prayer included or perhaps not. For example, Saxo claims that the warrior Balder sacrificed humans to Frey while Frey was a living King of Sweden. Since there is no evidence of cannibalism or monkish employment of men and women, these would have been victim sacrifices. In addition, Adam of Bremen claims that sacrificed humans and lower animals were hung from trees near the temple at Uppsala in Sweden (Ashliman, 1998a; Elton, 1905: 186).

### ***Conclusions Regarding Sacrifices***

Sacrifices can please Frey a lot. In *Gisli Sursson's Saga*, the sacrifices of an Icelander named Thorgrim so pleased Yngvi that He would allow no frost on the southwest side of Thorgrim's burial mound to get between Him and Thorgrim's corpse (Regal, 1997: 22-21 [Chapter 18]).

### **Drinking Rituals**

A drinking ritual including invocation of Frey is described in Chapter 14 of the *Saga of Hákon the Good* (Hollander, 1964: 107). This ritual illustrates the integration of worship of multiple deities in a ceremony.

Following is a brief summary of the ceremony in question. A sacrificial vessel was filled, then blessed by the chieftain who hosted the feast. The first toast was to Óðin and was an invocation for “victory and power to the king”. This was followed by toasts to Njörð and to Frey for plentiful harvests and peace. Next came a toast to the king. The final round was of memorial toasts — spoken in honor of dead kinsfolk.

### **Procession in a Wagon**

Land vehicles would have commonly figured in both liturgy and private rituals regarding Frey / Ing. The god rides in or pursues the vehicle.

The vehicle represents religion, religious wisdom, or meditational tools. It is used in both shamanic and priestly practice. Riding in the vehicle represents use of mysticism to make progress. Pursuing the vehicle represents the quest that all progressive mystics make, and Ing's departure from others symbolizes priestly work.

These conclusions are supported by the subsections that follow: "Transportation of and Idol", Frey's Wheeled Vehicle in Myth", and "The Stanza 'Ing'". The story of Nerthus is discussed because (A) some students mistakenly think it to be relevant and (B) showing that it is not relevant helps emphasize certain characteristics of Yngvi's cult.

### ***Transportation of An Idol***

There is only one ancient source which explicitly connects Yngvi-Frey with a wagon. *Gunnar Helming's Story*, which is spliced into the *Tale of Ogmund Bash*, describes a practice of touring a Frey idol through a district in Sweden in a wagon (McKinnell, 1997b: 314-322). Therefore, this story has been used to interpret the reference to a vehicle in "Ing". For example R. I. Page is indirectly referring to *Gunnar Helming's Story* when he remarks that "In later Norse tradition, Freyr progressed through the land in a car", and Gundarsson's reference to this story is quite explicit (Gundarsson, 1993a: 90-91; Page, 1973: 83).

According to the story, there was a Frey idol in a Swedish temple. The idol is described in detail in another section of this essay. This idol was toured around a district in early springtime as the central figure in ceremonies for good harvests. Accompanying the idol were a priestess and some "retainers" leading a draft horse. The idol was displayed publicly, and when Gunnar Helming played the role of Frey, people were very pleased to have a bodily representation of the god to share their food and company — this is another indication of the humaneness in Frey's worship.

*Gunnar Helming's Story* does not directly prove a formal ritual association between Frey and a wagon. The wagon was a practical way of transporting a large wooden idol, a priestess, and some equipment and supplies needed by other staff. The story does not imply that the wagon was part of a parade. It could have been used as part of an outdoor temple or as an item in a formal parade. We must turn to mythical evidence to examine those possibilities.

### ***Frey's Wheeled Vehicle in Myth***

In the myth of Balder's death, Frey rides to Balder's funeral in a wheeled land vehicle drawn by His magical boar (Young, 1954: 82). This establishes a connection between Frey and such vehicles, and raises the possibility of lost myths involving other uses of a cart, chariot, or wagon. Such myths would surely have formed the basis of ceremonial use of a wheeled vehicle. (See also the section "Travel" in "Specialties / Jurisdictions").

When Frey rides in a vehicle in the *Prose Edda*, it represents religion per se or certain things associated with religion. This is because He uses the vehicle to arrive at a gathering of deities in Asgarð, much as persons might use religious facilities, equipment, or practices to commune with the divine. This kind of association easily lends itself to liturgy and poetry, and the symbolism fits well into shamanic, priestly, and individual-meditation practice.

### ***The Stanza "Ing"***

The stanza "Ing" shows our hero pursuing a vehicle, not followed by nor riding in it. The symbol of Frey chasing a wægn is ambiguous but powerful. One the one hand, it suggests mankind's pursuit of means of attaining more divine lifestyles or communion with the divine. This pursuit also represents a search for technically leveraged means of making progress — a mingling of the lower-animal and divine aspects of mankind. (In the present book see Chapter 22, especially the section "Issues in Edition and Translation" / "Wæn Æfter Ran"; also see Chapter 1)

Pursuit of the vehicle itself represents religious seeking. In addition, Ing's departure from the disciplined ones in pursuit of this vehicle symbolizes the distinctiveness of the priest (or priestess) as an elite person. Sometimes, the clergyperson or shaman does not lead the way for others so much as that person goes on behalf of others.

### *The Wagon of Nerthus*

The oft-cited story of Nerthus offers no clue to the possibility of a land vehicle of some sort being important in worship of Frey. Some respected academics see a connection between the wægn in "Ing" and the car in which Nerthus toured. However, the worship of Nerthus is unlike the worship of Frey / Ing.

The story of Nerthus is told by Tacitus, and I briefly summarize. Her idol and a sacred vehicle were confined in a sacred grove, but periodically the idol was loaded into the car, cows were hitched up as draft animals, and the idol was taken on a tour of festivals. The vehicle per se was important in the overall ceremony of the tour. The logic is that since Nerthus was a goddess of great joy and peace, and since Her named is etymologically related to Njorð, and since a Frey idol was hauled in a wagon (noted above), therefore the stanza "Ing" must refer to a ritual in which His idol was toured in a cart, wagon, or chariot. Dickins says he is "doubtless" about this (Dickins, 1915: 20, footnote; Halsall, 1981: 146-147; Mattingly and Hanford, 1970: 134-135; Page, 1973: 83-84; Turville-Petre, 1964: 171-173).

The ceremonial use of Nerthus' vehicle contradicts the general style of Frey. Nerthus' idol is not shown; instead the wagon is used to conceal it during the ritual tour. At the end of the tour, the idol is cleansed by slaves who are killed for having seen the idol. Frey's idols are on public display; no one is ever killed for seeing His idol; and the inhumanity mixed in with Nerthus' worship is definitely un-Frey-like. Thus, it is very unlikely that the use of the vehicle in Nerthus' ceremonies is a model for use of a vehicle in Frey's.

## Legal Oaths

Formal oaths given in legal cases are worship in a sense. Beyond the expressed reverence for the deity or deities referred to, legal oaths imply an important role in social cohesion and moral justice for that deity or deities. In ancient Iceland, secular legal oaths were sworn in temples. The ancient Icelandic oaths were sworn with a temple arm-ring and addressed to one or more deities. This would be much like modern American legal oaths sworn in secular courts with the witness' hand on a Bible and with the formula "so help me God". We do not know the legal formulas for oaths taken in Pagan Norway, but oaths taken in court there were also sworn to more than one deity at a time (Pálsson and Edwards, 1976: 136-139)

### *The General Formula*

There is a general legal oath formula described in *The Tale of Thorstein Bull's Leg* (Clark, 1997). This is basically an oath to participate in a trial in good faith. The oath-taker was to hold a temple's arm ring, which was usually worn by the priest of that temple during liturgy, and the oath ring was to be reddened with blood from a ritually slaughtered male ox. The oath taker was to call at least two witnesses and say: "I call on you to witness that I swear an oath, a legal oath, on the ring. May now Frey and Njorð and the all-powerful God so help me that I will now prosecute or defend the case or bear witness or render a decision or verdicts according to what I know is most just and true and most according to the law, and will acquit myself of all legal duties which fall upon me while I am present at this Thing." It seems likely that this long, rambling sentence was not given verbatim at every occasion. The example below shows a departure from the all-purpose formula in the form of testimony given by an accused person. I discussed the implications of this in a section above entitled "Icelandic Law".

### *The Example in Killer Glum's Saga*

There is an example of a specific oath taken before Frey in *Killer Glum's Saga*. Although story might not be completely historically accurate, we can use the

oath as a plausible example. The oath was taken in a temple dedicated to Frey and the arm ring had been reddened with the blood of a sacrificed ox. The oath was taken by Killer-Glum, a Frey's priest, who had been asked to swear that he had not killed a certain person as evidence of Glum's innocence. Human witnesses were present. Glum said: "I name Asgrim as witness and secondly Gizur as witness that I take a temple oath on the ring and I deny to the god that I was not there and did not strike there and did not redden point or edge where Thorvald Hook met his death. Let those who are wise men standing by look to the oath." In a temple dedicated to Frey it might not have been necessary to mention one of His names explicitly. However, since the bad grammar you see in the oath was part on an attempted deception on the part of Glum, failure to mention Him by name might have been an intended evasion (McKinnell, 1997a: 307).

This is an example of a defective oath, but it shows four elements of temple oath-taking. These are: (1) the sacred arm-ring further sanctified by blood of ritually slaughtered livestock; (2) direct referral to a deity important to the oath-taker; (3) naming of at least two human witnesses orally, just as they might also be named in a written oath; and of course (4) the substance of the oath. The oath is defective in that the oath-taker has been ambiguous in an attempt to deceive — he confesses before Yngvi-Frey in words that he hopes will sound like a denial of guilt to the human official witnesses. (As the story goes, Frey does not seem to have been impressed.)

## Symbols

Symbols tells us what sorts of moral or practical lessons are emphasized by a particular deity's lore. It is important to evaluate what symbols mean in the light of the context in which they are presented.

Although there are several abstract symbols of Frey, He seems to have been symbolized in the latter Pagan years by figurines and life-size wooden idols. Use of human figures to represent this god would be consistent with His

humaneness, but contrary to religious beliefs current before the Migration Age (Hutton and Warmington, 1970).

The difficulty of interpreting symbols derives from their ambiguity, for symbols mean different things to different people. Consider a close-to-home example: half-glasses might symbolize reading to persons for whom lens-hardening makes such vision correction necessary, but to many very young people they are just glasses in a quaint style. Or consider a more historical example: a broken wagon wheel by the Oregon Trail means history to us, but to a traveler on that route in the 1840's, it meant personal inconvenience or hardship.

## Domestic Animals

### *Types of Domestic Animals Associated with Frey*

Horses, cattle and male hogs are the animals most commonly associated with Frey. But the *Ynglinga Saga* informs us that “all kinds of livestock” could be sacrificed to Him. As noted in the section “Sacrifices”, horses are especially associated with Frey and were sometimes involved in living sacrifices. For awhile, Frey owned a special horse who could avoid magical fire hazards. The sagas tell us that bulls were a major form of victim sacrifice to this god. (Dronke, 1997: *Skírnismál*, stanza 8; Hollander, 1964: 107).

His association with swine involves two different kinds of animals: feral swine with “razor” backs, and domestic swine. The boar most commonly associated with this god was Gullinbursti (Golden-Bristle, also called Cutting-Tusk), but we do not know its species (Hagan, 1995; Young, 1954: 108-110).

### *Implications*

There are four aspects of Ingi-Frey's association with domestic animals. The aspects are: (1) food and material wealth in general; (2) productivity; (3) martial functions; (4) transportation; and (5) esoteric means of progress.

It is clear that an aspect of Frey's association with livestock is His role as a god of productivity and of plenty. Hogs are prolific for medium-size or relatively large animals, and more prolific than cattle, which were the other important meat animals of pre-medieval and early medieval times. The use of boars at feasts in surviving Yule-time customs implies that boars were feast sacrifices in ancient Teutonic ceremonies. For example, there is the description of Yule customs in *The Lay of Helgi Hjorvarthsson* (Hagan, 1995; Hollander, 1962).

The boar also symbolizes Frey in His martial aspect, for feral swine are able and willing to fight back against hunters. The kind of boar that was used as a martial symbol early medieval Europe was more like the feral razorback of America than the livestock hogs of early and pre-medieval times, and it appears on warriors' helmets in England and Scandinavia, in mostly Pagan and in mostly Christian times. The boar is a frequently mentioned as a decoration of warrior's helmets in *Beowulf*. (Hagan, 1995; Stallybrass, 1966: 212-215).

Because horses and Frey's magical boar are transportation animals, these domestic beasts reinforce the association of Frey with transportation (see the section "Procession in a Wagon"). The association is not just with means of mundane transportation, but also with means of personal progress, hence with religion and perhaps with shamanic work.

## Amulets

One of the main features of the *Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* is a Frey amulet, described in Chapter 10. The story implies that some people at least in Norway and Iceland carried full-figure images of Yngvifrey made of an easily-worked metal and sized to fit in the sort of purse worn by both men and women in early medieval times. The amulet in question was made of silver (Wawn, 1997). The significance of the metal is not readily apparent, but the amulet was given as a gift by a Norwegian king. Since Teutonic kings of medieval times and earlier were supposed to be generous, large quantities of gold would be more impressive than a tiny amulet of silver. Although there are very mundane reasons why tiny artistic objects are made of materials other than wood or iron,

it is possible that silver was chosen because it was considered to symbolize something especially holy or sincere, since oath rings were legally required to be of silver (Clark, 1997). Regardless of the possible symbolic implications of silver, it is obvious that the emotional significance of a Frey amulet would commonly have been very powerful.

## Idols

Idols are described in a few early medieval sources, although Tacitus' account suggests that prior to the migration age, use of idols was rare or absent among the Teutonic nationalities (Mattingly and Hanford, 1970). Apparently, use of idols was learned from Romans and other Mediterranean societies.

The ancient Teutonic peoples did not work in stone, so their idols were made of wood. Such idols were often decorated with clothing and jewelry, and were regarded with great reverence. For example, in *Gunnar Helming's Story*, an idol is said to have become so empowered by worship that "the devil" used to speak from the idol. The idol wore clothes, was made of wood, and it was the size of a log large enough to be hollowed out. Because the idol was enlivened by Frey's presence, a woman was assigned to it as Frey's wife. The idol was housed in a temple most of the year, but the idol and the priestess were hauled to agricultural fertility ceremonies during winter months, probably late winter months during what we in modern America call springtime. Idols are also mentioned in *The Saga of the People of Fljotsdal*, and those idols also were decorated with fine robes and precious jewelry. In addition, they were mounted on pedestals. Adam of Bremen tells us that idols in the temple at Uppsala were also equipped. The Oðin idol wore "armor and weapons" and the Thor idol held a "scepter". There were idols in the temple described in *The Saga of Hakon the Good*. (Ashliman, 1998a; McKinnell, 1997b; Porter, 1997b: 432-433).

## Weapons

The myth of Frey's courtship of Gerð tells us that Yngvifrey once had a magical sword that would fight on its own if its owner fully knew how to use it (Hollander, 1962: *Lokasenna*; *Skírnismál*; Faulkes, 1987: 32). Modern Asatruists often use a deer's antler as a symbol of Frey, based on His use of an antler in killing a giant (Dagsson et al, 1993).

## Assistants

Skírnir is indicated as a servant and friend of Frey in the *Deluding of Gylfi* and *The Lay of Skírnir* (Hollander, 1962; Young, 1954: 61-63). Skírnir is "Shining One" or "Resplendent One", so that his service is another implication of Frey's ties to enlightenment, and to physical and moral attractiveness. In addition, Skírnir seems to have stood for communication between realms for the assertion of control or partnership. This is because in the myth of Fenrir's binding — told in *The Deluding of Gylfi* — it is Skírnir who is sent to the dwarves to obtain the magical fetter that finally neutralizes the wolf (Young, 1954: page 56-59).

Byggvir and Beyla are also indicated as His servants in *The Flyting of Loki*. Hollander interprets Byggvir as "John Barleycorn" and Beyla as "Milkmaid", so that these two servants reinforce Frey's ties to agricultural productivity (Hollander, 1962: *Lokasenna*, introductory prose and stanza 44).

## The Phallus

This god is associated with the phallus, and He is the only such deity in Teutonic religion. The main reason for this association is that passage where Adam of Bremen describes a Frey idol in the Swedish Pagan national shrine. In addition, scholars often mention an ancient figurine or two. Experts generally tend to view two ancient figures of men with erections (one showing a hand-on-chin thoughtful pose) as icons of Frey. Given material associating Frey with wisdom, it is especially possible that this little figurine recovered from a bog does represent Frey. The other figure is more ambiguous, and cannot definitely be

connected with this deity. There are representations of these figures and discussions of their structures elsewhere (Gundarsson, 1993a: especially the drawings on page 93; Dagsson et al, 1993; Page, 1990: photo on page 29; Turville-Petre, 1964).

This symbol means many things, and reinforces the point made much earlier in this essay about the great significance of this god. The phallus is an ambiguous symbol usually interpreted by scholars as simply referring to fertility. However, most human sexual intercourse does not lead to pregnancy and is not intended to. Therefore, a large erection can also symbolize enjoyment and readiness to act in a way that no other symbol can. In addition, as I point out in “Joy”, it can stand for an emotional state of happy anticipation (if you will excuse the pun!). It certainly symbolizes manhood also.

## Vehicles

This god is associated with travel and vehicle use. With Skiðblaðnir as one of his treasures (see discussion above), Frey is associated with ships. The evidence discussed under “Procession in a Wagon” associates Him with wheeled land vehicles. These vehicles were metaphors for religion and aspects of religion, and for the “magic” of human technological achievements.

## Temples

His temples seem not different in design nor furnishings from other deities' temples. The sanctity of His temples seems to have emphasized lawfulness and peace. However these are also likely characteristics of Teutonic Pagan temples in general, since Asgarð was a sanctuary.

Many temples were named after a single deity, but a large proportion were dedicated to a few deities or the entire pantheon.

## Outdoor Facilities

As Tacitus tells us that the Teutonic Pagans of his day did not use buildings as temples. Place name evidence (discussed above) and Wulfstan's *Sermon on False Gods* tell us that even in the era just before medieval times, religious ceremonies often took place in open-air locations, especially on hilltops, at crossroads, and in groves or clearings (Mattingly and Hanford, 1970; Swanton, 1993).

## Buildings

Given the weather in northern Europe, it seems likely that of the Germanic peoples would have at least occasionally used indoor facilities for religious ceremonies as soon as they had permanent shelters. In any case, the practice seems to have caught on as contacts with the Mediterranean peoples became more frequent.

There is certainly plenty of evidence of temples and of their furnishings and equipment in historical times, with Yngvi and His priests playing a dominant role. *Hrafinkel's Saga* describes of a temple for a number of deities from the Teutonic pantheon. In that temple, the priests' favorite deity was Frey. In *The Saga of the People of Vantsdal* (Chapter 15), there is another description of a temple. It included a high seat, elevated by pillars, and was around a hundred feet long. The structure does not seem to have been exclusively a temple of Frey, although it was built by a Frey's man at Frey's implicit bidding. In chapter 59 of the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, we are told that the people of Hlaðir in Trondheim Fjord had a temple which had a large gold ring on the temple gates and that both the building and the one idol within were decorated, presumably with hangings or treasures of precious metals. In Chapters 68 and 69 of the *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*, we are told that the people of Trondheim had a temple at which "sacrifices" were made. We are not told the nature of these sacrifices, except that they involved the slaughter of beasts. The temple contained a gold-adorned rod whose purpose is not stated, and idols on pedestals. We are not told if the idols were clothed, but Thor was the "most honored" of the deities

represented, and His idol was decorated with gold and silver. A temple is also described in Chapter 26 of *The Saga of the People of Fljotsdal*. This temple also contained images of deities, including Frigg and Freya among the others. The high seat on the lower bench was occupied by effigies of Frey and of Thor, implying that they were the most honored of the pantheon in this temple, at least in the most recent ceremony. The temple in general was richly decorated with wall hangings, and “everything was shining with gold and silver” (Hollander, 1964: 199, 207-208; Pálsson, 1971; Porter, 1997b: 432-433; Wawn, 1997: 22-23).

## Sanctity

Frey temples were sanctuaries against disorder, irresponsibility, and violence. These traits might have been in common among all Nordic Pagan temples.

The sanctity of a Frey temple is described partially in Chapter 19 of *Killer Glum's Saga* (McKinnell, 1997a: 296-297). Frey did not allow outlaws on his temple grounds — this is quite in contrast to the policy of Christian churches in medieval times, for they offered sanctuary to those pursued by legal authorities. Since a goði's house in the same field would be considered part of the temple, this would theoretically prevent a father from sheltering his outlawed son at home. In Chapter 17 of *The Saga of the People of Vantsdal*, we find that Frey did not allow swords to be brought into His temples (Wawn, 1997: 22-23).

If weapons were not carried into a Frey temple, then it would be unlikely that a humane (or even convenient) slaughter could take place. Therefore slaughter, butchering and probably also cooking would have taken place outside the temple, and blood and meat carried in. This inference is supported by lack of description of slaughter in Teutonic Pagan temples. Also, this inference is backed up by place names mentioned above, for some of those names imply outdoor enclosures for keeping or processing sacrificial large animals.

Peaceful sanctuary was probably a feature of all Nordic temples. Support for this inference is the apparent sanctuary of Asgarð. For example, the *Poetic Diction*

says that after Loki conspired to kill Balder, the deities could not get revenge upon Loki on the spot because of the sanctuary of Asgarð. Likewise, it appears that during the *Flyting of Loki* the most of deities were unable to resort to violence against Loki because of the sanctity of their abode. This myth and the myth of Thor's confrontation with Hrungrnir implies that only Thor, with his hallowing hammer, was able to do violence in the sanctuary (Hollander, 1962; Young, 1954: 81, 103). It seems likely that if criminals could find sanctuary in Pagan temples not dedicated to Frey, medieval Christian propagandists would have tried to distinguish between Christian and Pagan sanctuary.

## Constituency

Most temples in the surviving literature are primarily in service of a district perhaps the size of one day's walk from the temple. However, Adam of Bremen tells us that the temple at Uppsala was the focus of a national ceremony once every nine years, and it was probably a national temple as well as being the hof for the capital district (Ashliman, 1998a).

## Theological Integration

One of the outstanding characteristics of Nordic religion is the integration of the pantheon in ritual formulas, sacred facilities, and human allegiance. The literature contains many references implying that it was common for those who worshipped Frey or any other Teutonic Pagan deity to also worship other deities in the pantheon.

This would derive in part from one of the most basic lessons of polytheism itself (no one is an island) and in part from the communitarian emphasis of this particular religion. For example, a passage in the *Saga of Hákon the Good* (quoting from another source, the *Hákonarmál*) says that members of the Yngling family were recruited for Valhalla. This implies that it was not necessary to have Óðin as one's patron deity to be among the heroes honored by

membership in that elite. (See also Chapter 20 in this book; Hollander, 1954:125; S. Wódening, 1994c)

## Examples from Killer-Glum's Saga

*Killer-Glum's Saga* contains several references to Glum and his brother Vigfus wearing black (or dark blue) cloaks while carrying charmed spears or magical swords. This kind of outfit is generally taken to symbolize Oðin, and the behavior of Glum and Vigfus seems to reflect Oðin's influence on their lives. For example, in Chapters 7, 9, and 21 of that saga, Glum recites verses indicating inspiration from the God of Poetry. However, we also know from this saga that Glum was a Frey's priest and maintained a temple dedicated to Frey, and his poetry refers to other deities.

It is interesting to consider in detail the polytheistic references in Glum's poetry, for *Killer-Glum's Saga* examples of references to various Pagan deities, sometimes mingled in the same poem. In chapter 9, a stanza refers to Earth and to "the Striking Goddess of Strife" (possibly Freya, referring to the myth of the Brising Necklace). Three of the stanzas in Chapters 21 and 26 refer to Oðin and His Valkyries, but another alludes to one of Thor's adventures. In Chapter 23, Glum's verse refers to The Goddess Who Guards the Wine-Keep as a force of conscience, for She urges him to confess on a wrongful killing; there is no other reference to a wine goddess in ancient sources. Glum refers to Oðin in one stanza, and another refers to armed combat as "goddess-play" in Porter's translation. This might refer to an otherwise unknown goddess, or the translation might simply reflect Porter's opinion that valkyries are goddesses, as shown by one of his translations in Chapter 21. (See Crossley-Holland, 1980; Porter, 1997b).

## Eddaic Evidence of Integration of the Pantheon

In stanza 24 of *The Short Lay of Sigurth*, Sigurth is referred to as Frey's friend. By this time in the story, Sigurth has become a king and his identification with

Frey / Ing is quite understandable, for the section above “Association with Prestige” shows that He is identified with royalty. However, Sigurth and his line are also Woden’s men throughout the series of poems in the heroic lays of the Elder Edda.

Another sign of the integration of the pantheon in worship is a nickname of the male deities of Asgarð. Although Frey / Ing was from Vanaheim, *Poetic Diction* tells us that a standard poetic kenning for the Æsir was “Ingi-Frey’s Kin”. Also, Sturluson listed Frey twice among the Æsir (Faulkes, 1987: 88, 156-157).

In addition, the deities confer and cooperate in *The Lay of Thrym*, *The Lay of Hymir*, the myth of binding Fenrir, and several other myths. Paradoxically, teamwork on the part of the deities is usually not dominated by Oðin.

## Evidence of Conflicts

Of course, life is not perfect, and there is evidence of some disunity in Teutonic Polytheism. Although this evidence seems to contradict most of what we know about Teutonic religious practice, it must be acknowledged

Thorn (1997) supposes that the story of *The Riddles of Gestumblindi* implies a rivalry between the cults of Oðin and of Frey. The story is that a criminal (Gestumblindi) makes sacrifice Oðin to save him from the justice of King Heithrek’s law court. The king is a devotee of Yngvi. Oðin agrees to disguise Himself as the criminal and appear before the king. In the disguise, Oðin asks for a riddle contest instead of a trial. Of course, King Heithrek would be angry that his authority, justice, and the peace and order of his people would be threatened by this kind of cheating. The story per se does indicate hostility toward Oðin, since He more like a minor spirit than a god. Also, this story contradicts most of what we know of Teutonic religious practice.

There is no other evidence of distinct human cults in rivalry. However, there are other instances of discord among deities of Asgarð. The *Lay of Harbarth* depicts conflict between Thor and Oðin. In that poem, Oðin plays the role of a ferryman

who engages in a flying, or verbal put-down duel, with Thor. At the conclusion of the story, Oðin denies passage to Thor as Thor attempts to return to Asgarð from an expedition to fight evil. Although Larrington feels that Oðin wins the verbal duel, this poem depicts Oðin as less godlike than Thor. In the *Lay of Vafthrúthnir* and *The Lay of Grímnir* Oðin disputes with Frigga. (Larrington, 1996: 69; Hollander, 1962; Young, 1954).

Except for the role of Loki, the residents of Asgarð never show the kind of disunity that we see among deities in *The Iliad*. Loki's overall behavior is clearly more giantlike than divine. His role seems mostly to have been to contrast against the divine and show us how not to act. For this reason, Loki was not subject to worship. (See James, 1997; Stanfield, 1999e; Turville-Petre, 1964)

## **Conclusions Regarding Theological Integration**

Community is a major emphasis of the religion. A major lesson of the myths is that we can tolerate even passionate differences without losing a sense of community. The communitarian emphasis is discussed in several places in this book, and communitarian ethics are a theme of Swain Wódening's (1994c) discussion of Heathen morals.

This general style shows in religious practice. Thus we find that Frey / Ing is not worshipped in a separate cult.

## **Conclusions Regarding Worship of Frey / Ing**

There was a cult of Frey, but it was not distinct as a separate denomination. The distinctive emphases of Frey lore imply that one who was particularly dedicated to this deity — and both men and women were dedicated to Him — would find certain things of more concern to them than to many others in their community. But His followers were not administratively segregated from the other elements of His pantheon.

The whole of the lore of this god cannot be summed up briefly if we are to do justice to it. However, by using a comprehensive review of His lore we can answer the questions raised near the beginning of this appendix.

## **Overall Conclusions**

(1) Ing is one of Frey's names. Therefore there is an indirect but fairly transparent reference to Him in the title word of the stanza.

(2) The vehicle is one of Frey's symbols and has significant esoteric implications. The details of this are discussed above.

(3) It is clear that the stanza "Ing" refers to Frey's functions and symbols. This is not only because of the use of one of His names, but also His functions and symbols include travel, development through stages, and vehicles (both land and sea). The last line of the stanza implies that He is invoked by reference to these matters —and this seems quite plausible. Therefore the stanza refers to rituals of Frey.

## Appendix E: Wyrd<sup>37</sup>

The word “wyrd” represents an important concept in Teutonic pagan religion. In modern times, many questions about the nature of wyrd have been raised and many answers have been expressed in both the Pagan and academic literature. Some of these questions are: Is it a process or an outcome? If an outcome, is it specific or circumstantial? Can we change our wyrd, and if so how? How is wyrd caused? Just how complete or incomplete is the evidence and how ambiguous is it? What is the religious significance of wyrd? (See also the sidebar “Pronunciation of Wyrd”.

It may seem ironic that this appendix is an attempt to get a more objective answer to some of the questions that have been posed by taking more account of religious or psychological matters than is common in the philological literature. However, there are things that can be seen from one perspective that are much more difficult to see from the other.

This discussion of wyrd is a substantial revision of Stanfield’s (1997) paper in *Théod Magazine*. The analysis and writing are more lucid, but the substance of the conclusions is about the same.

### ***Pronunciation of Wyrd***

The consensual theory of Old English pronunciation holds that the “y” in wyrd is pronounced as is the Modern German umlaut-u or the “u” in Modern French “tu” (Mitchell and Robinson, 1993). Whether the “r” is pronounced like the modern American “r”, or like a modern British upper class “r”, the sound of wyrd is distinct from that of its descendant, “weird”.

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<sup>37</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 2000e). An edition prior to that was published in *Théod Magazine* (Stanfield, 1997b).

Reviewing the variety of Pagan and secular views on wyrd may help to increase awareness of the methodological and substantive issues.

### Variety of Concepts

## Reconstructionist Pagan Concepts

The point of this section is that there has been a great variety of views of wyrd among Pagans rather than a consensual definition. Opinions have varied along five dimensions: (1) fate-to-free will; (2) internal versus external source; (3) spiritual-or-environmental; (4) all-encompassing-to-narrowly relevant; (5) lability. It should be noted that since 1997 some of the persons whose works are cited in this section have changed their positions but not yet published new works dealing with wyrd.

## Fate-to-Free Will

Views range from the idea that wyrd is the same as the Modern English “fate” to the view that human will is supreme. In *Teutonic Religion*, Gundarsson states each thing has its own wyrd “which cannot be escaped” and that wyrd is “fate”. Gundarsson equates wyrd with *ørlog* (primal layer, or first cause), which is set at birth. However, most heathen authors opine that we have more control over our wyrd. Edred Thorsson explains that we can each discern our own wyrd through divination, and that doing so helps us each to become more the master/mistress of his/her own destiny. Thorsson also takes the view that we each provide our own primal cause for our own karma/wyrd. Aswynn takes the position that wyrd is controlled by people to the extent that they exert conscious thought. Exertion of conscious thought alone is enough to resist being dominated by externally imposed wyrd. On the extreme free-will side of the continuum, we not only make our own wyrd, but we can change it after it is made. Thus, Swain Wóden-

ing claims that a person can magically select which events from the past influence future chances (Aswynn, 1990: 258; Gundarsson, 1993a: 13-15; Thorsson, 1988: 13-16; Thorsson, 1989a: 99-102; S. Wódening, 1994).

## Internal-or-External Source

The extreme view on the external end is clearly delineated, but clarity falls off as we move toward the internal end of the continuum. No one takes the internal extreme. The external-source extreme is held down by Gundarsson. He contends that wyrd is created entirely by norms (Gundarsson, 1993a: 13-14). Freya Aswynn takes the more moderate position that “Although Norms shape the fate of men (sic), they do not necessarily create it.” She feels position that people control their wyrd to the extent that they exert conscious thought. However, Ms. Aswynn also states that Norms “control fate and dispense wyrd.” Aswynn also advises us to call on the Norms in magic and divination (Aswynn, 1990: 111, 238-239, 258). Swain Wódening clearly feels that “we lay our own wyrd,” although he also indicated that Wóden could intervene in one’s wyrd (S. Wódening, 1994c: 10; 1994b: 18). Thorsson appears to be ambivalent than is the case. In *At the Well of Wyrd*, he appears to imply that wyrd is woven by the norms, but if one reads the relevant passage in *At the Well of Wyrd* very carefully, it is clear that Thorsson only mentions the norms in passing. They have no role in creating wyrd. In both *At the Well of Wyrd* and *A Book of Troth*, he seems to take pains to say that people create all of their own wyrd without necessarily being aware of it. Thorsson; 1988: 13-16; 1989:99-102; 1995).

## Spiritual-or-Environmental Locus

This dimension refers to the location of wyrd. The distribution of opinion does not truly resemble a continuum, for there are only two positions. The spiritual position is Edred Thorsson’s, who tells us that wyrd “works through the fetch,” which is a numinous being attached to the individual. The fetch stores the “energies and actions of the individual” and events in one’s environment. So wyrd is located in the spiritual aspect of our being (Thorsson, 1989: 93, 101).

The other heathen authors cited here imply that wyrð is an environmental constraint or circumstance.

## All-Encompassing-to-Narrowly Relevant

This dimension refers to the extent to which things and events are connected in the web of wyrð. Swain Wóðening sees wyrð as “the collective deeds and lives of all in the cosmos.” Under the influence of this view, wyrð could be described in terms of modern concepts such as path analysis, markov chains, and open systems theory, as I used to do. Thorsson and Chisolm define wyrð more restrictively as “The process of the unseen web of synchronicity and cause and effect throughout the cosmos”. This leaves out all visible causal connections. Other sources present wyrð as referring only to influences that bear in some important way on a focal phenomenon. In other words, the contents of wyrð depend on who and what you are talking about. Freya Aswynn and Edred Thorsson hold that we each have our own personal wyrð — which contradicts Thorsson’s notion that wyrð is *the* unseen web. Gundarsson quotes Eric Wóðening as pointing out that causal influences in wyrð vary in strength of effect, and that some things are just not important enough to be in the web (Aswynn, 1990: 258; Chisolm, 1993: 115; Thorsson, 1989a: 101, 215; 1992: 217; Emery, 1969; Kemeny et al., 1956: 171-177; Nie et al, 1975: 383-397; E. Wóðening, 1993; S. Wóðening, 1994c: 11).

## Lability

Heathen authors disagree on the extent to which wyrð is open to change. In *At the Well of Wyrð*, Thorsson (1988: 13) indicates that wyrð is an accomplished result, and Gundarsson agrees with this point of view in *Teutonic Religion* (1993a). In *Our Troth*, Gundarsson (1993b: 268-270) quotes Eric Wóðening’s position that there is a “process of wyrð,” but this process is apparently conducted only at the beginning, when norms establish wyrð. In *A Book of Troth*, Thorsson (1989) indicates that wyrð is a process, a “dealing out” of events subsequent to a primal cause. This would mean that wyrð constantly changes as it progresses from the beginning of a chain of events to the end, but that these

changes are predetermined. In *Our Troth*, Gundarsson claims that Pagans magically created or modified wyrd by means of ritual magic (Gundarsson, 1993b: for example, see the chapter on Yule). Swain Wóðening (1994a) holds that one can change one's wyrd at any time. Aswynn (1990) hold that wyrd is always in flux.

## Summary

Among Pagan-reconstructionist scholars, there is little agreement on the nature of wyrd, and some of the most prominent scholars modern Pagan scholars seem to disagree with themselves. Pagan reconstructionist movements must apply subjective criteria because religion is more subjective than is science. Also, where the evidence is incomplete or ambiguous, we must make use of our own well-informed insights from outside the ancient texts. Therefore there will always be some reliance on hunches, intuition, and pre-existing preferences. However, expressions of the opinions in question are usually not accompanied by evidence, and this lack of objectivity might explain the extent of disagreement.

## Secular Studies

The common element in dictionaries and other studies of the concept is the lack of conscious human control over wyrd. Wyrd refers to two types of phenomena. One type is events that are certain: things that have already happened or that are sure to happen. The other type of phenomenon is chance. The academics never discuss the possibility of perceiving the etiology of wyrd.

Dictionaries show more variety of meaning for wyrd than do other sources. The first Old English dictionary to make it into print (Somner, 1659) did not define wyrd in the singular, although it discussed the derivation of the focal word. Somner defined the plural of wyrd as “Parcæ, the fates, destinies.” Later dictionary authors translate the focal word as “event”, “fact”, or “phenomenon”. Some add: destiny, chance, fortune, The Fates, deed, transaction, phenomenon, condition, and fact. To these, Borden adds “that which will happen,” which is a

nuance away from fate. Bosworth and Toller say that wyrd can denote what happens with or without a sense of numinous etiology. However, only Hall and Bosworth-Toller cite evidence in support of their definitions. (See Barney, 1977:12, 108; Bessinger, 1960: 80; Borden, 1982: 1587; Bosworth and Toller, 1898: 1287-1288; Bosworth and Toller, 1921: 751; Doane, 1978: 411; Hall, 1960: 427; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993: 1531; Jember et al, 1975:178; Mitchell and Robinson, 1992: 365).

Some books on Germanic religion include brief studies of wyrd, which they tend to equate with fate. For example, Branston made a case that the concepts of Fate and the Fates has ancient Indo-European roots, that these ideas show branches in three Indo-European religions, and that wyrd and the norms are the Germanic part of this pattern. Earle claims that wyrd is the same as Urðr in Scandinavian myth. But he also claims that wyrd combines all the characteristics of all the Norms. Turville-Petre did not directly translate wyrd, but he also equated it with “urðr”, which he said was an Old Norse word for fate. (See Branston, 1974: 57, 65-71, 186; Davidson, 1964: 217; Earle, 1884: 68-69; Guerber, 1895: 148, 154-159; Turville-Petre, 1964: 278).

Three secular studies concentrated on wyrd as a concept in Old English literature — and those studies generally conclude that wyrd is beyond human control. The most important is Timmer’s (1940, 1941) very thorough and extensive study. Timmer concludes that wyrd represented “blindly ruling Fate” until conversion to Christianity. After conversion wyrd was subordinated to Yahweh, although it still represented “a sense of the inevitability of the events of a man’s (sic) life” (Timmer, 1940-1941: 124-125). Also important is Stanley’s (1975) book on Anglo-

### ***The Well and the Tree***

Many modern-day Pagans opine that *The Well and the Tree* is the classic study of wyrd, but this is not the case. Bauschatz (1982: 87) says that wyrd has been well studied by others, implying no need for extensive research on his part. The references he gives on wyrd consist of the Payne (1974) article and the list of references in that article. With no additional data nor compelling analysis in Bauschatz’ book, I have found it useful as background only. This explains why Bauschatz’ book is not cited in this paper as among the major studies of wyrd.

Saxon Paganism. Stanley points out that *wyrd* glosses certain Latin words referring to fate, destiny, or predestination, and it occurs in contexts where it refers to Yahweh's will. The focal word also occurs in contexts where Stanley feels it refers to outcomes (final fate, doom, or death). Payne's (1974) paper on *wyrd* in *Beowulf* is closer to the conclusion drawn in this paper, for she says that *wyrd* represents "the agent behind...experiences" which show a lack of that paternalism or beneficence "associated with 'God'". (See also the sidebar "The Well and the Tree".)

In their prominent study of *The Wanderer*, Dunning and Bliss (1969) infer that "the difference between the Germanic concept of *wyrd* and the Classical concept of 'Fate' is largely etymological." It seems likely that whatever the nuances of Roman Pagan religious philosophy, Dunning and Bliss were referring to the Modern English "fate". Otherwise, they would have had to create or to cite an explanation of fate in Roman Pagan religion similar to the study of *wyrd* in this appendix.

Incidentally, two additional definitions are provided by Hall and by Borden (probably following Hall): "pleasure" and "verbosity" (Hall, 1960; Borden, 1982). It is worthwhile to note that the focal word is not always used in a philosophically interesting way.

A major shortcoming in the secular studies is that the subculture of academe tends to bias scholars' attentions away from the more profound religious questions. This bias tends to inhibit perceiving the religious context that gives meaning and importance to ancient discourse regarding *wyrd*.

## Summary of Pagan and Secular Views

There certainly has been a lot of disagreement about this topic. To the extent that Teutonic Pagan religion has been suppressed, we might expect that some of its core concepts might seem so alien to modern sensibilities that we would have difficulty seeing them even with the very skillful and professional examination that this topic has had. In the recent past, scholars studying *wyrd* in a Pagan religious context have disagreed more radically than those working in academe.

Many Pagans opine that a person can make or change wyrd, that one can perceive the etiology of wyrd, and/or that wyrd is a causal process. In contrast, scholars writing for secular or mostly Christian audiences tend to look upon wyrd as fate-like. In general, those who have the most reason to expect critical scrutiny by experts tend to view wyrd as an outcome and as not subject to conscious manipulation — except insofar as medieval Christians said that Yahweh controls wyrd. One of the concerns of Pagan (and other) religious philosophers is to avoid saying that people totally lack freedom and responsibility. This concern is philologically valid because we would be right to expect the ancient’s use of wyrd to reflect correct philosophy. And so we might well ask of the evidence: “to what extent is wyrd fate-like, does it encompass all phenomena, and what does it mean?”

One interesting point of scholarly agreement is that wyrd is not a Christian concept. Therefore, when the term “wyrd” is mentioned in ostensibly Christian writings we are looking at an impurity that has been added to create an acceptable or comprehensible alloy. Apparently, Biblical concepts that seem natural to many modern persons would have been alien or incomprehensible in early medieval Germanic cultures. Therefore, we can justify examining early medieval uses of the focal word to see how it would have been used without the one-god theory. (See also the sidebar, “Purely Christian Culture”).

The evidence used here relies heavily on poetry as opposed to prose. Since diction is more archaic in Old English poetry than in prose, poetry is a better

#### **Ancient Usages**

##### ***Purely Christian Culture***

Stanley’s (1975) and Timmer’s (1940-1941) main thesis was that there was no Pagan influence on early medieval English culture. Timmer felt that Old English literature on wyrd was Christian, but Stanley saw it as secular. Almost all modern Pagans and neo-Pagans would regard a denial of Pagan influence as greatly in error. Stanley and Timmer did their best to handle the evidence logically and thoroughly. We should keep in mind that James Russell’s (1994) book on Pagan influences and some of the sources he used were not available to Timmer nor to Stanley.

place to look for clues to the customs and beliefs of Pagan times.

## Dissertations on Wyrd

The most straightforward discussion of wyrd in early medieval literature is King Alfred's, written in the 800's. Alfred saw his missions as including instructing his people, advancing quality scholarship, and strengthening Christian religion.

Alfred's definition gives clues as to how wyrd was used in Pagan culture as well as how he wanted the word used henceforth (Campbell et al., 1982: 155; 157; Bolton, 1986).

There is also an implicit dissertation on wyrd in a poem from the early 900's called *The Wanderer*. That poem was not intended as explicit instruction on wyrd — the poem says that wyrd was well known in those times. However, *The Wanderer* can tell us a lot about the present topic and is often cited in studies of wyrd.

### ***Originality in Alfred on Boethius***

Alfred apparently intended to explain Boethius' ideas and Christian doctrine in Anglo-Saxon cultural context, not to provide an exact translation of *The Consolations of Philosophy*. King Alfred's interpretation reorganized *Consolations* and omitted large parts, but Alfred's book is twice as long as the Latin original. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that where Alfred used "wyrd" in place of "fatum" and "fortuna" in the passage quoted here, he meant to explain Yahweh's actions in terms of wyrd and not necessarily in terms of Roman Pagan religious concepts. The present author is not competent to make an esoteric interpretation of the Roman Pagan concepts related to fate and cannot elucidate nor speculate upon any relation between wyrd and Pagan fatum. (See Bolton, 1986; Campbell et al, 1982: 155, 157; Fox 1864)

## Alfred

In Alfred's discussion and elsewhere in Old English literature, the term "wyrd" is incorporated in Christian philosophy. This implies that the concept was most likely of Pagan, not secular origin, and that the reality of wyrd was beyond denial. Alfred set forth a redefinition of wyrd to explain the Biblical concept of an all-powerful and all-knowing deity. (See also the sidebar, "Originality in Alfred on Boethius").

### *Alfred's Definition*

The passages used here are taken from Timmer's (1940, 1941) quotations from Alfred's translation of *Consolations of Philosophy* and from editions of Alfred's translation by Sedgefield (1899) and Fox (1864). The division into numbered paragraphs is based on Timmer's but is mine.

- 1) Ac ðæt ðætte we hatað Godes foreþonc and his foresceawung, þæt bið þa hwile þe hit ðær mid him bið on his mode, ærdæm þe hit gefremd weorðe, þa hwile ðe hit geþoht bið; ac siððan hit fullfremd bið, þonna hatað we hit wyrð. Be þy mæg ælc mon witan þæt hit sint ægþer ge tvegen naman ge twa þincg, foreþonc and wyrð.
- 2) Se foreþonc is sio godcunde gesceadwisnes; sio is fæst on þæm hean sceppende þe eall fore wat hu hit geweorðan sceall ær hit geweorðe.
- 3) Ac þæt þæt we wyrð hatað þæt bið Godes weorc þæt he ælce dæg wyrð, ægþer ge þæs ðe we gesioð ge þæs þe us ungesewenlic bið.
- 4) Ac se godcunda foreþonc heaðerað ealle gesceafta, þæt hi ne moton toslupan of hiora endebyrdnesse. Sio wyrð þonne dælð eallum gesceaftum anwlitan and stowa and side and gemetgunga; ac sio wyrð cymð of ðæm gewitte and of ðæm foreþonce þæs ælmihteðan Godes.
- 5) Se wyrð æfter his unascecgendlicum foreþonce þonne swa hwæt swa he wile, swa swa ælc cræftega ðencð & mearcað his weorc on his mode ær ær he hit wyrce, & wyrð siððan eall. þios wandriende wyrð þe we wyrð hatað færð æfter his forþonce & æfter his geþeahte, swa swa he tiohhað þæt hit sie.

In translation.

- 1) And we call this God's forethought and His foresight, that is while it is with Him in his mind, before it becomes accomplished, while it is thought. And after it is fulfilled, we call it wyrð. By means of this may each person therefore know that both two names and two things: forethought and wyrð.

- 2) This forethought is the divine sagacity. It is constant in that the High Creator knows all beforehand, (and knows) how it happens before it takes place.
- 3) Therefore that which we call wyrd is God's everyday work, both that which we perceive and that which is imperceptible to us.
- 4) Moreover, the divine forethought controls all conditions so that they cannot fall out of order. Therefore, wyrd bestows upon all phenomena appearances, places, aspects, and regulations, because wyrd comes from the knowledge and the forethought of the almighty God.
- 5) He works whatever He wills according to His unannounced plan, just as each craftsperson thinks & plans his or her work in his or her mind before he/she does it, and afterwards does it all. This wandering wyrd which we call wyrd fares according to his forethought and according to his thought, just as He intends that it should be.

In an earlier passage of the same work, Alfred advises us: “Ne meahst ðu nu geit þinre wyrde nauht oðwitan ne þin lif no getælan, ne eart þu no eallunga to nauhte gedon swa swa þu wenst.” In Modern English: “You may not blame your wyrd at all nor despise your life; nor are you entirely free to do as you please”

### ***Discussion of Alfred's Definition***

Clearly, Alfred depicts wyrd as beyond human foresight, control, or alteration. It is a powerful set of circumstances, providing a structure of constraints and opportunities within which we must act. We cannot explain it empirically, and we cannot see it as it develops around us. Sometimes we cannot perceive it as it exists. Wyrd is clearly a result or a set of results, not a causal web. It is certainly not a being as defined in this passage.

When Alfred says that we should not become emotionally negative about wyrd, he is implying that wyrd is not all-encompassing, for we have at least partial responsibility for our own outcomes and adjustments. He indirectly advises us that emotional negativity toward things that we cannot change is wasteful and can be quite unhealthy.

That which is explicitly not Teutonic Pagan in this definition is the role of an almighty and all-knowing deity who is always loving and just. Thus, the differences between Alfred's (revisionist) wyrd and Teutonic Pagan wyrd are threefold. (1) In a Biblical adaptation, wyrd is necessarily always just because it is controlled by Yahweh. We do not necessarily perceive the justice of wyrd, for Yahweh is beyond human understanding. In a Teutonic Pagan system, wyrd would not need to be just. (2) In a Biblical adaptation, there must be a conscious mind behind wyrd, but that mind does not learn nor adjust because Yahweh's mind is perfect. In the Pagan system, there need be no thought behind wyrd. (3) In a Biblical use of the focal word, it cannot refer to anything beyond the power of Yahweh, but in a Teutonic Pagan system wyrd can be independent of deities and beyond their powers.

It might be said that the presence of sorcerers and diviners in Pagan systems raise the possibility of people working wyrd. However, sources more Pagan than was Alfred stress that no one avoids wyrd. Also, although some English Pagan spell chants have survived, none of them speaks directly of manipulating wyrd. Nor is there explicit mention of magicians peering into wyrd or manipulating it. Wyrd is the same as or very similar to the Old Norse *urðr*, which is said to limit the the deities. Likewise, there is no source showing that someone learned of a future wyrd from a diviner and avoided it. (See discussions below and Rodrigues, 1993; Hollis 1997). It is obvious that there are limits of human capability, and in Teutonic Pagan religion there are limits of divine power. It seems quite safe to infer that by definition wyrd included those factors which were beyond the limits of even the greatest conscious power.

## The Wanderer

This poem has been the subject of interesting controversies. The composition was probably completed about 950, but the title "The Wanderer" was bestowed by Benjamin Thorpe in 1836. Therefore the title is not a clue from medieval times and probably reflects a modern misunderstanding. Some feel that this poem is a Pagan work with a few Christian lines added at the beginning and end, others think they see a thoroughly Christian composition. Scholars have also

debated whether the poem is a monologue in which the title character tells his story, or a series of speeches by distinct voices speaking on a single theme. (See Bradley, 1982; Crossley-Holland, 1982: 45-47, 50-53; Dunning and Bliss, 1969; Gollancz, 1895; Leslie, 1966; Mitchell and Robinson, 1993: 268-275; Pope, 1965).

The best short title is probably “Oppression”. A major theme of the poem is that in the normal course of human life there are extremely unpleasant situations that affect many personal lives but are beyond the power of any group or individual to alter or prevent. In certain passages, these situations are referred to as *wyrd*. The other themes are (1) lament and warning of the destruction of warfare, (2) emphasis on the importance of self-containment in the face of hardship, and (3) finding an honorable course in a churlish world.

The poem is a series of brief excerpts organized around the common themes. Selecting excerpts from a few popular classics would help give legitimacy to a work of questionable political correctness — the oppressions and disasters discussed were part of normal early medieval Germanic politics. The number of speaking roles or performers would depend on artistic and philosophical considerations, but as many as 10 performers can be utilized. In some ancient gatherings, everyone in the hall could perform a part, and some parts could have been choruses. The poem was intended for an audience of Christians, agnostics, atheists, and (mostly) diehard Pagans.

All quotations from *The Wanderer* are compilations from the editions of Gollancz (1895), Diamond (1970), and Mitchell and Robinson (1994). The translations shown below are like the half-line-based translations of *OERP* strophes, made more to give the meaning of each half line than to communicate the nonverbal messages of the original. No attempt is made to preserve the medieval punctuation.

### ***Wyrd is Absolutely Unyielding***

These are the first five lines of the poem. The main point of this passage is that whether *wyrd* persists or changes is a matter of chance, not of conscious efforts

nor of (human's nor spiritual beings') wishes. Because there is no profound "why" behind some things, there is hope even in the most enduring and depressing situation.

Oft him ánhaga • áre gebídeþ  
 Metudes miltse • þeah-þe hé mód-ðearig  
 geond lagu-lade • lange scolde  
 hréran mid handum; • hrim-ðealde sæ,  
 wadan wræc-lástas. • Wyrð byþ ful aræd.

Oft for himself the loner • favor experiences —  
 Metod's mercy — • although he in discouragement  
 far (over) sea routes • long had to  
 propel (his boat) by hand; • (through) frost-cold sea  
 to travel the paths of exiles. • Wyrð is absolutely resolute.

The first line seems ambiguous to some modern observers. It could mean "Often the solitary one asks favor for himself", or it could mean "Often the loner experiences favor for himself". The following line gives a clue, for its "b" verse is: "þeah þe he mód-ðearig". You ask for a break *because* (not "although") you have long suffered without it. You can experience relief although you thought you never would get a break from loneliness, physical hardship, and sheer discouragement.

Notice what this passage does not say. It does not imply that you can gain mercy or favor if you pray sincerely and deeply believe.

Some scholars feel that this passage is Christian because it mentions Metod, but mention of Metod can be quite ambiguous. If Metod were a hypostasis of Yahweh, He would be above changing His mind because He is super-conscious and all wise. Therefore He would never change His mind and give you mercy merely because you asked for it, and you would not be able to get "áre" on your own against His will. This produces the same result as if Metod were but a giant without awareness or intent and yet more powerful than any goddess or god. Either way, that part of your situation that is wyrð is absolutely unyielding.

Thus, the first five lines allow interpretations according to both Alfred's idea of *wyrð* and according to a strictly Pagan view. The catch is that Christians expect prayer to bring results or a change on one's ways to trigger mercy, so we have to look upon the ambiguity of this passage as pretty thin camouflage.

### *Character is Needed for Endurance*

Lines 15-18 occur near end the first phase of the drifter's monologue (lines 8-21). The first phase tells us that he has lost all his confidants and has not yet found a replacement, therefore he must suffer in silence.

Ne mæg wérig mód • wyrde wiðstandan  
 né sé hréo hyge • helpe gefremman.  
 Forðon dóm-georne • dréorigne oft  
 in hyra bréost-cofan • bindað fæste.

Neither may weary mood • withstand *wyrð*,  
 nor (may) those angry thoughts • be of assistance.  
 Therefore, those eager for a good reputation • a dreary thought often  
 in their heart-coffers • bind fast.

The drifter tells us that strong negative emotions, whether of depression or anger, are of no help in successfully enduring *wyrð*. Complaining about problems without hope of solving them can be cathartic, but such talk can also make you more aware of anger or discouragement. Complaining too much can also alienate others. Sometimes you just have to tough it out and maintain the best mood you can. The drifter has to maintain this discipline while physically impoverished and far from a supportive lord or sympathetic comrades. This emphasizes that ultimately one has to take responsibility for one's own morale.

Another side of this passage is the emphasis on social support. Namely, close friends and supportive authorities are the good social supports to help you keep your sanity in the face of severe oppression.

We understand this passage more clearly if we see that it is part of a general theme against excessive warfare. That is why there is so much emphasis on severe suffering, and we should not infer that wyrd is simply bad news and hard times. This passage is part of a warning that the effects of warfare often go beyond what is thought of during the fighting or planning to fight, and that even intended results are sometimes regrettable.

Dunning and Bliss (1969) interpret these lines as implying that somehow one can change wyrd. However, the poem includes a prior passage which indicates that “wyrd biþ ful áræd”. This excerpt is about maintaining mental health, not changing one’s environmental circumstances.

### ***The Seen but Invisible, the Willed but Involuntary***

Everyone who reads this document (including the author) has at some time committed and act and wondered why he or she did it, and every one of us has done something important and found that it had consequences we knew in advance but were not fully aware of. That is the sort of thing that lines 85-87 speak of. Although wyrd is not explicitly mentioned, this passage clearly speaks of it.

Ýþde swá þisne eard-geard • ælda scyppend  
 oppæt burg-wara • breahntma lease,  
 eald enta ġeweorc • indlu stodon.

Thus laid waste this earthly place · did mankind’s Creator  
 until city-dwellers’ · noises ceased  
 (and) ancient giants’ works · stood empty.

The immediate context of passage is a description of a walled city that was constructed with labor that would be very difficult to repeat, but which is now ruined and depopulated by war. The point of the phrase “Ýþde..ælda scyppend” (Laid waste....Mankind’s Creator) is that the proximate cause of the destruction in question is human nature. In whatever context the excerpt originated, it might have spoken of Yahweh openly punishing a city of sinners, but in *The Wanderer*

there is no sign of direct action by Him. Instead He has indirectly caused this by making human nature.

By reminding us that there are things we do that bring about wyrd-type circumstances, this helps us realize how wyrd can develop and change all around us all the time. How, then does wyrd arise? “It is just human nature.”

These three lines contradict the tone of the rest of the poem by blaming Our Father for the carnage and destruction in question. The rest of the poem says that the wyrd of war that we see has been made by men, and the rest of the poem carefully avoids directly criticizing anyone’s theology. This is a telling clue that *The Wanderer* has been redacted from several speaker’s lines and probably from several poems.

### ***Everyone Knows You Cannot Change Wyrd***

Lines 97-100 are part of a passage that bemoans the loss of the martial inhabitants of a walled city. The remarkably moving poetry is intended to reinforce the caution against warfare that is a major theme of *The Wanderer*.

Stondeð nú on láste • léofre duguþe  
weal wundrum heah • wýrm-licum fah.  
Eorlas fornóman • asca þrýþe  
wápen wæl-gífru. • Wyrd séo máre!

Stands now after •(the) dear war band (has gone)  
wall wondrously high • (and) and painted with sinuous shapes.  
Earls were taken away • by spears’ force,  
(by) slaughter-greedy weapons. • Wyrd the well-known!

The passage laments the fact that deaths are not to be taken back, just as everyone knows that you cannot change wyrd. This fact is highlighted by the lifeless walls of a city ruined by the loss of its humans. We see a sadness not necessarily fully intended by either the defenders or attackers.

This quotation tells us that *wyrð* was common knowledge, not a highly esoteric and obscure concept addressed only by a few occult insiders. In turn this supports the interpretation that *wyrð* refers to a type of commonly-experienced situation. We may infer that *wyrð* refers to a structure of opportunities and constraints — everyone experiences this all the time. This would be something to be dealt with by those who would proselytize large numbers of Teutonic Pagans to a Biblical religion.

### ***Wyrð Brings Changes***

Following are lines 107-110.

Onwendeð *wyrða gescraft* • *weoruld under heofunum*.

Her bið *feoh læne*. • Her bið *freond læne*.

Her bið *mon læne*. • Her bið *mæg læne*.

Eal þis *eorþan gæsteal* • *idel weorþeð*.

- ♦ Changes *wyrds'* nature • (the whole) world under heaven.  
Here is money temporary. • Here are friends temporary.  
Here is man temporary. • Here is woman temporary.  
All (of) this earthly place • becomes useless.

For students of *wyrð*, the expression “*wyrða gescraft*” has drawn substantial interest. Contrary to certain commonly-expressed opinions, in this context “*wyrða*” is used as speakers of Modern English would use the possessive of “circumstances”.

The mention of *wyrð* in this passage may appear to refer to an allegory, so some people infer that this passage evinces a set of two or more Pagan goddesses collectively called “*Wyrð*”. Thus, “*wyrða gescraft*” is sometimes translated as fate’s (sic) decree or Fates’/*Wyrds'* decree. This in turn could be taken to imply a group of Pagan Teutonic wights called *wyrds* who rule supreme and cause evil (Timmer, 1940, 1941). However, poetic license allows us to say that inanimate things act although they do not. For example, if a road could wander we would have great difficulty staying on it or going to a known destination over it, but the

figure of speech “road wanders” is often heard. There is more than one wyrd mentioned because there are many circumstances impinging on the whole world.

The translation of “gesceaft” is not as critical as is our understanding “wyrda” in this passage. We could translate “gesceaft” as “decree” or “decrees” in the sense of “requirement” However, the treatment of wyrd in *The Wanderer* does not allow wyrd to be an absolutely determining circumstance or set of circumstances. If we translate as “created phenomenon”, then “wyrda gesceaft” would refer to the implications or specific results of extant conditions beyond our control. To get the best sense out of lines 107-110, gesceaft can be translated as “nature or condition”. Then the passage says that it is the nature of wyrd to cause these changes. (See Bosworth and Toller, 1921; Hall, 1960)

This passage tells us that wyrd does not necessarily cause things to remain as they are. Instead, the circumstances we cannot change can themselves bring changes. The broader context is that the poem is trying to tell us not to make things even worse than they are by rash action.

### ***You Can Choose Not to Make Things Worse***

Lines 112-114 include most of the concluding advice in the poem. They allude to advice in lines 64-72, which say that a wise person will not be overly exultant, too weak, etc. — but most of all a wise man will not rashly promise action before he knows what is really in his heart.

Til bið sé þe his tréowe gehealdeþ. • Né sceal næfre his torn tó rycene  
beorn of his bréostum acýpan, • nemþe he ær þá bóte cunne,  
eorl mid elne gefremman. • Wel bið þam þe him áre séceð.

Good is he who keeps his troth. • Never shall his resentment too quickly  
born of his breast be made known, • unless he knows the remedy beforehand,  
(and) the earl with vigor (how) to act. • (It is) well with he who seeks honor for  
himself.

Regarding *wyrd*, this tells us that although certain flaws are normal, you do not have to let them take over. In other words, you cannot eliminate *wyrd*, but you can moderate its consequences (and perhaps its occurrence) by taking conscious control.

The poem concludes with a line of Christian liturgy that is just as out of phase with the main body of the poem as is the criticism of Christianity in lines 85-87. The statement is: “Comfort (is) from (the) Father in Heaven, • where that security stands for us all.” This appears to be merely politically correct, but what it can mean to an esoteric listener in a mixed audience is that we need inner strength to have the discipline to act with honor and alert common sense in a challenging world of reality.

## ***Conclusions***

*The Wanderer* implies that *wyrd* was widely known in ancient times. Also, it is circumstantial, it is beyond human intervention, it could lead to changes as well have a conservative effect, and each of us is responsible for her or his own coping with *wyrd*. *Wyrd* is not your outcomes, it is the structure of opportunities and constraints within which your outcomes occur.

*Wyrd* does not refer to an etiological chain or web, nor a web of synchronicity. The focal word that in Old English contexts refers to certain current circumstances. These are circumstances whose etiologies are never fully known.

In *The Wanderer*, we see certain circumstances developing from mankind’s folly, but all we can say of the etiology is that making war is just human nature and the best we can do is try to not make things worse by acting less consciously than we must.

## **Additional Uses**

Uses of the focal term outside dissertations on *wyrd* support the contention that the best one-word translation is “circumstance”, although *wryd* usually refers to

a certain type of circumstance. These three selections are just illustrative. It is not possible in this appendix to explicitly discuss all 882 instances where *wyrd* and its etymological relatives appear in the corpus of Old English (Bessinger, 1960) nor even the 19 times that that *wyrd* per se appears in poetry (Barney, 1977).

## Wyrd Does Not Always Allow Freedom of Action

Sometimes the opportunities and constraints we face do not allow meaningful freedom of action. Therefore there are times when courage and clear thinking would have us accept conditions or outcomes that we do not desire. For a religion to help a person live a better life, it has to deal with this kind of situation, one where adaptation is more a matter of aware emotional self-control than of an aggressive strategy.

The often-compelling power of *wyrd* is illustrated by a passage from King Alfred's "translation" of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, which is not in a section where Alfred was trying to explicitly explain *wyrd*. The context is this section is a historical background explaining how the Ostrogoths took over a large area of the Roman Empire and how the Ostrogothic King Theodoric felt compelled to suppress an incipient rebellion. (Among other things, King Theodoric had a Pope executed). From the Mitchell and Robinson (1993) edition, these are lines 28-31a with some changes in punctuation.

Stód þáge on ðám. • Þéod wæs gewunnen  
wintra mænigo • oðþæt wyrd gescráf  
þæt þe Þéodriçe • þegnas and eorlas  
héran sceoldan.

For a time things stood like this. • The nation was conquered  
many winters • until circumstances required  
that Theodoric • to thegns and earls  
had to listen.

Theodoric had gotten himself into difficulty by doing things he knew he was doing, yet he did not foresee the consequences of his actions and possibly did not realize afterwards how he got himself into this trouble.

*The Ruin*, which is often cited in studies of wyrd, discusses something that has happened to people due to a combination of factors that were beyond their control. These are the first two lines of that poem, quoted from the Mitchell and Robinson (1993) edition with some changes in punctuation.

Wrátlic is þes wealstán, • wyrde ġebraécon.  
burgstede burson; • broснаð enta ġeweorc.

Wonderous is the stone wall, • (yet) shattered by compelling circumstances.  
The city in ruins • - a thing made by giants -decays.

## A Slightly Different Sort of Circumstance

In some instances where the focal term is sometimes translated as “phenomenon” or “deed” the modern “circumstance” would also work. This is from the forty-seventh poem in a group in the certain ancient book called “riddles”. This particular poem is not a riddle, but more like a stanza from the *OERP* with the first word indicating a topic and deeper subject matter partially hidden from view. This is the whole poem, based on Mackie’s (1934) edition. In this context, Groff (1992) translates wyrd as “deed”, and “phenomenon” is probably the most accurate (if not very poetic) rendering. However, you can see that “circumstance” does fit.

Moððe word fræt. • Mé þæt þúhte  
wrátlicu wyrd, Þá ic at wundor ġefrægn,  
þæt se wurm forswealg • wera ġied sumes,  
þéof in þýstro, • þrymfætne cwide  
ond þæs strangan staþol. • Stælġiest ne wæs  
wihte þý gléawra, • þe hé þám wordum swealg.

A moth eats words. • By me that is considered  
 (a) wonderous circumstance. • Then I inquire into that wonder  
 that the caterpillar consumes • men's words whole  
 (as a) thief in the night, • (both) glorious discourse  
 and its strong (physical) basis. • Clever not was thief-guest  
 (nor made a) clear-thinking wight, • although he consumed the words.

## Etymological Considerations

The inference that *wyrð* refers to circumstances without question as to causal relationships can be corroborated by etymological considerations. The focal word is related to *weorðan* (to become or to happen). Barney (1977: 12) and Pagan author Swain Wóðening (1994a) have described the evolution of *wyrð* from a hypothetical Indo-European root word (*wer*) meaning “to turn” through a family tree of Germanic words. “*Weorðan*” refers to happening. It does not refer to making something into nor (usually) to being made into; it does not denote “caused to become”. Wóðening speculates that *weorðan* came to mean “to become” as a result of its relation to *wyrð*. It may be a noun made from a past participle of a verb meaning “to turn out” in the sense of “become”.

Old English words relating to causality are very different than the focal word. The OE prepositions for “because” (*ac*, *for*, *ða*, *mid ðam ðæt*), “consequently” (*swa*), and “because of” (*be*, *fore*) are etymologically unrelated to *weorðan* and to *wyrð*. As a conjunction *forði* means “because”. As a conjunction, *forði* denotes “for that cause, or consequently”. *Forpon* means “for that, for, because”. Likewise, the verbs denoting cause are unrelated to *weorðan* (*gedon*, *fremman*, *geweorcan*). The verb *geweorcan* derives from the Indo-European root “*werg*” rather than the roon “*wer*”. The noun for “cause” (*intinga*) is also etymologically unrelated to *weorðan*. (See Hall, 1960; Houghton Mifflin, 1993: 1623-1624).

Therefore, *wyrð* is not a web of causal interrelationships connecting all phenomena nor is it a process. The focal word does not refer to the past nor to the future, but only to that which has become.

If there were a Pagan wight or wights who controlled wyrd, then we would expect that wight to symbolize an etiology that would not be concerned with ethics, communication, intelligibility, shrewdness, nor learning. Such a wight would be alive, very active, and very powerful — but not conscious. The sections immediately following show that there are beings in Teutonic Paganism who fit the description of “wyrd’s controller” In the Old Norse literature, the norns of Asgarð fit the description. Since there is more Pagan discussion in the Old Norse corpus than in Old English, an understanding of the norns of Asgarð helps us analyze the Old English wight called Metod, who is the Pagan “wyrdra wealdend” (controller of circumstances).

## **Wights and Wyrd**

## **Norns**

The Norse branch of Teutonic Paganism has three norns, but one of them is of particular interest here. The importance of Urðr for the present inquiry is that she gives a clearer model than we get from Old English sources, because there is much more surviving mythical literature in Old Norse than in Old English, and the Old Norse literature is more Pagan. Also, comparison of national similarities and differences within Germanic Paganism is interesting per se.

## **The Character of the Norns**

The norns of Scandinavia are associated with a cognate of wyrd; a wyrd-like effect comes from one or all three of them, and they behave as we would expect causers of wyrd to behave.

## *Urðr as Wyrð*

The Old Norse cognate is *urðr*, which may have most of its denotations in common with *wyrð*. Cleasby et al (1957) and Zöega (1910) define *urðr* as “a weird, fate” and as “the name of one of three norns”. Zöega adds that *urða* is a verb meaning “to cover with stones and an *urð* (also a feminine noun) is a heap of stones fallen from a hill. From the compound words listed in the Cleasby et al and Zöega dictionaries, the fate-related sense of *urðr* seems the more common, and it seems possible that if competent non-Pagan scholars interpret *wyrð* as the Modern English “fate”, then scholars could be making a similar mistake in translating *urðr*. In the *Skaldskaparmal*, Snorri Sturluson refers to *Urð* as fate in the sense of impending death. Likewise, *wyrð* was used to refer to death or impending death (as is the Modern English “fate”).

There is substantive as well as etymological evidence of the *wyrð*-like effects of at least one norn. Old Norse myths speak of the irresistible dominance of the norns. There was a golden age when the deities were extremely creative and joyful, then three norns came — *Urðr* (Had to Be), *Verðandi* (Coming to Be), and *Skuld* (Has to Be), and the deities could no longer do whatever they wanted. There are also many non-*Asgarð* norns who “shape the lives of” people. For example, in *Skaldskaparmal* there is a list of four norns “who shape necessity”. Strophes 4 and 5 of *The Spell of Groá* state that the work of the norns is not subject even magical manipulation. As in England the Christians had to reconcile their religion with *wyrð*, so in Scandinavia the Christians had to reconcile themselves with *urð*: Snorri refers to *Urð*’s well as the seat of Christ’s power. In *The Prose Edda*, *Voluspa*, *The First Lay of Helgi the Hunding-Slayer*, and *Skaldskaparmal*, and other sources, we see norns determining broad outlines of life chances and personalities rather than details of outcomes. It seems that the most important of the norns of *Asgarð* is *Urðr*, and that her effect is called *urðr*. *The Gylfanning* in the *Prose Edda* says that norns for humans originate as goddesses, elves and dwarves, but they function about the same as the norns of *Asgarð*. (See Dronke, 1997; Faulkes, 1987: 18, 121, 126, 157; Hollander, 1962; Morris and Magnusson, 1888).

### *Unconscious Actors*

Norns operate like causers of wyrð in that they do not know what they have done, what they are doing, nor what they are going to do — nor have they reasoned why. The norns of Asgarð come from the least intelligent sort of giants, for they are “þursa meyjar” — daughters of thurses. Although many of the deities of Asgarð have risen from giant origins, we know that Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld are not divine by their behavior and relationships to other wights. When normic behavior is described, norns are said to weave, cut, award, etc. What norns are not said to do is cogitate. Although they decide, norns do not plan, calculate, consider, nor intend. Old Norse literature does not usually let us read a character’s thoughts on paper, but we can infer their thoughts from dialog and behavior. No one ever asks norns any questions. Although Wodan consults female wights for divination, and although the deities hold council every day at “Urðar brunnar” (Urð’s Well), neither Urð nor her sisters takes part in these consultations. Nor do norns confer with each other. When Oðin recites wisdom poetry at the Urð’s Well in *Havamál* (strophe 111), Urð does not give assistance. There is also a story from the *Volsunga Saga*: “Sigmund... (had) two sons... and when Helgi was born, Norns came to him... and said that he should be in time to come the most renowned of all kings” (Morris and Magnusson, 1888: Chapter 8). But in the *Volsunga Saga* story the norns announce without showing any intent to give useful advice, without giving any reason for their decisions, and without mutual dialog. The norns never give reasons for anything they do. (See the sidebar “The Well of Urð”; and Bauschatz, 1982: 2-7; Bellows, 1923; Brodeur, 1916; Dronke, 1997: *Voluspa*, str 8; Faulkes, 1987; Hollander, 1962; Kroesen, 1996; Thorsson, 1988: 13; Morris and Magnusson, 1988; Cleasby et al, 1857: 498; Young, 1954).

Some might find it strange that a ultra-powerful and very commonly-observed characters would act without consciousness, because we usually associate unconsciousness with extreme passivity. However, if you examine the Norse myth of creation very carefully, you will find that the first being, the giant Ymir, never attained consciousness (Faulkes, 1987).

There is one story that contradicts this interpretation. The Story of Nornagesta shows norms arguing with each other, although they are childishy irresponsible. Perhaps the Story of Nornagesta represents a local variation in Teutonic religion. We would certainly not expect that Teutonic religion would be the same everywhere and throughout Pagan times. (See Guerber, 1895: 154-159; Gundarsson, 1993a: 245-255; Gundarsson, 1993b: 116-117; Thorsson, 1987: 188-189; Stead, 1994: “The Jotnar”.)

## Wyrd, Urðr, and Örlög

Since wyrd refers to a situation that has already arisen, only one of the norms could have decreed anything like wyrd. In Old Norse sources, the result of collective normic actions is örlög or a metaphorical web or woven cloth. Örlög might refer to prime causes in chains of events, since the word means “ultimate layers” or “primary strata.” The philosophical meaning of having three norms decreeing is that the past (Urðr) provides a context for but does not determine the present (Verðandi), and the present conditions but does not determine the future (Skuld). Thus, norms together would “pronounce prime causes” at a child’s birth which would shape his or her life to the extent of determining some outcomes. A meaning of the web or woven cloth would be that it takes all three of the norms to make an outcome. Thus, the örlög that is produced by all three norms could a prime cause that works out to someone’s destiny (Bauschatz, 1982: 2-7; Dronke, 1997: *Voluspá*; Thorsson, 1992: 214).

### *The Well of Urð*

The meaning of making considerations at Urð’s Well seems to be that we need to at least know the situation to make decisions or give advice. For example, the *Loddfáfnismál* is introduced by the strophe in which Óðin says he will recite by Urð’s Well, and *Loddfánismál* discusses only everyday practicalities, not accounts of events in the past nor those to come (Larrington, 1993).

Thus, the effect of Uðr is wryd-like and might be exactly the same as the Old English wryd. The effect of the norms as a group does not have a corresponding

term in the surviving corpus of Old English, and *ørlæg* probably did not play significant a role in the English branch of Teutonic polytheism.

## Metod

It is reasonable to infer that among English Pagans Metod was the wight of *wyrð*. We know this being from mixed-faith literature, where he usually appears as an aspect of Yahweh. Metod is masculine and not referred to as a *norn*, but he fits the model of an allegory for the origins of *wyrð*. Metod had the characteristics of supreme (but not unlimited) power and lack of consciousness that we find in *Urðr*. This wight did not have any partners combining to make specific outcomes.

## *Production of Ørlög*

Anglo-Saxon scholars found that *wyrð* approximated the Latin *fatum* or *fortuna* closely enough to translate those words. Therefore if there were “*norns*” in English Paganism, then the ancient scholars would have found an Old English word for *norns* as an adequate approximation of *Parcæ*. Although Alfred did not translate *Parcæ* (he Anglicized it into “*Parcas*”), one of the Old English glosses shows “*Wyrde*” (plural) as a translation of *Parcæ* (Bosworth and Toller, 1898). Thus, it appears that *norns* might have been part of English Paganism.

However, the gloss of *Parcae* as “*Wyrde*” is probably a very loose approximation on the part of the ancient writer. If the English *wyrð* giants were *wyrde*, then all the English *norns* would have corresponded to *Urðr*. *Wyrð* is a cognate of *urð*, the Old Norse word that forms the basis of the name of the *norn* *Urðr*.

Also, *wyrde* are not found associated with *wyrð* in Old English literature — except for translations from Latin originals, where some word was needed to translate “*Parcae*” -- who do not have an equivalent in English Pagan religion. If some translators glossed a set of Roman Pagan deities as “*wyrde*” (plural), that was probably as close as they could get to making a translation — but not a true

statement of equivalence. In Old English, the appellation “Wyrðra Wealdend” (Controller of Circumstances) occurs many times, but is always singular.

This means that there was not an English group to collectively produce *ørlog*. Most likely, the concept of *ørlog* was not important in Pagan England. This would imply a denominational difference between the Norse and English. That is, the Norse appear to have been a little more fatalistic than the English. We would be surprised if there were not denominational differences within Germanic Paganism.

### ***Metod is Associated with Wyrð***

If there had been an English allegory for the cause of a circumstance that had already arisen from the past, then would also expect to find that wight’s name in the surviving corpus in association with *wyrð*. We find that association very clearly made in lines 115b-116 of *The Seafarer* (Mitchell and Robinson, 1994: 282).

.... • Wyrð biþ swíþre  
Meotud meahþigra • þonne ænges monnes geþygd.

.... • Wyrð is stronger,  
Metod (is) mightier • than any man’s intention.

### ***The Allotted of Each Person***

In the Scandinavian system, there are three *norns* in Asgarð and many lesser *norns* for people. However, in the English system, there is only one *Metod*, who is multifaceted and affects each of us differently. His name is “The Allotted” (acted upon) not “The Allotor” (actor), and this implies that he is not divine. The name “Allotted” corresponds to the notion that children are allotted *norns* at birth. That is, *Metod* is the wight allotted to Mankind somehow, and presumably in a different aspect to each of us. This passage from lines 2524b-2527a of

*Beowulf* (Alexander, 1995) illustrates the association of Metod with wyrð as he who is allotted to each.

.... • Nelle ic beorges weard  
oferfléon fôtes trem, • ac unc furður sceal  
weorðan æt wealle, • swá unc wyrð getéoð  
Metod manna gehwæs.

... • Not willing am I from the barrow's guardian  
to flee one foot-length, • but for us from that point on  
will happen at the wall • as for us wyrð ordains,  
(as ordains) The Allotted of each person.

### ***Metod Was Assimilated to Yahweh: Battle of Maldon***

If the Christians had sought to assimilate the concept of wyrð into their theology, then perhaps the Christians would have also depicted the Pagan wight of wyrð as an aspect of Yahweh.

The association of Metod with Yahweh during period of mixed religion is illustrated by a passage from *The Battle of Maldon*. No distinction is made between Metod and other aspects of Yahweh in that poem, as “Metod” and “Drihten” (the Lord) are used as synonyms for alliterative purposes. This example from lines 145b-147. These lines occur after an English earl has been mortally wounded in battle.

... · Se eorl was þe bliþra  
hlóh þá, móde man · sáede Metode þanc  
þæs dægweorces · þe him Drihten forgeaf.

... · The earl was the happier —  
laughed then, the courageous one — · (and) said “Thanks” to Metod  
(for) the days' work · which the Lord had set before him.

***Metod Was Assimilated to Yahweh: Maxims I***

The passage refers to two Pagan wights. It refers to the god Wóden as a genuine, acting deity and to the giant Metod as an aspect of or as identical with Yahweh.

For reference, let us begin with the passage. It is shown below first in Old English, then in transliteration. This is Mackie's (1895) edition, where the lines are numbered 132-137 in *Gnomic Verses*. (In Rodriguez edition, these are lines 62-67 of Part B in *Maxims I*; and in the *ASPR* — Krapp and Dobbie, 1936 — they are lines 132-137 of *Maxims I*).

Wóden worhte weos · wuldor alwalda  
 Rume roderas · þæt is rice god •  
 Sylf soðcýning • sawla nergend  
 Se us eal forgeaf • þæt we on lifgaþ  
 Ond eft æt þam ende • eallum wealdeð  
 Monna cynne • þæt is meotud sylfa:7

This passage is an admonition to switch from polytheistic religion using idols to Abrahamic religion. We know that this is a Christian (or Jewish) passage because the resemblance to the beginning of a psalm is close enough to imply derivation from that source.

My (prose) translation is divided into the same lines as the poetry for convenience in discussion.

Wóden wrought idols; (the) glorious Almighty,  
 spacious skies. That is the powerful god,  
 the Truth-King, souls' savior;  
 (He) who gave us all that occurs in the courses of our lives  
 and (who) at the end will rule over all  
 of mankind. That is Metod himself.

The first two lines contrast the power of Yahweh with the impotence of Pagan deities. In the first line, “Alwalda” is an adjective used as a noun, and can be transliterated as “Almighty”.

There is a Biblical basis for this. These two lines allude to lines 5 & 6 of Psalm 96: “For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens”. Another translation is “For the gods of the nations all do nothing, but the Lord made the heavens”. (Perhaps the original Hebrew has a pun on idol/idle.) Isaiah, Chapter 44, 9-20 conveys a similar message on the impotence of physical idols, but with a less obvious emphasis on the use of “idol” as a metaphor for Pagan deity. The idea in both these places in the Old Testament is that the national deities are merely chunks of wood, not real deities, and that the Jewish national deity is for everyone. (Barker et al, 1995; Catholic Church, 1987; Lockman, 1977.)

The next refers to what Yahweh can do for the esoteric practitioner of Biblical lore. Of course, the whole set of lines is saying that Yahweh is the only true deity and His religion is the only true religion -- the same as Psalm 96 and certain lines from Isaiah. But the present line is implying a reason for this claim. That line asserts that the real power of Yahweh is that He is the king of being true to oneself in a very deep sense, and in that way is the soul’s savior. Otherwise, one will not quite be fully in touch with one’s own soul. You might say that the supersoul is a part of each of us, and the Abrahamic deity is the only efficacious guide for finding it.

The next line refers to Yahweh as the Creator of all. Note that Metod is not mentioned in the context.

The last two lines carry double meaning. (1) Just as Yahweh was the beginning of all Creation, at the end of Mankind’s physical life He will also rule all people on Judgment Day. (2) Eventually all the world’s people will turn to Yahweh, regardless of any considerations of a possible Judgment Day.

The last verse says that Yahweh is our destiny, the Allotted One himself. Grammatically, the justification for translating “meotud sylfa” as “Metod

himself” is that the genitive “sylfa” is an idiom. For example, we can see in Riddle 84 the half-line “ne ic sylfa huld”. This line makes sense in context as “Not (am) I myself loud” (“I am quiet”) (Mackie, 1978: 226-227). Likewise, in King Alfred’s interpretation of *The Consolations of Philosophy* (Mitchell and Robinson, 1993: poetic section, line 33), we find the expression “cyning sylfa”, which only makes sense in context as “the king himself”.

Thus the mention of Metod conveys two genuinely Abrahamic-religion messages. (1) The reference to Metod emphasizes the inevitability that Mankind is going to return to Yahweh’s rule. Also, (2) it brings consideration to the point beyond which no further argument nor justification is required. This is because Metod stands for that which is inherently unexplained.

And we know that we are interpreting the reference to Metod correctly because we are quite familiar with the (Biblical) theology that the author is trying to communicate.

### ***The Unconscious Actor***

With the norms, evidence lack of awareness includes their being typed as giants. For example, in the myths the norms impart no information and never offer shrewd analyses to other wights. Also, the high deities never ask norms for any favors, and this implies that any such request would fall upon deaf ears — or an uncomprehending mind.

Likewise Metod is not one to ask for assistance or advice. For example, *The Wanderer* pointedly gives us a clue in its first couple of lines, where we see a verb that could imply praying for mercy or could imply passively experiencing mercy in the first line. If you know that Metod is an unconscious being, then the ambiguity is resolved in the next verse; otherwise you have to complete at least the second whole line.

Also, we have evidence from literature of syncretic Christianity. In that literature, Metod is an aspect of Yahweh who is often mentioned in connection with desperate or disastrous situations. In such situations, adherents of Biblical

religions often pray to Yahweh or one of His saints for assistance, salvation, or courage. No one ever prays to the Metod aspect of Yahweh for anything, not even for the courage to face wyrd with dignity.

In considering whether the wights of wyrd have intelligence, we must be aware of what Metod does and how this is handled — without justification. He is the origin of the most exciting, thrilling, and growth-potential things that occur, but also the origin of horrible disasters. To put it colloquially, how smart can he be if he brings us the excessive devastation of war that *The Wanderer* reminds us of? It would be circular reasoning to say that Metod is unconscious just because I think that war is stupid. However, the literature that mentions Metod in connection with wyrd (but without mentioning Yahweh) does not justify anything he brings us. This holds whether it is the light of day (as in strophe 24 of the *Old English Rune Poem*) or the drifter's personal woes in *The Wanderer*. Things are otherwise where Metod is clearly an aspect of Yahweh, as in lines 103-109 of *The Seafarer* (Mitchell and Robinson, 1994), where workings of Metod/Yahweh are character builders. The notion that hardship is here to build our character is standard Biblical theodicy. The Teutonic Pagan attitude is that some hardships (and advantage) merely exist, and that any eufunction or dysfunction they serve may be incidental, not inherent. (That is why Teutonic Paganism does not need a theodicy.)

## Conclusions Regarding Wights of Wyrd

There are wights of wyrd in Teutonic religion. These beings show both commonalities and contrasts between the Norse and English branches of Teutonic Pagan family.

The wights of wyrd symbolize the obscure or mindless origin of wyrd. In the surviving literature from early medieval times, no one prays to them, no one sacrifices to them, no one consults them, they never give useful guidance. They never show any sign of analysis. They never show any concern for nor anger at anyone, nor do they attempt to be fair. They never respond to anything. They never learn.

In the Scandinavian branch, one of the norns fits the bill. Her name is Urðr, and she probably produces an effect called urðr, which is a cognate of wyrð and which shares most of its meanings with wyrð. She has two sisters who are less important, and together they produce ørlög, a determining primal layer in the course of an individual human's life.

In English Paganism, the wight of wyrð is Metod. However, English Paganism was less fatalistic than was the Scandinavian branch of the family. Therefore, Metod does not have partners and wyrð is not fitted into a primal layer of events. In Scandinavia, each person was allotted norns at birth, but in England each person was allotted a facet of Metod.

Wyrð has several meanings, such as “death,” “pleasure,” or “phenomenon,” but one of them is philosophically much more interesting than the others. It is in that more philosophically interesting sense that the concept is investigated here.

### **Conclusions Regarding Wyrð**

It is not always useful to translate “wyrð”, because there is no exact equivalent in Modern English. But the best one-word translation of wyrð is “circumstance” or “realities”, as in the phrase “we must attend to realities”. Wyrð is a firm structure of opportunities and constraints within which we must choose how to act (or not to act). Wyrð is always something that has already occurred. It has no relevance to questions of justice and is beyond conscious influence. Wyrð does not include that which can be adequately accounted for on empirical or moral grounds. Thus, wyrð does not always refer to numinous etiology. Instead, the concept points our attention away from etiology and toward our own adaptive actions or strength of character. Wyrð is not an all-inclusive web and is not necessarily weird. It is not

a wight, despite a phrase like “wyrd ordains”, which is a metaphor like “as chance would have it”. Pagan religious philosophers are correct who opine that one can reduce the effect of wyrd on one’s life by increasing one’s degree of conscious control. However, no one can eliminate wyrd. The wyrd one has at any time may prevent changes or cause them, but that wyrd itself is almost certain to change as long as one lives.

Wyrd is neither inherently pleasant nor unpleasant. However, the concept is useful in making healthy adjustments to reality. (As such it has a proper place in Teutonic Pagan religion.) Since we are more likely to need counseling or written wisdom when faced with circumstances we regard as on balance unpleasant, the concept is most often mentioned in connection with disadvantage, death, or disaster.

“Wyrd” is also used in the plural where we would use the plural of “circumstance”, to indicate the sum of factors beyond conscious control that impinge in a highly influential way. The plural of wyrd is also used because each person or thing has its own wyrd.

There are mythical beings that symbolize the origin of this type of circumstance. The English wight of wyrd is Metod. He is neither friendly nor unfriendly, but can be quite beneficial or harmful. He is not a conscious being. No one ever prays to him, sacrifices to him, or celebrates him, but on balance human life thrives on our planet so he has to be good for us. The Norse wight of wyrd is Urðr, one of the norns.

The English and Scandinavian branches of Germanic Polytheism differ in regard to wyrd. The Scandinavian system is more sophisticated but takes a slightly more deterministic outlook than does the English system.

There are probably some subtle differences or similarities in concepts of urðr and wyrd that are not currently perceptible due to loss of literature.

## **Appendix F: Non-Empirical Mysteries, Mysticism, and Uses of the *OERP*<sup>38</sup>**

### ***A Topic That Should Not Be Unusual***

In the study of runes, we are not just talking about an alphabet nor wisdom poetry. Instead, we are contemplating how at least some of the ancient Teutonic peoples handled something shared by all religions.

This chapter is also based on the author's personal experience, on conversations with practitioners of esoteric religion, and on several documentary sources. (See also Ayer, 1946; Barks et al, 2004; Bhaktivedanta, 1984; Burt, 1955; Cleary, 1992; Eliade, 1959; Geertz, 1966; Mauss, Otto, 1950; Stanfield, 1995; Thorsson, 1982; Wu, 1990.)

There is very little said about religious mystery in runic studies. Many academics seem to be completely naive regarding religious mysteries. This cannot simply be an illusion produced by professional pressures to be objective. Most academics and most people in Teutonic religious reconstruction appear not to consider that religious mystery is related to runic studies, despite sometimes writing or saying that "rune" can mean "mystery".

Religious mystery is identified with mysticism.

Some dictionaries define mysticism more or less as theory and/or practice based on the idea that one can directly attain ineffable intuitive knowledge or spiritual power through subjective experience. I am going to "eff" about this topic for a few pages, and others have written whole books on the subject. Hence, whatever you do and whatever you get, it is not strictly ineffable.

Instead, I am going to define religious mystery in the next two sections of this appendix. This definition is consistent with the ways progressive mysticism is

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<sup>38</sup> A previous edition of this essay was published in *The Rune* (Stanfield, 1995).

done in various contexts: Buddhist, transcendental meditation, and so on. And if you use “mysticism” as it is defined here, you use will be consistent with generally accepted practice.

Then I will show examples of using the *OERP* to experience this kind of mystery. This seems more efficient than trying to talk about the topic sufficiently.

Just as “mysticism” is difficult to describe succinctly, the topic is not completely effable.

### ***Religious and Empirical Mysteries***

The explanation is clearest if the focal type of mystery is contrasted with a more familiar kind.

Religious mysteries have two basic characteristics that differentiate them from secular (or empirical) mysteries. (1) religious mysteries are experienced emotionally at least as much as they are known intellectually. (2) Religious mysteries are permanently enduring.

We come to know of the two type of mysteries in different ways. Empirical mysteries can well understood and perceived by spoken language, mathematical formulas, manual handling, and other right-brain kinds of working. Intuition and inspiration are what happens.

Religious mysteries are more difficult to describe objectively, and intuition and emotion seem to be the main ways of knowing. We call religious mysteries “mysteries” because they are complex and not physically perceptible.

## *Epistemology of Religious Mysteries*

We know of religious mysteries both emotionally and intellectually, but they are really more emotional intuitive than intellectual. This is why religious mysteries are often addressed in art or labyrinths as opposed to expository prose or tables of data.

Each of us may have a slightly different understanding of such mysteries because none of us will see the whole at one time.

Also, we cannot combine our perceptions fully, although language is helpful and religious mysteries seem objective when mystics talk to each other about them. That is because we give similar, if somewhat vague, descriptions of our experiences.

Religious mysteries are most accessible to us in meditative states. Often one is only attuned to religious mystery for a small part of the time that one is in meditation. At exceptional times, one can concentrate on a religious mystery for hours but usually not with a constant level of intensity.

This is not like factory assembly work. Sometimes one can become aware of religious mystery without making any special effort. Also, a long period of frequent meditations or formal studies can occur with only infrequent and minor insights resulting, and then an inspiration occurs on awakening of a morning or while driving on a long highway. Sometimes a person can meditate on what seem slightly productive or unproductive occasions over several months, but then realize that a subtle change occurred in one's perception of mundane reality.

Not everyone can knowingly perceive religious mysteries. Those who cannot perceive religious mysteries may be intelligent, honest, hard-working, and friendly. They are not necessarily bad people. However, they often think the others are just pretending or deluded.

Often, people grow into the ability to perceive religious mysteries. Personally, I think back to when I was in my twenties and an atheistic graduate student in a social science. I thought of all hidden realities as things to be investigated, explained, and published out of their misery. I was irritated by the Catholics' mention in their public rituals of mysteries that defied verbal explanation. How naive I was!

You can feel the emotional difference between the two types of mysteries. Empirical mysteries can give one a certain appealing unease (curiosity) to the extent that one likes to have matters understood. But religious mysteries have a weird and uncomfortable or thrilling and awesome aspect. (Awe is a mixture of admiration, love, and horror<sup>39</sup>.) Everyone who experiences religious mysteries feels both the attraction and repulsion, but usually one emotional reaction is a lot stronger than the other. Therefore, religious mysteries beckon to some and frighten others away.

### *Complementarity of Mystical and Mundane*

The progressive mystic usually slips into a frame of mind using ritual. This can be a quiet, solitary meditation; a small group's ritual drama; a mass ceremony; or some other kind. These rituals are commonly based on religious myth or some relatively vague but religious ideas about comogeny, but secular rituals can also be done.

Afterward, he or she slips back into regular life perceiving things differently. Physically, everything looks the same. Socially and psychologically, all the arrangements are still there. But the context that gives phenomena meaning is different in view of memories of the mystical experience.

Neither the mystical nor the mundane is entire to itself. The pair completes the picture.

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<sup>39</sup> “Awesome” is misused so often that we will eventually have no word for this quality of experience.

## *One Source, Two Kinds of Mystery*

A phenomenon can present both empirical and religious mysteries. We can feel these mysteries even if we find the phenomena pretty understandable empirically, and even if we think we are not religious.

An example might help. One does not need to be a consciously religious person to look at a clear sky on a moonless night and find feelings of joy and wonder. It is not that we lack astronomical knowledge and are overcome with superstitious fear. Quite the contrary, for astronomical knowledge brings some of us more in touch with the emotional experience. It is all the more awesome to realize that we are not looking at a gigantic roof but instead that we are staring billions of miles into space and time. (Some of those twinkling objects have moved afar since their light started our way.) One reason some people engage in full-time empirical study of astronomical phenomena is the passion that drives their fascination. Although many seem numb to the biggest of shows, for others the magic is in the emotion they feel. The emotion cannot be fully expressed in words; it must be experienced to be known.

Consider a couple more examples. Although we know a lot about the mechanics of human speech or childbirth, these phenomena offer us feelings that we might describe as magical (in addition to the empirical facts).

The stanzas of the *OERP* present both types of mystery.

On the one hand, poetic discourse is not plainly-stated as normal discourse. Circumlocutions, odd turns of phrase, metaphors, and allusions create some minor sense of mystery as the listener or reader tries to figure out what the poet, speaker, or singer is trying to say.

So one experiences something other than the empirical facts and wonders of human behavior and the human psyche that the student is led to contemplate. Supplementary emotions and notions are amplified by a combination of

rhythms, alliteration, the lyrical turns of phrase, and nonverbal intuitions that arise as one “reads between the line” (figures out implied messages from explicit clues).

The *OERP* is one of many instances where an artist uses empirical mystery to stimulate a mood conducive to looking for non-empirical mystery.

### *Using Stanzas of the OERP*

In the first edition of this appendix, I went on about values, character, intellectual study, and other topics. Everything I did to try to shorten that discussion in the intervening years seemed to make it more verbose.

So let us get directly to uses of the strophes.

The stanzas can be used singly or in combinations as bases of discussions of four to five people, talking about what the implications of the poetry mean to them. The stanzas can be used as bases of sermons. But those uses are not mystical.

Following are examples of the use of stanzas of this poem in group or solitary meditations.

Note how the meditations are set up. The introductory material -- or just the title of the meditation -- sets a mood to lead people in understanding the stanzas on their own without having read this book. The meditators read or recite the poetry in each exercise in a cycle until they are satisfied or until it is time to give up. (In practice, I find one to three passes through the material is sufficient.)

The first example reveals a secret. Progressive mysticism, the use of mystical methods to maintain or accelerate one’s maturation or enlightenment, does not require religion.

Although the first example gives a general idea of how ancient persons might have used the poem, that particular exercise shows how relevant the work is to people who know a lot more about evolution than the English did in 950 CE.

### ***Generations' Meditation***

One's life dies out, but some deposit is left. This implies that if we listen to the supersoul within and between us all, we will leave the best legacy we can.

A mystery it is that • mankind is of units but  
     Needing nexus each to be whole.  
 Deposited soil • anchors the seedlings –  
     Gives context that can't be denied.  
 Genetics and culture • new folks have their roots in;  
     the future is tied to times past.  
 From species before • and folks we resemble  
     To species unknown, links will last.  
 So roots are our richness. • We rise 'cause they help us.  
     And the future is founded on us.

Grave is egregious to ev'ry earl;  
 for surely then does the flesh begin as corpse to cool,  
 and the pallid bod must choose the soil as bedmate.  
 Products will perish then.  
 Pleasures depart then.  
 Pacts are abandoned then.

On outside the yew is an unsmooth tree.  
 But hardy it is, secure in the soil,  
 and sustainer of flame in the hearth.  
 By root-work upheld, it's happy at home.

The poplar is pome-less.

Produces it though its sprouts without seedlings.  
 Lovely its branches; tow'ring its top is.  
 Its trimming is fair with leaves it has grown.  
 The heavens it touches!

Cash does comfort any creature that's human.  
 But each person must plentifully give it  
 If wanting a judges' judgment to chance.

### ***Meditation on Religion***

(It is not necessary to set this up other than by announcing the topic or title of the exercise.)

Sea is by people considered extensive  
 when boldly they venture in vessels unstable,  
 and severely scary are the swells of the water,  
 and the boat they rely on -- is out of control!

To all living the lamp is plain from its fire,  
 so pale and shining.  
 Yet it burns most oft where noble ones  
 are inside resting.

The tree ash is so very tall  
 and beloved by folks so much!  
 On its base does it firmly stand,  
 its station does rightly hold,  
 though it faces a fight against  
 benighted ones many.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

This appendix has gone on for a few pages discussing mysticism, and religious mystery, without saying anything about magic, divination, nor soul travel. Those topics are outside the scope of the present study. Here, we are examining the *OERP* as wisdom poetry and as a discussion of and tool for progressive mysticism.

Also, the discussion in this appendix has not said much about religion per se. The poem is a discussion of religion, or at least one specific religion, at the metaphorical and derived-stanza levels. So religion is definitely within the scope of this book.

But progressive mysticism per se can occur in different formats in different religions or outside of any system that meets the definition of religion I set out in the addendum to Chapter 20. At least, this is a logical possibility. (Actually, all mystics the authors knows of are in some kind of religion.)

## Appendix G: The Translations

This appendix has two sections: one for the “perfect” translations into the ancient poetic structures, and one for translations into modernized meter.

The purpose of the B translations is to present a complete a rendering of the original in Modern English. This includes preserving not just the words of the Old English, but also the alliteration and rhythm. Partly because these attempts tended to succeed, it is useful to have a collection of such translations in one place. Where an attempt at a “perfect” translation has fallen significantly short of the mark, as in stanza 20 for example, this is noted in the corresponding chapter. In any case, the “perfect” translations are close enough to be interesting in themselves.

For liturgical or meditational use by English-speaking persons, however, the modernized meter translations might be preferable art. They are attempts to express the original intended verbal and nonverbal communication in ways that will seem clearer in Twenty-First Century cultures.

### *Translations B*

#### *(1)*

Cash does comfort • a creature that’s human.  
 Must each person though • plentifully give it  
 If one does want a judges’ • judgment to chance.

#### *(2)*

Elk is awless • and ultra-antlered.  
 Too-much tough, that beast • tussles with antlers.  
 Famous fen-dweller, • that’s a feisty one!

**(3)**

Prickle plenty sharp • princes, to each is;  
taking is torture. • Total fierce the pain for  
each individual • who'll one not release.

**(4)**

Os is end-cause of • ev'ry speaking,  
Sapience' shore-up, • and sage-person's comfort;  
To barons each one, • blessing and high hope.

**(5)**

When sheltered, a-riding is • for any swordsman  
soft, but quite stressful • for one sitting up high on  
mount so very mighty • over miles many.

**(6)**

Lamp is by sentient ones • known as flaming,  
bright and blond-pale. • Burns most often  
where aristocrats are • inside resting.

**(7)**

Gifting is humans' • praise and garnish,  
Support and approval. • Brings poorlings homeless  
help and honor • for those who would lack.

**(8)**

Glee is gainéd • when one's griefs are small  
(both sores and sorrows) • and one has for oneself  
bounty, revels • and a town's good reserves.

**(9)**

Hail's the whitest granule. • Whirled 'tis in heavenly vapors;  
wafted by windy storming. • Turneth it to water thereafter.

**(10)**

Hardship disheartens greatly. • Oft though becomes, to humans' offspring  
some helping and some healing anyhow • -- if disheart'ning they heed in time.

**(11)**

Ice is ultracold, • and overly slipp'ry.  
Glistens, glass-lusters • — gemstones resembles.  
Floor frosted all-o'er • fair the view seemeth!

**(12)**

To humans year-new brings hope • that Yaweh allows  
— Sacred sky-above's sov'reign — • soil to give up  
choicest crops for • chieftains and poor folks.

**(13)**

Yew is outside • unsmooth of bark;  
strong, soil-secure, • flame's sustainer.  
Root-work upholds the tree, • happy in homeland.

**(14)**

Peorð is always • play and laughter  
for proud amici • where mercs are sitting  
In beer tavern • blithely together.

**(15)**

Elx-sedge earth has • oftest in marshland,  
 waxing in water. • Wounds it grimly,  
 bloody burneth • ev'ry last body  
 who'd on it any • on-holding try.

**(16)**

Sail, to seafarers, • is ceaseless hoping,  
 while it they ferry • over fishes' bath,  
 'til their brine-stallion • brings them to shoreline

**(17)**

Tír's a token-sign • holdeth troth so well  
 with ones who're noble. • Always progressing on  
 over nimbuses of night-times • -- never swindles.

**(18)**

Poplar is pome-less. • It supports nonetheless  
 sproutings without seedlings. • On its spans 'tis lovely.  
 Soars its summit, • spruced up lovely  
 — with waxing fol'age. • Welkin it touches!

**(19)**

Ride is for rulers • aristocrats' joy;  
 horse standing proud • while him spearmen surround,  
 moneyed ones mounted • commune by speaking;  
 for the uneasy • always comfort.

**(20)**

Man when in mirth is • to mates so dear!  
Still, must every last one • all abandon,  
for the Lord decided • -- law from Yahweh --  
that humble flesh • to earth be given.

**(21)**

Water to people • seems very wide  
if they must go boldly • on boats unsteady,  
and them sea surges • strongly frighten,  
and the sea-stallion • steering ignoreth.

**(22)**

Ing was firstly • in East Denmark  
observed by soldiers • 'til he later east  
on his way did go, • wain after came.  
Thus the hardened ones • then the hero calléd.

**(23)**

Home-land is very dear • to each human's heart  
if they might by right there • also right fairly  
at homestead have use of • harvest mundanely.

**(24)**

Day by the Lord is sent, • dear to mankind!  
Metod's marvelous light, • mirth and high hope  
for poor and affluent; • for all to profit!

**(25)**

Oak is on Earth for • anthros' offspring.  
 Food-beasts' fodder • frequently fareth  
 over sea-divers' bath • surges testing  
 whether oak keepeth • hon'rably faithful.

**(26)**

Ash tree is ultra tall; • loved by anthros.  
 strongly based it is, • station rightly holds,  
 though assaulted by • simpletons many.

**(27)**

Yr is athelings' • and earls' ev'ry one  
 winning worth-mark. • It's on war-horse lovely,  
 wayfare-stress enduring, • war-gear that is fine!

**(28)**

Beaver's brook-fish like, • but habitually eateth  
 fodder in forest. • Has a fair kind of home,  
 wrapped 'round by water • where it relishes living.

**(29)**

Death is dreadful • to ev'ry duke-man,  
 for then immutably • meat beginneth  
 (as the soma must chilleth) • soil to choose as  
 pale one's bed-partner. • Products will rot then.  
 Pleasures depart then. • Promises fail then.

### *Modernized-Meter Translations*

The purpose of the modernized translations is twofold. First, the contrast between the traditional and modernized translations helps us be more fully aware of the non-verbal communication built into the original. But secondly, the modernized translations provide material that might well be more convenient to use in by today's speakers of English in study, liturgy, and/or literary artistic appreciation.

In some chapters, the modernized- meter translation is a more complete expression of the original intent for persons in contemporary cultures than is Translation B. For some literary or liturgical purposes, the choice is between the modernized translation and the original and the choice depends on one's comfort with Old English.

The modernized translations are more loosely-structured than are the traditional versions. Commonly, the modernized translations vary considerably from strict blank verse, with many lines having too many or too few feet for strict iambic pentameter. Some lines are quite trochaic or dactylic instead of iambic. Also, the alliteration frequently departs from the traditional pattern, with more lines having double alliteration or no alliteration than in the traditional translations.

But overall, the modernized translations also tend to convey the verbal and non-verbal content of the original in each stanza. In many cases, the modernized translations communicate the original intent better than the traditionally-structured renditions, because they communicate to modern audiences in modern ways. They also often preserve the original's overlay patterns of word sense, alliteration, and even rhythm. This is partly because of frequent use of Types B and A (iambic and trochaic) rhythms in the original. It is also partly because English has retained some fundamental characteristics of Old English despite additions of acronyms and the importation of many Latin, Greek, Japanese, French, Spanish and other foreign-source words.

**(1)**

Cash does comfort any creature that's human.  
But each person must plentifully give it  
If wanting a judges' judgment to chance.

**(2)**

Resolute is the moose and heavily horned.  
A beast very fierce, it fights with those horns.  
That famous moor-dweller's a spirited wight!

**(3)**

Very sharp is a thorn for the ones who are noble,  
evil to the grasp.  
And extreme is its fierceness for any person  
sticking with it.

**(4)**

Os is the source of all our speech,  
and wisdom's pillar, and counselors' comfort,  
and to all patricians -- contentment and hope.

**(5)**

A ride indoors is for any hero soft.  
But strenuous it is when you're sitting high  
on a hard-muscled steed on a route that's long.

**(6)**

To all living the lamp is plain from its fire,  
so pale and shining.  
Yet it burns most oft where noble ones  
are inside resting.

**(7)**

Gifting for people is praise and adornment;  
it is goods and honor.  
But it's every outcast's respect and mercy,  
which are otherwise lacking.

**(8)**

Of joy one partakes who knows little of woes,  
(has no sore nor no sorrow), and who on their own  
possesses some wealth and can party --  
and moreover can access a town's strong reserves.

**(9)**

Hail's the whitest of grains.  
Whirled 'tis in heavens clouds, tumbled by storming winds.  
But then into water it turns.

**(10)**

Hardship can be depressing.  
But it often becomes to the sons of men a helping and a healing  
-- if they heed the disheartening in time.

**(11)**

Ice is very cold and slippery in excess.  
But it glistens and gleams just like precious gems,  
and frost-covered ground a fair scene makes!

**(12)**

The turning of the year brings mankind hope that God --  
the holy king of heaven -- lets soil bring forth  
its brightest blessings for barons and for peasants.

**(13)**

On outside the yew is an unsmooth tree.  
But hardy it is, secure in the soil,  
and sustainer of flame in the hearth.  
By root-work upheld, it's happy at home.

**(14)**

Enjoying of peorth is always laughter and play  
for contented comrades where gentlemen sit  
at tables in beer-halls, blithely together.

**(15)**

Has elx-sedge its home usually in marshland,  
where it waxes in water. Grimly it wounds,  
makes pain and blood, whenever a person  
on this plant attempts to make a grab.

**(16)**

A sail is to seamen ceaselessly hope,  
while they bring it along on their briny path,  
until by their boat they're brought to land.

**(17)**

Tir's a token that keeps trust well  
with ones who're noble. Always it is on course  
over many nights' darknesses -- never deceiving us.

**(18)**

The poplar is pome-less.  
Produces it though its sprouts without seedlings.  
Lovely its branches; tow'ring its top is.  
Its trimming is fair with leaves it has grown.

The heavens it touches!

**(19)**

For nobles a ride brings aristocrats' joy.  
The steed standing proudly while soldiers surround --  
wealthy warriors mounted, words exchanging.  
And to restless ones, the horse is a comfort.

**(20)**

A cheerful person (to comrades) is dear.  
But each of us must --  
the others depart, for The Lord has determined  
(He Himself has chosen)  
that lowly flesh --  
to dirt be given.

**(21)**

Sea is by people considered extensive  
when boldly they venture in vessels unstable,  
and severely scary are the swells of the water,  
and the boat they rely on -- is out of control!

**(22)**

Ing was first among the Danes by warriors seen.  
But later on he eastward went,  
and a wagon followed on.  
Accordingly brave soldiers -- strong, austere, and stern --  
that hero they did call.

**(23)**

Homeland by humans is heartily loved,  
if there they by right and rightly may  
enjoy in their homes in the good things of life  
as a frequent occurrence and matter of custom.

**(24)**

Day is here sent by the Lord,  
dearly beloved of mankind!  
Metod gives marvelous light,  
bringing delight and good hope  
to rich and to poor folks alike.  
Of value it is to us all.

**(25)**

Oak is on earth for the children of men.  
Food 'tis for livestock, and often it fares  
forth on the bath of the sea-diving birds.  
There where the swells of the ocean can test,  
can see if the oak remains nobly in troth.

**(26)**

The tree ash is so very tall  
and beloved by folks so much!  
On its base does it firmly stand,  
its station does rightly hold,  
though it faces a fight against  
benighted ones many.

**(27)**

For a thane or a baron, a yr's always a joy  
and badge of prestige to have.  
Looking good on a horse but still tough on the road,  
such fine gear for war it is!

**(28)**

The beaver is like a fresh-water fish,  
but food it takes on land.  
A lair it does have, too, a goodly home ground,  
a place with water all 'round.  
And there does it happily live.

**(29)**

Grave is egregious to ev'ry earl;  
for surely then does the flesh begin as corpse to cool,  
and the pallid bod must choose the soil as bedmate.  
Products will perish then.  
Pleasures depart then.  
Pacts are abandoned then.

## Appendix H: Anglo-Saxon Prosody

To understand poetry, it helps to know how it is made. As Hollander puts it: As this author tells us, “an adequate comprehension of the principles of Old Germanic verse technique is essential for the correct reading and understanding -- nay, for entering at all into the spirit of Old Germanic poetry.”

You might even enjoy writing poetry of your own in the traditional English style.

The traditional poetry of the English prior to the Norman conquest has a lot in common with traditional poetry in other Germanic languages. English poetry of this period was not as complicated and varied as later Icelandic poetry, but is basic to the advanced poetry of the Norse peoples. Hence, some (limited) use is made of a manual on Norse poetry later in this appendix.

A few rules are described here. Ancient English poetry is based on a half-line structure. Traditional Germanic poetry was alliterative. The ancient English followed certain rules of rhythm. In a given line, one word in the second half of the line is more important than the others. (Any rhyming in pre-Medieval Germanic poetry was generally accidental.)

Scholars who translate Germanic languages have to know these rules to distinguish poetry from prose, because the language itself is fairly poetic. But they also need to know these rules to redact medieval literature into formats we can recognize. When writing out poetry on vellum or parchment, writers of the ancient language did not start each whole “line” on a new line. They wrote out whole stanzas or whole poems in continuous streams, often with punctuation only to show where a stanza ended. The *Old English Rune Poem* was unusual in that it had a lot of clues to where parts of the poem began and ended. The *OERP* was written in separate stanzas with punctuation to separate most half lines. It also had a drop-capital (a rune) at the start of a new paragraph to show where each stanza began, and each stanza had a special end-of-stanza mark. This is shown in Appendix A.

In addition to the rules discussed in this appendix, most high-grade poetry also has other features found commonly in poetry. Phraseology is fancy (“lyrical”) not plain-speaking, and words are sometimes put out of their normal grammatical order to shift emphasis to the “misplaced” words, to get a desired rhythm, or to sound romantic. Metaphor and simile are more common than in prose. Verbal formulations are often quite compact, with notions implied and requiring some thought to figure out what the poet is really trying to say.

The general rule is that each line is divided into two verses, with two heavy beats in each verse. Scholars call these the “a” and “b” verses or the “on” and “off” verses. So, if a stanza has 2 lines, it would have 6 verses: 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b, etc. A poem like *Beowulf* does not have stanzas, so its lines are numbered consecutively, and if someone refers to line 1998b, this is a precise location.

## The Half-Line Structure

Consider the fourth stanza of the *OERP*.

Os is end-cause of • ev’ry speaking,  
 Sapiencie’ prop-up, • and sage-person’s comfort;  
 To barons each one, • blessing and mettle.

Each of these half-lines contains two heavy beats. In some situations, the English counted an intermediate beat as “heavy” and sometimes as a light beat.

In the middle of every line, you will usually see a raised dot “•”. This is called a caesura, and it marks a brief pause (which is also called a caesura). If you read the lines in Old English, even if you read haltingly because you are checking a dictionary or grammatical reference, it is clear that there is not always any such pause. However, philologists and other usually put in the raise dot on every line anyway, giving all the lines a uniform appearance and showing where each line is divided into two verses.

Although there is supposed to be a pause between the “a” verse and the “b” verses, there is not supposed to be one between the “b” verse of one line and the start of the next line.

This translation of the tenth stanza illustrates how there can be more continuity between lines than between verses in the same line.

Hardship disheartens greatly. • Oft becomes though, to humans’ offspring  
some helping and some healing anyhow • -- if disheart’ning they heed in time.

Stanza 6 gives us another example of this technique, which poets call enjambment.

Lamp by living ones is • learnt of by flame,  
bright and blond-pale. • Burns most often  
where upper-class are • inside resting.

In some instances -- and this is the case in the third line of the three-line stanzas of the *Old English Rune Poem* -- the line benefits from an artificial pause for a dramatic effect. That is, an artificial pause is placed between one phrase and another to draw more attention to the second phrase. You can try this out for yourself in the stanza shown below. Read the whole stanza “Rad” as you would normally speak it, then read it again. On the second reading, pause briefly between “mighty” and “over” and slightly lower your voice and slow your pace as you read the last half-line.

Sallying sheltered for • swordsman any is

Soft, yet stressful • for one who sits astride tall  
 Mount so mighty • over miles-long ways.

Alliteration is a common feature of all Germanic poetry. So the rules described below are useful background for any study of Germanic poetry. In general, ancient English poetry -- including the *OERP* -- is characterized by pretty close adherence to the rules of alliteration.

## Rules of Alliteration

### Basic Alliteration

In each line, the three syllables with the most stress should alliterate. In each line, the first verse should have two alliterating syllables and the second should have one. Usually, all the alliterating syllables are in different words. but that is not required.

For example, consider this line from the first verse of the *Old English Rune Poem*:

Cash does comfort • any creature that's human.

The alliterating syllables are: cash, com(fort), and crea(ture).

Often, lines of Old English poetry violate the most basic alliteration rule by having only two alliterating stressed syllables. Once in awhile, you will see a line with four.

## Vowel Alliteration

In Old English, all vowels are regarded as if they alliterated. Consider the fourth stanza of the *OERP*, which starts with this line:

Os is end-cause of • ev’ry speaking,

This line follows the alliteration rules because “Os”, “end-cause”, and “Ev’ry” are accepted as alliterating, even though the “o” is not the same letter as the “e’s”.

## Spelling Versus Sonic Alliteration

Another rule is that alliteration depends on spelling rather than sound. This is interesting in that it implies that the listeners (poetry is a performing art) knew how to spell the words. But pre-medieval literacy rates are a topic for another book. For now, consider the twelfth stanza:

Year-new brings humans hope • that Yahweh suffers  
— Sacred sky-above’s sov’rein — • soil to give up  
choicest crops for • chieftains and poor folks.

In the original, the first line has alliteration on “g” instead of “y”. In the original first “g” is pronounced like a “y” and the others are pronounced more like the “g” in “good”:

Ġér byþ gumena hiht • ðon god læteþ

When translating Old English poetry into Modern English, the present author has found it expedient to rely on sonic instead of spelling alliteration. Sonic alliteration tends to sound better to modern audiences, and it has been easier to achieve sufficient alliteration in the modern language with sonic than with

spelling alliteration. For example, in my translation of the first line in the twelfth stanza, I achieve sonic alliteration if the speaker pronounces “humans” with a silent “h” (as some do).

Let us consider the issue of diphthongs. A diphthong is a combination of two letters that count as one letter for making sounds. For example, in Modern English, “th” is a diphthong, for it indicates just one sound. If a combination of consonants indicates two sounds, it is not really a diphthong. Consonantal diphthongs count as consonants -- as if they were just one letter for alliteration. Thus, “thus” alliterates with “then” but not with “time”.

When considering the last line of the twelfth stanza, one might think that “choicest” and “crops” alliterate (see above). However, in Modern English “ch” is a diphthong -- two letters which combined denote one sound. So the third line in that translation is defective regarding alliteration. (The defect is only in the translation; the original has three “b” words alliterating.)

In the ancient, traditional poetry, combinations that express both consonantal sounds do not count as diphthongs. For example, in the eleventh strophe, “glisnaþ” (glistens) and “glæs” (glass) alliterate with “gimnum” (gems). In Modern English, this means that “ship” would only alliterate with a word like “shore”, but “special” could alliterate with “some”.

The Old English “sc” (same sound as Modern English “sh”) is a diphthong. Our modern English “ch” (as in child) is represented by one letter in Old English manuscripts, “c”. In this book, I try to consistently represent that sound in Old English as “ċ”.

## **Interior-Syllable Alliteration**

Words alliterate on their most-stressed syllables, not necessarily on the first syllable in the word. People sometimes forget this when trying to compose or translate. Consider the second line of the seventh stanza of the focal poem.

...Support and approval. • Brings poorlings homeless...

In the line above, the alliterating letter is “p”, which is in the second syllable in “support” and in “approval”.

On the other hand, the following line has a nice lyrical quality but “above” and “below” do not alliterate on their “b’s”, for the stressed syllable in “below” starts with an “l”.

The sun above and the earth below.

In traditional Old English poetry the half-line structure and alliteration are coordinated with rhythm.

## Half-Line Rhythms

For a native speaker of Old English, the main clue that he or she was listening to poetry and not to prose was rhythm. If a passage did not conform to the traditional rules of rhythm, it would sound like prose instead of poetry.

To hear the rhythm in poetry, just read the lines as you would speak them naturally. Rhythm is mainly a matter of stressed and unstressed beats, or of relatively loud and soft sounds. It is the pattern of relatively loud and soft sounds that we recognize as rhythm in drum music, and the same holds in spoken poetry.

Compare these two lines, one in flat prose and two that each has more rhythm than the one above (specifically, iambic pentameter, the most common Modern English rhythm).

They have balls and bats.  
 They have both balls and bats.  
 And they have both balls and bats.

## Where Stress Falls

The stress in both Modern and Old English falls mainly on nouns, adverbs, and adjectives. Usually, unstressed syllables occur in verbs, conjunctions, and prepositions. However, we artificially sometimes stress sounds not normally stressed to indicate emphasis. Sometimes, a word in poetry (or prose) is moved out of its grammatically normal position to give it more emphasis. For example, compare the sound of “increasing” in the following.

Rapidly increasing pressure.  
 Rapidly pressure increasing.

## The Types of Verse Rhythms

The traditional rhythm was structured by the half-line, or verse. This knowledge was lost for several hundred years, until Eduard Sievers discovered in 1893 that there are just 6 basic half-line rhythms used in Old English poetry.

The traditional types of half-line are shown below. The rhythm patterns are called: A, B, C, D1, D2, and E. The following notation is used. A stressed syllable is indicated by a forward slash (/). A weakly or secondarily stressed syllable is indicated by a backward slash (\). An unstressed syllable is indicated by a “x”. Except as noted below in Type D verses, a secondary stress can go in place of either a strongly stressed syllable or an unstressed syllable. Where the rhythm marks are in parentheses, this indicates optional syllables.

## Type A

This type of verse is called “falling-falling”, since each stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable, and this usually happens twice in a verse.

The basic pattern is:

/ x / x

For example, consider this example of a simple Type A half-lines from the first line of the first stanza of the *OERP*:

Cash does comfort

That line is spoken with more stress on “cash” than on “does” and more stress on “com-” than on “-fort”.

It is not necessary for a Type A verse to have only four syllables. Following is an example of a type A with an optional syllable in the middle (quoted from a modern invocation of Wóden):

Sacred Inspirer

In both sets of examples there are just two levels of syllabic stress. If a verse has secondarily-stressed syllables, they can be used as either stressed or unstressed. For example, the following would be acceptable as a type A, although the syllabic stress pattern is: / \ / x

word-hoard wanted

Typically, a type A verse with just one alliterating syllable carries the alliteration in its first stressed syllable. As in the “off” verse in this example taken from the third stanza of the *OERP*.

Taking is torture; • totally cruel for

Considering optional syllables, the notion for a Type A verse is:

(x x) / x (x x x x) / x

## Type B

This is called “rising-rising”, since the stressed syllables are each fronted by at least one unstressed syllable. The notation for the most basic Type B verse is:

x / x /

The following illustrates a type B verse.

the boys so bold

The last line of poetry in the section on type A shows a type B half-line in the “off” verse. Note that the stress is on the second stressed syllable (“route”). This is common where there is only one alliterating syllable in a type B verse.

Since unstressed syllables can come before an A or a B verse, the easiest way to tell whether you have a type A or B is by looking at the last two syllables of a verse.

Including optional syllables, the notation to describe a Type B rhythm is:

(x x x x) x / x (x) /

## Type C

The type C verse is characterized by two stressed syllables in the middle of the half-line. The notation for the simplest form is:

x // x

I like to call this type “rise and fall”, although it is often called “clashing”, as though the two stressed syllables got along poorly. This is Mitchell’s and Robinson’s (1994) example.

In keen conflict

Taking into account the optional syllables, the notation for the “C” rhythm is:  
 (x x x x) x // x

## Types D1 and D2

Type D is basically falling. It usually has two stressed syllables together, but there is a secondarily (or weakly) stressed syllable after them. Sometimes that weakly-stressed syllable is just before the end of the line (D1) and sometimes it is right at the end of the line (D2).

In its simplest, type D1 has two strongly-stressed syllables, then one weakly-stressed syllable and finally an unstressed syllable. This would sound like falling by stages. The simplest notation is:

// \ x

It would sound like this.

tank-top shedding

Considering optional syllables, the notation would be:

(x x) / (x x x) / \ x

A broken-fall rhythm (D2) comes part-way back up and is described by this notation:

// x \

An example of a broken-fall verse is:

both bats they have

The full notation for a D2 rhythm is:

(x x) / (x x x) / x \

With optional syllables, a D2 (broken fall) could sound like this, which is based on a line 1a from the tenth stanza.

Restriction restrains our minds

There are not many type D lines in the *OERP* or in Old English generally.

## Type E

A Type E verse has its stressed syllables at the beginning and the end, so it is also called fall-and-rise. The simplest notation to describe this is:

/ \ x /

As in:

bat swung but missed

## Hypermetric Verses

A hypermetric verse is one that has more syllables than usual, with an extra emphasized syllable. Generally hypermetric verse has about half again as many as the usual verse, although sometimes an entire Type A or B verse is added on to another verse.

Verse number ten (“Nyd”) is full of examples of hypermetric verses.

Hardship disheartens greatly. • Oft becomes though, to humans’ offspring  
some helping and some healing anyhow • -- if disheart’ning they heed in time.

Line 1a is a Type A verse with the equivalent of half a Type A vers added at the end. Line 1b has two whole Type A verses stuck together. Line 2a is a Type A verse with half a Type A added at the end. Line 2b is a Type B and a half.

## Rhythm Wrap-up

Type A is called falling-falling: (x x) / x (x x x x) / x [“quick steps taking” has this pattern: / x / x]

Type B is rising-rising: (x x x x) x / x (x) / [“push up not down” has this pattern: x / x /]

Type C is rise-and-fall: (x x x x) x // x [“the fire blazed on” has this pattern: x // x]

Type D1 is falling-by-stages: (x x) / (x x x) / \ x [“his barrels a-blaze, lead flew” has this pattern: x / x / \ x]

Type D2 is broken-fall: (x x) / (x x x) / x \ [“now I’m on a losin’ streak” has this pattern: / \ x x / x \]

Type E is fall-and-rise: / (x) \ x (x) / [“home island beheld” has this pattern: / \ x /]

It is not possible to understand the *Old English Rune Poem* without realizing the importance of the alliterating syllable in the second half of each line, especially with regard to the first line of each strophe. Paying close attention to them helps avoid misleading analyses that suppose that the more important implications of each stanza are based on the stanza’s first word.

## Chief Staves

The alliterating syllable in the second half-line dominates the line.

In his technical discussion of Icelandic poetry, Snorri Sturluson (Faulkes, 1987: 166) implies that in composing a line, the Icelandic poets often start with the second half-line and with the first stressed word in that half-line. The first letter

in the most stressed syllable in the most important word in the second half-line is the chief letter (or sound), and the two alliterating letters (or sounds) in the first half-line are “props”, or supporting letters.

For example, suppose we were to compose a strophe about wild cattle (or to translate *OERP* stanza number two). We might say:

Bovine brave is • and big its horns are.  
 Intensely tough this beast • tussles with horns.  
 Magnum moor-dweller • that is mettlesome!

In the first line, the chief letter is the “b” in “big” and the “b’s” in the first and second words in that line are supporting letters. In the second line, the word that determines the alliterating sound is “tussles”, alliterating with the t’s in “intensely” and “tough”. Likewise, regarding the third line, we could say that “magnum” and “moor-dweller” alliterate with “mettlesome” rather than that “mettlesome” alliterates with the other two words.

Notice also that in each line in this example, the syllable that gets the most stress has the chief letter.

By “stave”, Snorri Sturluson means “letter”, but throughout my discussion in this book, I usually refer to the whole word in the second line as the chief stave. This is simply for convenience, since the correct term is “chief-stave-defining word”, which is a cumbersome expression.

When interpreting the stanzas of the *Old English Rune Poem*, I consider the word containing the alliterating letter in the second half-line the most important part of the line. This is not really because that word usually gets more stress than does the name of the rune. It is because it typically denotes a more important idea than does the rune name. Hence, the chief stave is a clue to the more important (and implicit) messages conveyed by the stanza. I started looking at chief stave, however, because Snorri Sturluson calls the occurrences of the alliterating letter in the first half-line as “props”. He implies that the first-verse

words containing the syllables that fall into the alliteration pattern are supporting players in the drama.

This section includes brief discussions of two topics: line-length and the bullet-list style.

## Miscellaneous Observations

### Line Length

Lines of Old English poetry tend to have about 9-11 syllables each. The *Old English Rune Poem* is not an exception, and its stanzas tend to have 30 to 33 syllables, including the three- and two-line stanzas (but not the four- or five-line stanzas).

Some speakers of Modern English will recognize many lines of the ancient poetry which have two Type B or Type A verses as iambic pentameter. One reason for occasionally translating lines of Types C through D into Types A and B is that Types A and B sound like the most familiar structure in modern poetry.

### The Bullet-List Style

The language of Old English poetry tends to have a lot of parenthetical phrases, a lot of repetition, and a somewhat staccato sound to speakers of Modern English. This poem in particular tends to present bullet lists of characteristics. Decreasing the severity style is often helpful to convey the same emotion in our language as was conveyed in ancient times.

To sum all this up, let us conclude with a detailed critique of the quality of the “perfect” translation of the eleventh strophe of the *OERP*.

## Concluding Exercise

An objective of translating or composing in this tradition is to get three layers of structure to coincide. There is a pattern of rhythm, on top of that a pattern alliteration, and on top of that the sense of the words. The two alliterating syllables in the first verse and the one in the second verse have to be stressed in the rhythm. To carry the meaning of the original or the meaning you want to convey, the sense of the words has to coincide with the rhythm and alliteration so that the emphases are where you want them.

So let us consider the first verse of the focal stanza. Included in the alliteration are the name of the rune and an adjective that says (trivially) that ice is extremely cold. In this case we have an exact match.

**Verse 1a.** Both are Type A, perfect match.  
 / x / x (4 syllables)  
 is byþ oferceald

/ x / x  
 ice is ultracold

Moving to the second, or “off” verse, we see that the word that determines the alliterating letter is the first word in the verse, and that it directly conveys the ideas of excess or extreme-ness. Except that the translation moves the optional

syllable from the middle of the verse to the beginning, the translation is a very close match. In the case of the verse 1b in the *OERP*, it is important to get the chief stave right because that word is the principle clue to the meanings of the stanza.

However, there a subtle difference between the original and the translation which is not mentioned in Chapter 11. Notice that he most stressed syllable in the original says something like “DIS-proportionately”, and in the translation there is slightly less emphasis on a contrast between moderation and extreme. It turns out that the Modern English words that exactly translate the intended meaning of the original do not work into the rhythm pattern the same as the original word did. Hence the translation is a little more subtle than the original.

**Verse 1b.** The original is Type A, but transl has extra syllable at start and one less total.

/ x \ x / x (6 syllables)  
ungemetum slidor

x / x / x (5 syllables in transl)  
and overly slipp'ry

In the first verse on line #2, the translation shows a compromise. In the original, the second word is an adverb modifying “glistens”. But in the translation, in order to make a more perfect rhythmic match, the second word is a verb that modifies “glistens”, although as a parenthetical expression it carries the same meaning as the original’s “(with) glass-like luster”.

**Verse 2a.** Both are Type D1 (falling by stages) -- exact match.

/ x / \ x  
glisnaþ glæshlütter (5 syllables)

/ x / \ x  
glistens, glass-lusters

As you go through the rest of these verses yourself, you can exercise the skills you have learned to critique the translations and thereby burn-in the lessons.

**Verse 2b.** Both are Type A with an optional syllable in the same place, another exact match.

/ x x / x  
 ġimmum ġelícost (5 syllables)

/ x x / x  
 gemstones resembles

**Verse 3a.** Type D2 (broken fall) but transl has one less unstressed syllable.

/ \ x x /  
 flór forste geworht (5 syllables)

/ \ x x /  
 floor frosted all-o'er

**Verse 3b.** both are Type D1 (falling by stages) and an exact match.

/ x / \ x  
 fæġer ansyne (5 syllables)

/ x / \ x  
 fair the view seemeth

In view of the fact that there is no story line to the *Old English Rune Poem*, it was probably not meant to be recited or sung straight through. It was intended to be used one strophe at a time or in a selection of two to five strophes. This would make musical accompaniment less useful than in a longer performance, but still a little instrumental music here and there might be quite appealing.

The present author has listened to several performers using a Sutton Hoo type of harp and singing poetry of various types. Except for Benjamin Bagby, they all sound bad. Even Mr. Bagby's performance of *Beowulf* is mostly supported by his talents as a storyteller and speaker of Old English (Aaron and Morrow, 2006).

As noted above the present author finds the isochronic theory of musical accompaniment implausible.

To find out what is really possible, one has to turn to very talented modern performers.

Most instrumentalists who use the ancient Northern European harp seem to lack virtuosity. On 5 March 2012, a young man named Will Rowan posted on YouTube a demonstration of what is possible with a seven-string Northern European lyre with high-level skills: ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD00xqqW\\_68&feature=youtu.be&noredirect=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD00xqqW_68&feature=youtu.be&noredirect=1)).

## Musical Accompaniment

Another place to look is the performances using modern instruments in a professional band. Jefferson Airplane has a song showing what can be done with a group of singers and instruments, and with skill in use of voice and the instruments. They take a possibly sappy love poem and make it beautiful and heart-tugging.

In their song *Today*, the band Jefferson Airplane makes sparse use of their musical instruments in much the way that Dark Age and medieval English performers might have used their instruments. Their lead and rhythm guitars are more partners than lead and rhythm, and they suggest what can be done with harps (or lyres) of different types or of the same type tuned differently and played with different techniques. Their use of electric bass suggests what can be done with a frame drum added in the combination. Of course, re-enactors are not likely to have Marty Balin's voice nor to have Grace Slick and Paul Kantner singing backup, but there must have been some very talented singers in the Early Medieval Age.

You can find *Today* on YouTube or the album *Surrealistic Pillow*.

The material here was learned from several sources, which you can use for further technical backgrounding. The most important of those sources are listed here. They go into further detail on ancient Germanic poetry than is helpful in a book about one poem.

## Further Reading

Diamond, 1970: 46-67. This is the most detailed discussion of Old English prosody I have found. In handling more detail than I have, Diamond discusses subdivisions of

verses into feet. He also discusses where in a verse alliteration usually occurs and describes sub-varieties of the types of rhythm. (Diamond, Robert E. 1970. *Old English Grammar and Reader*. Detroit, MI, USA: Wayne State University Press.)

Halsall, 1981: the chapter “Styles and Themes of the Old English *Rune Poem*”. Her discussion of prosody is not as detailed as what you find here, but she discusses the prosody of the stanzas in broader contexts of the poem as a whole and in the surviving body of Old English poetry. I disagree with Halsall’s (excessive) emphasis on the importance of the rune names and with her idea that the poem is Christian. However, the analysis is excellent: thorough and lucid. I recommend her whole book as a study of this poem. (Halsall, Maureen. 1981. *The Old English Rune Poem: A Critical Edition*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.)

Chickering, 1981: 29-31. This source includes coaching on reading aloud or reciting Old English poetry.

Hollander, 1962: xxi-xxvii. As this author tells us, “an adequate comprehension of the principles of Old Germanic verse technique is essential for the correct reading and understanding -- nay, for entering at all into the spirit of Old Germanic poetry.” Hollander wrote the pages in question as part of an introduction to his translation of some Old Norse poetry, and his translations attempt to express the nonverbal content of that poetry. This is a good place to start a study of ancient Germanic poetry in general. (Hollander, Lee M., trans. 1962. *The Poetic Edda*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.)

Mitchell and Robinson, 1994: Appendix C. This is lucid and succinct. The authors discuss some topics that I left out of this appendix or combined with other topics for brevity. I do not agree with everything they wrote, however. Mitchell and Robinson opine (on page 162) that “sp” and “st” are diphthongs, only alliterating with other “sp’s” or “st’s”. However, the poetry they show on page 251 (line 271 from *The Battle of Maldon*) shows otherwise -- that “sp” can alliterate with “s”. Where they go wrong is in their assumption that we can have a diphthong where the two letters combine to stand for the combination of sounds

in the same two letters. For purposes of alliteration, a diphthong must present a sound different than the combination of the two letters, as does “ch” in Modern English and as “sp” does not. (Mitchell, Bruce and Fred C. Robinson. 1994. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. *A Guide to Old English*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell.)

Faulkes, 1987: “Hattatal”. This is the detailed manual on Icelandic poetry mentioned in the section on chief staves. This one really is “old school”, having been written in the 1200’s. It is quite useful for the student interested in studying Icelandic poetry, which was quite popular Europe in pre-Medieval and Medieval times. Faulkes, Anthony. 1987. *Edda*. By Snorri Sturluson (1220). London: Everyman.)

Wrenn, 1967: Chapter 3: “Form and Style in Anglo-Saxon Literature”. This is the most complete discussion of Old English poetry. Although it is cited directly nowhere in this appendix, Wrenn’s work is behind much of what appears in the other sources and in my analysis of the *OERP*. (Wrenn, C. L. 1967. *A Study of Old English Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc.)

Jones, 1967: 43-51. This is a succinct description of the isochronic theory, detailing how the poem would have been accompanied by harp music according that theory. He is following Creed, but Jones’ discussion is briefer and more interesting than Creed’s.

## Appendix I: Line-by-Line Metrical Structure of the *OERP*

I have found Fredrick Jones' (1967) listing of the meter of each line useful. And because his listing uses Creed's isochronous system, a listing using the Sievers might also be useful. The Sievers rhythm type is indicated for each half-line. The listing here is by half-line instead of line of the page size of this book. (The book was formatted to fit easily in a six-inch electronic book reader.)

In addition, the reader might be curious how the Translations B compare to the original in meter, so all the "perfect" translation verses are listed here also.

The lines are numbered consecutively, for this is the usual custom among students of the Old English Rune Poem. But since the composer probably did not intend the poem to be recited straight through, but for the stanzas to be used piecemeal, I also retain the half-line numbering used in the substantive chapters of this book.

In each table, directly under the stanza # cell, is the verse type and syllable count (for example, "A, 4" indicates a type A rhythm with 4 syllables).

### Overall

#### Line # Stanza #1

<b>1</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x
	A, 4	feoh	byð	fro	fur
		/	x	/	x
	A, 4	cash	does	com	fort
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/ x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	A, 5	fir	a	ge	whyl	cum		
		x	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 6	a	crea	ture	that's	hum	an	
<hr style="border: 2px solid black;"/>								
2	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x	x	\	
	D2, 6	sceal	ðeah	man	na	ge	hwylc	
		/	x	/	x	\		
	D2, 5	must	each	per	son	though		
<hr style="border: 2px solid black;"/>								
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	x	/	x		
	A, 5	mic	lun	hit	dæ	lan		
		/	x	x	/	x		
	A, 5	plen	ti	flly	give	it		
<hr style="border: 2px solid black;"/>								
3	<b>3a</b>	x	x	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 7	gif	hi	wil	lan	for	driht	ne
		x	x	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 7	if	one	does	want	a	judg	es
<hr style="border: 2px solid black;"/>								
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	dom	es	hleo	tan			
		/	x	x	/			
	C, 4	judge	ment	to	chance			

***Overall***

***Line # Stanza #2***

<hr/>						
4	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	Ur	byþ	an	mod	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	Elk	is	awe	less	
<hr/>						
	<b>1b</b>	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	and	of	er	hryn	ed
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	and	ul	tra	ant	lered
<hr/>						
5	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x	\
	D2, 5	Fel	a	frec	ne	deor
		/	x	/	x	/
	hyperm A, 5	too	much	tough	that	beast
<hr/>						
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	feot	eþ	mid	horn	um
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	tuss	les	with	ant	lers
<hr/>						
6	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	mær	e	mor	stap	a
		/	x	/	\	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

D1, 5	Fa	mous	marsh	dwel	er
<b>3b</b>	x	x	/	x	/
B, 5	þæt	is	mod	ig	wuht
	x	x	/	x	/
B, 5	that's	a	feis	ty	one

*Overall*

*Line # Stanza #3*

7	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	\
	D2, 5	þorn	byþ	þearl	e	scearp
		/	x	/	x	\
	D2, 5	prick	le	plen	ty	sharp
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	þeg	na	ge	hwyl	cum
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	princ	es	to	each	is
8	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	An	feng	ys	yf	yl
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	Tak	ing	is	tor	ture
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x	/
						x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	hyperm A, 6	un	ge	met	um	rep	e
		/	x	/	x	/	x
	hyperm A, 5	to	tal	fierce	the	pain	for
<b>9</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	Man	na	ge	hwyl	cum	
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5*	each	in	di	vid	ual	
	<b>3b</b>	x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	ðe	him	mid	rest	ep	
		x	/	x	x	/	
	B, 5**	who'll	one	not	re	lease	

\* Requires slurring the last syllable into one syllable.

\*\* Not the same rhythm, but the emotional effect is quite similar.

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #4**

<b>10</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	\	x	
	D1, 5	Os	byþ	ord	frum	a	
		/	x	/	\	x	
	D1, 5	Os	is	end-	cause	of	
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	/	x		

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	A, 4	ælc	ra	spræc	e	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	ev'	ry	speak	ing	
<b>11</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	\	x	/	x
	A, 5	Wis	dom	es	wraþ	u
		/	\	x	/	x
	A, 5	Sa	pi	ence'	shore-	up
	<b>2b</b>	x	/	x	x	\
	A, 5	And	wit	en	a	fro
		x	/	\	x	/
	A, 5	and	sage-	per	son's	com
		x	/	x	x	/
<b>12</b>	<b>3a</b>	And	earl	a	ge	wham
	B, 5	x	/	x	x	/
	B, 5	To	bar	ons	each	one
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	x	/	\
	A, 5	ead	nys	and	to	hiht
		/	x	x	/	\
	A, 5	bless	ing	and	high	hope

**Overall****Line # Stanza #5**

<b>13</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	\	x	
	D1, 6	Rad	byþ	on	rec	yd	e	
		x	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 6	When	shel	tered,	a-	rid	is	
<b>14</b>	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/	x		
	A, 5	rin	ca	ge	hwyl	cum		
		x	/	x	/	x		
	A, 5	for	an	y	swords	man		
<b>14</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	\	/	x		
	D1, 5	Sef	te	and	swiþ	hwæt		
		/	x	\	/	x		
	D1, 5	soft	but	quite	stress	ful		
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 7	þam	þe	sit	teþ	on	u	fan
	x	x	/	x	x	/	x	
A, 7	for	one	sit	ting	up	high	on	
<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x	/	x		

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	A hyper, 6	mær	e	mæg	en	heard	um
		/	x	/	x	/	x
	A hyper, 6	mount	so	ver	y	migh	ty
<b>15</b>	<b>3b</b>	x	x	/	/	x	
	C, 5	o	fer	mil	paþ	as	
		x	x	/	/	x	
	C, 5	o	ver	miles	man	y	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #6**

<b>16</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	x	x	\
	unmetrical, 6	cen	byð	cwic	er	a	ge	wham
		/	x	x	/	x	\	
	D2, 6	lamp	is	by	sen	tient	ones	
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	cuð	on	fyr	e			
		/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	seen	as	flam	ing			
<b>17</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	blac	and	beorht	lic			
		/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	bright	and	blond-	pale			
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	byr	neð	oft	est			
		/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	burns	most	oft	en			
<b>18</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	x	/	x	\	x	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

A, 6	ðær	hi	æð	e	ling	as
	x	x	/	x	\	x
A, 6	where	a	ris	to	crats	are
<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
A, 4	in	ne	rest	að		
	/	x	/	x		
A, 4	in	side	rest	ing		

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #7**

<b>19</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	x	x
	unmetrical, 6	gy	fu	gum	en	a	byð
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	gift	ing	is	hu	mans'	
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	gleng	and	her'	nys		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	praise	and	gar	nish		
<b>20</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/	\	x
	D1, 6	wra	u	and	wyrð	scyp	e

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

		x	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 6	sup	port	and	a	pro	val
	<b>2b</b>	x	/	x	x	/	
	B, 5	and	wræc	na	ge	hwam	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	B, 5	brings	poor	lings	home	less	
<b>21</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	ar	and	æt	wist		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	help	and	ho	nor		
	<b>3b</b>	x	x	/	x	/	
	B, 5	ðe	byð	oð	ra	leas	
		x	/	x	x	/	
	B, 5	for	those	who	would	lack	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #8**

					
22	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x
	A, 4	wen	ne	bru	ceð
		/	x	/	x
	A, 4	glee	is	gain	ed
					
	<b>1b</b>	x	x	/	x /
	<b>B, 5</b>	ðe	can	wea	na lyt
		x	x	/	x /
	B, 5	when	ones	griefs	are small
					
23	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/ x
	A, 5	sar	es	and	sor ge
		x	/	x	/ x
	A, 5	(both	sores	and	sor rows)
					
	<b>2b</b>	x	\	/	x /
	E, 5	and	him	syl	fa hæfð
		x	/	x	x /
	B, 5	and	has	for	him self
					
24	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

A, 4	blæd	and	blys	se		
	/	x	/	x		
A, 4	boun	ty,	rev	els		
	/	x	/	x	/	
<b>3b</b>	x	x	/	x	x	/
B, 6	and	eac	byr	ga	ge	niht
	/	x	/	x	x	/
B, 6	and	a	town's	good	re	serves

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #9**

<b>25</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	/	x	
	hyper A, 6	hægl	byþ	hwit	ust	cor	na	
		/	x	/	x	/	x	
	hyper A, 6	hail's	the	whit	est	gran	ule	
		/	x	x	/	x	x	/
	hyper A, 8	hwyrft	hit	of	heo	fon	es	lyf
		/	x	x	/	x	\	/
	hyper A, 8	whirled	tis	by	heav	en's	high	gas
		/	x	x	/	x	/	x
<b>26</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/	x	/	x
	hyper A, 7	weal	cap	hit	wind	es	scur	a

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	/	x	x	/	x	/	x	
hyper A, 7	waf	ted	by	win	dy	storm	ing	
<b>2b</b>	/	x	\	x	/	x	X	\
hyper A, 9	weorþ	eþ	hit	to	wæt	er	e	syþ
	/	x	\	x	/	x	x	/
hyper A, 9	turn	eth	it	to	wat	er	there	aft
								er

**Overall  
1 Line**

# **Stanza #10**

<b>27</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	x	/	x
	hyper A, 7	nyd	byþ	near	u	on	breo	stan
		/	x	x	/	x	/	x
	hyper A, 7	hard	ship	dis	hear	tens	great	ly
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	\	x	/	/	x
	hyper E, 9	weorþ	eþ	hi	ðeah	oft	ni	þa
		/	\	x	/	x	/	x
	hyper E, 9	oft	though	be	comes	to	hu	mans'
							off	spring
<b>28</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	/	x	x	x	/	x
	hyper A, 10	to	help	e	and	to	hæl	e
							ge	hwæþ
		x	/	x	x	x	/	x
							/	x
								\

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

hyperm A, 10 some help ing and some heal ing an y how

**2b** / x / \ x / x  
 hyperm D1, 7 gif hi his hyl stap ær or

x x / x x / x /  
 hyperm B, 8 if dis heart ning they heed in time

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #11**

**29 1a** / x / x  
 A, 4 is byþ ofer ceald

/ x / x  
 ice is ultra cold

**1b** / x / x / x  
 hyperm A un ge met um sli dor

x / x / x  
 A, 5 and over ly slipp' ry

**30 2a** / x / \ x  
 D1, 5 glis naþ glæs hlut ter

/ x / \ x  
 D1, 5 glist ens glass- lus ters

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	<b>2b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	gim	mum	ge	li	cost
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	gem	stones	re	sem	bles
						
<b>31</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	\	x	x	/
	E, 5	flor	for	ste	ge	wor'ht
		/	\	x	x	/
	E, 5	floor	frost	ed	all-	o'er
						
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	fæ	ger	an	syn	e
		/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	fair	the	view	seem	eth

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #12**

<b>32</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	\	x	/
	hyperm E, 6	ger	byþ	gu	men	a	hiht
		x	/	x	/	\	x /
	hyperm E, 7	to	hu	mans	year-	new	brings hope
	<b>1b</b>	x	/	/	x		
	C, 4	ðon	god	læt	eð		
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 6	that	Yah	weh	suf	fers	
<b>33</b>	<b>2a</b>	\	x	/	x	x	/ x
	hyperm A, 7	hal	ig	heof	en	es	cyn ing
		/	x	/	x	x	/ x
	hyperm A, 7	sa	cred	sky-	a	bove's	sov reign
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	\	x		
	A, 4	Hru	san	syl	lan		
		/	x	\	x		
	A, 4	soil	to	give	up		
<b>34</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x		

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

A, 4	beorh	te	ble	da
	/	x	/	x
A, 4	choic	est	crops	for
<b>3b</b>	/	X	X	/ X
A, 5	beorn	um	and	þearf um
	/	X	X	/ X
	chief	tains	and	poor folks

*Overall  
1 Line*

# *Stanza #13*

<b>35</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x
	A, 4	Eoh	byð	u	tan
		/	x	/	x
	A, 4	Yew	is	out	side
	<b>1b</b>	/	\	x	/
	E, 5	un	smeþ	e	treow
		/	/	x	/
	E, 5	un	smooth	of	bark
<b>36</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	/	x	\
	D2, 4	heard	hrus	an	fæst

		/	/	x	\		
	D2, 4	strong	soil-	se	cure		
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	B, 4	hyrd	e	fyr	es		
		/	x	/	x		
	B, 4	flame's	su	stain	er		
<b>37</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	\	x	/	x	/
	E hyperm, 7	wyrt	rum	un	un	der	wreþ
				ed			
		/	\	x	/	x	/
	E hyperm, 6	root-	work	up	holds	the	tree
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	wyn	an	on	eþ	le	
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	hap	py	in	home	land	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #14**

						
<b>38</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	peorþ	byð	sym	ble	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	peorð	is	al	ways	
						
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	ple	ga	and	hleh	ter
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	play	ing	and	laugh	ter
						
<b>39</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	wlanc	um	win	um	
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	for	proud	a	mi	ci
						
	<b>2b</b>	x	/	x	\	x
	A, 5	ðar	wig	an	sit	tað
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	where	mercs	are	sit	ting
						
<b>40</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	/	/	x	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

C, 4	on	beor	sel	e	
	x	/	/	x	
C, 4	in	beer	tav	ern	
<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	\	x
D1, 5	blið	e	æt	som	ne
	/	x	x	/	x
B, 5	blithe	ly	to	geth	er

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #15**

<b>41</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x
	A, 4	eohlx	secg	eard	hæð
		/	x	/	x
	A, 4	elx-	sedge	earth	has
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/
	A, 5	oft	ust	on	fen
		/	x	x	/
	A, 5	Oft	est	in	marsh
					land
<b>42</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/
	A, 5	wax	eð	on	wat
					re

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	wax	es	in	wat	er
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	wun	dað	grim	me	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	wounds	it	grim	ly	
<b>43</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	blod	e	bren	eð	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	blood	y	burn	eth	
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	beorn	a	ge	hwylc	ne
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	ev	ery	last	bod	y
<b>44</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	/	/	\	x
	D1, 5	ðe	him	æn	ig	ne
		x	/	\	/	x
	D1, 5	who'd	on	it	an	y
	<b>4b</b>	/	/	x	\	
	D2, 4	on	feng	ge	deð	
		/	/	x	\	
	D2, 4	on-	hold	ing	try	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #16**

						
<b>45</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	sig	el	se	man	num
		/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	sail	to	sea	far	ers
						
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	x	/
	A, 6	sym	ble	bið	on	hiht e
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	is	cease	less	hop	ing
						
<b>46</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	/	x	x	/
	A, 6 *	ðonn	hi	hin	e	fer iað
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	while	it	they	fer	ry
						
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	x	/
	B, 5	of	er	fisc	es	beð
		\	x	/	x	/
	B, 5	ov	er	fish	es'	bath
						
<b>47</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	\	/	/	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

C, 5	oð	hi	brim	heng	est
	x	\	/	/	x
C, 5	til	their	brine	stal	lion
					
<b>3b</b>	\	x	x	/	x
A, 5	bring	eð	to	land	e
	/	x	x	/	x
A, 5	bring	eth	to	shore	line

\* This half-line is unmetrical unless the speaker/singer slurs together the final two syllables into one.

**Overall****Line # Stanza #17**

<b>48</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	\	
	D2, 5	tir	bið	tac	na	sum	
		/	x	/	x	\	
	D2, 5	Tir's	a	tok	en	-sign	
	<b>1b</b>	\	x	/	x	/	
	B, 5	heald	eð	tryw	a	wel	
		\	x	/	x	/	
	B, 5	hold	eth	troth	so	well	
<b>49</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	/	x	\	x	
	B, 5	wið	æð	e	ling	as	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	B, 5	with	ones	who're	no	ble	
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	x	/	\	x
	D1, 6	a	bið	on	fær	ylð	e
		/	x	x	/	x	\
	D2, 6	al	ways	pro	gres	sing	on
	<b>3a</b>	\	x	/	x	x	/
							x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	hyperm A, 7	of	er	nih	ta	ge	nip	u
		\	x	/	x	x	x	/ x
	hyperm A, 8	ov	er	nim	bus	es	of	ht- times
								nig
<b>50</b>	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	næf	re	swic	eð			
		/	x	/	x			
	A, 4	nev	er	swin	dles			

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #18**

<b>51</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	\	
	D2, 5	beorc	byð	bled	a	leas	
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	pop	lar	is	pome	less	
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	\	x	x	/
	E, 6	ber	eð	ef	ne	swa	ðeah
		x	x	/	x	x	/
	B, 6	it	sup	ports	none	the	less
<b>52</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	x	/	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	A, 6	tan	as	bu	tan	tud	der
		/	x	x	x	/	x
	A, 6	sprout	ings	with	out	seed	lings
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 6	bið	on	tel	gum	wli	tig
		x	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 6	on	its	spans	tis	love	ly
<b>53</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	heah	on	helm	e		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	soars	its	sum	mit		
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4*	hryst	ed	fæger	e		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	spruced	up	love	ly		
<b>54</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	ge	lod	en	leaf	um	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5**	with	wax	ing	foil	iage	
	<b>4b</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	lyft	e	ge	teng	e	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	/	x	x	/	x
A5	wel	kin	it	touch	es!

\* To make this line metrical, it is necessary to pronounce “fægere” as a two-syllable word: like “fair-uh”.

\*\* To make this line metrical, it is necessary to pronounce “foliage” as if it were “fole-adj”, as many people habitually do at least in the USA.

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #19**

<b>55</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	eh	bip	for	eorl	um

	/	x	x	/	x
A, 5	ride	is	for	rul	ers

	<b>1b</b>	/	x	\	x	/
	E, 5	æp	e	ling	a	wyn

	x	/	x	x	/
B, 5	a	ris	to	crats'	joy

<b>56</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	\	x	/
	E, 4	hors	hof	um	wlanc

	/	\	x	/
E, 4	horse	stand	ing	proud

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	<b>2b</b>	x	/	/	x	x	\
	hyperm C, 6	ðær	him	hæl	eþ	as	ymb
		x	/	/	x	x	/
	hyperm C, 6	while	him	spear	men	sur	round
<b>57</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	wel	ge	on	wicg	um	
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	mon	eyed	ones	mount	ed	
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	wrix	lap	spræc	e		
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	com	mune	by	speak	ing	
<b>58</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	x	/	/	x	
	C, 5	and	biþ	un	styll	um	
		x	x	/	/	x	
	C, 5	for	the	un	eas	y	
	<b>4b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	æf	re	fro	fur		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	al	ways	com	fort		

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #20**

<b>59</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	man	byþ	on	myrþ	e
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	man	when	in	mirth	is
	<b>1b</b>	x	/	x	/	
	A, 4	his	mag	an	leaf	
		x	/	x	/	
	A, 4	to	mates	so	dear	
<b>60</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	x	/	x	x /
	B, 6	sceal	þeah	an	ra	ge hwylc
		x	x	/	x	x /
	B, 6	still	must	ev	ry	last one
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	oð	rum	swic	an	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	all	a	ban	don	
<b>61</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	x	/	x	/ x
	A, 6	for	ðam	dryht	nes	wyl e
		x	x	/	x	/ x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	A, 6	for	the	Lord	de	cid	ed
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	dom	e	sin	e		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	law	from	Yah	weh		
<b>62</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	/	x	\		
	B, 4	ðæt	earn	e	flæsc		
		x	/	x	/		
	B, 4	that	hum	ble	flesh		
	<b>4b</b>						
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	eorþ	an	be	tæc	an	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	to	earth	be	giv	en	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #21**

<b>63</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	lag	u	byþ	léod	um
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	wa	ter	to	peo	ple

	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	\		
	unmetrical, 4	lang	sum	ge	þúht		
		/	x	x	/		
	unmetrical, 4	seems	ver	y	wide		
<b>64</b>	<b>2a</b>	\	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 6	gif	hí	scul	an	néþ	un
		\	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 6	if	they	must	go	bold	ly
	<b>2b</b>	x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	on	nac	an	tealt	um	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	on	boats	un	stead	y	
<b>65</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	\	/	x		
	C, 4	and	hí	sáeyþ	a		
		x	/	/	\	x	
	C, 5	and	them	sea	surg	es	
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	swýþ	e	brég	aþ		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	strong	ly	frigh	ten		
<b>66</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	x	/	/	x	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

C, 5            and    se        brim    heng    est

                  x        x        /        /        x  
 C, 5            and    the     sea     stal    lion



**4b**            /        x        x        /        x

A, 6            brídl    es        ne        gým    eð

                  /        x        x        /        x  
 A, 6            steer    ing     ig        nor     eth

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #22**

						
<b>67</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	\	x	
	A, 4	Ing	was	ær	est	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	Ing	was	first	ly	
						
	<b>1b</b>	x	/	/	x	
	C, 4	mid	East	Den	um	
		x	/	/	x	
	C, 4	in	East	Den	mark	
						
<b>68</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	ge	sew	en	seg	un
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5*	ob	served	by	sol	diers
						
	<b>2b</b>	x	\	/	x	/
	E, 5	op	he	sið	ðan	est
		x	/	\	x	/
	E, 5	til	he	la	ter	east
						
<b>69</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	x	/	x	/

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

B, 5            of        er        wæg    ge        wat

                  x        x        /        x        /  
 B, 5            on       his       way    did       go

**3b**            /        /        x        \  
 D2, 4           wæn     æf       ter     ran

                  /        /        x        \  
 D2, 4           wain    af       ter     came

**70** **4a**           \        /        x        x  
 unmetrical, 4 ðus    Heard   ing     as

                  \        /        x        x  
 unmetrical, 4 Thus    hard    ened   ones

**4b**            x        x        /        x        \        x  
 A, 6           ðon     e        hæl    e        nem    dum

                  x        x        /        x        \        x  
 A, 6           then    the     he     ro       nam    éd

\* For this to be metrical, “soldiers” has to be pronounced “soldjers” -- without the “i”.

**Overall  
1 Line**

<b>#</b>	<b>Stanza #23</b>						
<b>71</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	x	\
	D2, 6	eð	el	byþ	of	er	leaf
		/	x	x	/	x	\
	D2, 6	home	land	is	ver	y	dear
	<b>1b</b>	/	\	x	/		
	E, 4	æh	wylc	um	men		
		x	/	\	x	/	
	E, 5	to	each	hu	man's	heart	
<b>72</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x	/	x
	hypermetric A, 6 gif	he	mot	ðær	riht	es	
		/	x	/	x	/	x
	hypermetric A, 6 if	they	might	by	right	there	
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	\	x	
	C, 5	and	ge	ry	sen	a	
		x	x	/	x	x	/
	B, 6	and	in	right	eous	ness	too
<b>73</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 6	on	bruc	an	on	bold	e
		x	/	x	x	/	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

A, 6            at        home    stead    have    use       of

**3b**            /        x        \        x

A, 4            blæd    um       oft       ast

A, 5            /        x        x        /        x  
               har     vest    mun    dane    ly

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #24**

**74 1a**        /        x        /        x        \  
 D2, 5        dæg    byþ    driht    nes    sond

D2, 6        /        x        x        /        x        \  
               day    by     the    lord    is     sent

**1b**        /        x        /        x  
 A, 4        deor    e        mann    um

A, 4        /        x        /        x  
               dear    to     man    kind

**75 2a**        /        x        /        x        x        \  
 D2, 6        Mær    e        met    od     es     leoht

D2, 6        /        x        /        x        x        /  
               Me     tod's    mar    vel    of     light

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	\	
	D2, 4	myrɣp	and	to	hiht	
		/	x	/	\	
	D2, 4	mirth	and	high	hope	
<b>76</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	ead	gum	and	earn	um
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5*	for	poor	and	af	fluent
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	eall	um	bric	e	
		x	/	x	/	x
	A, 5	for	all	to	pro	fit

\* The last two syllables in “affluent” have to be “luent” were one syllable.

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #25**

<b>77</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	Ác	byþ	on	Eorþ	an
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	Oak	is	on	Earth	for

	<b>1b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	Eld	a	beam	um		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	an	thros'	off	spring		
<b>78</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	Flæsc	es	fód	or		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	Food	beasts'	fod	der		
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	fer	eþ	ge	lóm	e	
		/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	fre	quent	ly	far	eth	
<b>79</b>	<b>3a</b>	x	x	/	x	x	\
	B, 6	Of	er	ga	not	es	bæp
		x	x	/	x	x	\
	B, 6	ov	er	sea	div	er's	bath
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	gar	secg	fand	aþ		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	sur	ges	test	ing		
<b>80</b>	<b>4a</b>	x	x	/	/	x	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

C, 5	Hwæp	er	ác	hæb	be
	x	x	/	/	x
C, 5	wheth	er	oak	keep	eth
					
<b>4b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
A, 5	æp	el	e	treow	e
	/	x	x	/	x
A, 5	hon'r	a	bly	troth	ful

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #26**

**81 1a** / x / x \  
 D1, 5 æsc biþ of er heah

D1, 5 / x / x \  
 ash is ul tr tall

**1b** / x / x  
 A, 4 eld um dyr e

A, 4 / x / x  
 loved by an thros

**82 2a** / x / \  
 D1, 5 stiþ on staþ ul e

D1, 5 / x / \  
 strong ly based it is

**2b** / x / x \  
 D2, 5 sted e riht e hylt

D2, 5 / x / x \  
 sta tion right ly holds

**83 3a** x x / x /

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

B, 5	ðeah	him	feoht	aþ	on
	x	x	/	x	/
B, 5	though	as	sault	ed	by
<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x	
A, 4	fir	as	mon	'ge	
	/	x	x	/	x
A, 5	sim	ple	ones	man	y

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #27**

<b>84</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x	\ x
	D1, 6	ýr	byþ	æþ	e	ling a
		/	x	/	x	\
	D2, 5	yr	is	a	the	lings'
	<b>1b</b>	x	/	x	x	/
	B, 5	and	eorl	a	ge	hwæs
		x	/	x	x	/
	B, 5	and	earls'	ev'	ry	one
<b>85</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	wyn	and	wyrþ	mnyd	

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	win	ning	worth-	mark		
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 6	byþ	on	wicg	e	fæg	er
		x	x	/	x	/	x
	A, 6	It's	on	war-	horse	love	ly
<b>86</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	x	/	\	x
	D1, 6	fæst	lic	on	fær	el	de
		/	x	\	x	/	x
	D1, 6	way	fare	stress	en	dur	ing
	<b>3b</b>	/	\	x	x	/	
	E, 5	fyrd	geat	e	wa	sum	
		/	\	x	x	/	
	E, 5	war	gear	that	is	fine	

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #28**

						
<b>87</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	iar	byþ	ea	fix	a
		/	x	/	\	x
	D1, 5	bea	ver's	brook-	fish	like
						
	<b>1b</b>	x	x	/	/	x
	C, 5	and	ðeah	a	bruc	eþ
		x	x	/	x	/
	A, 6	but	ha	bit	ually	eat
		x	x	/	x	/
	A, 6	but	ha	bit	ually	eat
		x	x	/	x	/
	A, 6	but	ha	bit	ually	eat
						
<b>88</b>	<b>2a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	fod	res	on	fold	an
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	fod	der	in	for	est
						
	<b>2b</b>	x	x	/	x	x
	B, 6	haf	aþ	fæ	ger	ne
		x	x	/	x	x
	B, 6	has	a	fair	kind	of
		x	x	/	x	/
	B, 6	has	a	fair	kind	of
						
<b>89</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	x	/	x

Stanzas of the OERP, Appendix I

Structure of Each Line

A, 5	wæt	re	be	wor	pen		
	/	x	x	/	x		
A, 5	wrapped	'round	by	wa	ter		
<b>3b</b>	x	x	/	x	/	x	
A, 6	ðær	he	wyn	num	leof	aþ	
	x	x	/	x	x	/	x
A, 7	where	it	rel	ish	es	liv	ing

**Overall**

**Line # Stanza #29**

<b>90</b>	<b>1a</b>	/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	ear	byþ	egl	e		
		/	x	/	x		
	A, 4	dust	is	dread	ful		
	<b>1b</b>	/	x	x	/	x	
	A, 5	eorl	a	ge	hwyl	cum	
		x	/	x	/	x	
	A, 5	to	ev'	ry	duke-	man	
<b>91</b>	<b>2a</b>	x	/	\	x		
	unmetrical, 4	ðonn	fæst	lic	e		

		x	/	\	x	
	unmetrical, 4	in	mut	ab	ly	
						
	<b>2b</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	flæsc	on	gin	neþ	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	meat	be	gin	eth	
						
<b>92</b>	<b>3a</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	hraw	sceal	col	ian	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	so	ma	chill	eth	
						
	<b>3b</b>	/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	hrus	an	ceos	an	
		/	x	/	x	
	A, 4	soil	to	choose	as	
						
<b>93</b>	<b>4a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	blac	to	ge	bed	dan
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	pale	one's	bed	part	ner
						
	<b>4b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	bled	a	ge	dreos	ap
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	pro	ducts	will	rot	then

<b>94</b>	<b>5a</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	wynn	a	ge	wit	aþ
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	plea	sures	de	part	then
	<b>5b</b>	/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	wer	a	ge	swic	aþ
		/	x	x	/	x
	A, 5	prom	is	es	fail	then