THEMATIC AND STRUCTURAL AFFINITIES:
THE WANDERER AND ECCLESIASTES*

Abstract

It is argued that the Biblical book Ecclesiastes is the principle influence behind the thematic structure of the Old English poem *The Wanderer*. Specifically, the tonal disjunction at the end of the poem is directly analogous to a similar disjunction in the Judaic work. The recognition of this influence aids in determining the genre of the Old English poem as a sub-part of a Wisdom Literature tradition. Some insight is also gained regarding the number of protagonists in the work and the style of imagery presented.

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What is immediately striking about the critical heritage of the Old English poem *The Wanderer* is the high degree of disagreement about basic aspects of the poem. It has been seen variously as totally pagan with Christian interpolations, as a fusion of pagan and Christian elements, and as entirely Christian.[1] There is even little consensus on how many personae speak in the story, whether it be as many as three or as few as one. Even the structural analyses offered have been diverse, with almost as many variations as there are articles on the poem. This lack of consensus has largely been caused by the paucity of literary precedence. Many other shorter Old English poems have comparable analogues or sources which illuminate the process of poetic construction and adaptation. These analogues lend great insight into the poems themselves, as is the case for the Apocryphal Judith and the OE *Judith*, and likewise for *Daniel*, *Genesis*, and so forth. The enigmatic poems are the ones for which there is no readily identifiable genre, as for *The Wife's Lament* and *Deor*. With this latter group we must array *The Wanderer*.[2]

Genre

Several attempts have been made to link *Wan* to other species of writing, both corpus-internally and externally. However, these linkages have been diverse. Woolf (1975: 192) disagrees with the perception that *Wan* is an elegy, instead identifying it as a *planctus* – a lamentation.[3] However, this categorisation seems inadequate as it does not readily account for the presence of the wisdom passage in lines 64–70, nor does it account for the fact that the poem is not said aloud, being pronounced *on mode*; it is merely incidental that the audience overhears it. If anything, it is a meditative lament, which may not be rightly termed a *planctus* at all. Most importantly, identifying the poem as a *planctus* fails to account for the *snottor*'s sudden transition from despair to hope in the last five lines of the poem. The fatalistic declaration that *eall þis eoþran gesteal idel weorþeð*

(110) gives no indication of the forthcoming hopeful doxology, promising *seo fæstnung* (115) in Heaven. From a more popular point of view, Clark and Wasserman (1979: 291) suggest that *Wan* is a *consolatio* – an encouragement, following Lumiansky (1950: 110–111), Cross (1961: 63) and Doubleday (1969: 189). However, this genre-identification is only accurate for lines 1–5 and 111–115. Terming *Wan* a *consolatio* fails to explain the fatalistic tone of the body of the text and, again, the sudden transition from despair to hope in the conclusion.

Indeed, most of the efforts to categorise *Wan* into some genre have been impressionistic and selective: it seems mournful, therefore it is an elegy or a *planctus*; it has an element of encouragement, therefore it is a *consolatio*. However, as noted above, these identifications rely on the tone of selected passages of the text. No genre has been identified that merges the opposing elements of despairing lamentation, and hopeful encouragement. This failure is principally attributable to two things:

1. The OE corpus is such that there is too small a quantity of texts to permit clear genre-divisions to be drawn up.

2. No similar work external to the corpus has been identified, allowing no cross-literary genre categorisation.

The second point is arguably incorrect. Pope (1965: 171) states that the *snottor*'s speech shows Biblical and Patristic leanings with a touch of classical philosophy, whilst also recognising a native wisdom tradition. In this vein, Peters (1981: 291) suggests some relation of the poet's message to gospel material, but this relationship seems tenuous. Diekstra (1971: 75) offers the most specific and broad-ranging analogues, proposing parallels with Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Cicero, Ambrose, Augustine, Lactantius, Isidore, and Alcuin.[4] This has proven to be a popular point of view, with Clark and Wasserman (1979: 291) unreservedly accepting Diekstra's Boethian view. From another tack, Martin Green (1975) identifies apocalyptic elements in *Wan*. This is not so easily acceptable, as the scenes of apocalyptic desolation are in the past (*Wan*, 96ff), not set in the usual apocalyptic present or future (cf. *Dream of the Rood*, 95ff). Avoiding this objection, Richardson (1989: 159), following Burrow (1965: 167) suggests that the scenes of desolation are analogous to the destruction of the Flood in Genesis. The conclusion is an expression of God's mercy. However, the conclusion focuses on a spiritual hope, whereas God's promise after the Flood was purely temporal, and signified in temporal terms. Although some of *Wan*'s imagery may derive from Biblical scenes of desolation, they do not adequately explain the tonal effects in the poem. A more promising analogue has been suggested by Selzer (1983: 227) in spiritual exercises, in the same genre as those of St. Augustine and St. Ignatius de Loyola. Despite these attempts, the endeavours to find external analogues have not been unanimously approved. Rosier (1964: 369) disagrees that *Wan* can be explained by reference to

"medieval traditions of the *peregrinus* or of eschatology or of Boethian philosophy".

Indeed, Rosier seems to have a point. Given the diversity of opinion, and attendant contention, it is safe to say that no convincingly strong structural or thematic ties to *Wan* have been found outside the Old English corpus of poetry. At least, no work or genre has been identified that directly sheds light on the structural and philosophical disjunction in *Wan*. Even so, it is fairly evident that without some sort of external analogue or related work, the contention surrounding the poem will remain unresolved.[5] The main problem rests in finding such a work. Unlike *Judith* or *Daniel* the source is not immediately obvious. Furthermore, if there is no "source" as such, what should one look for in attempting to find a genre-related work?

In answer to this, I suggest that above all *The Wanderer* is a non-proverbial wisdom poem. This in itself is nothing new – the passages in 64–79 and 111–115 make this obvious. Along with this, I make the assumption that the poem is an overtly Christian work.[6] These two main factors point immediately to Christian Wisdom literature. At its most canonical level, Christian literature is the Bible, including the Apocrypha. From an Anglo-Saxon point of view, the most interesting portion was the non-New Testament literature.[7] Of the non-NT non-proverbial wisdom literature, it is Ecclesiastes that bears most relation to *The Wanderer*, both thematically and structurally.[8]

Other thematic and structural analogues

As noted above, the most noticeable aspect of *Wan* is that it has a strangely disconcerting clash in doctrine and tone in the last five lines. Up to this point, the two brief references to God in lines 3 and 85 seem incidental – a mere sop to more religious-minded readers. It is this sense in *Wan* that motivated the proponents of the interpolation theory. Since then, commentators have battled with the incongruence of philosophy displayed. From one point of view, the *anhaga* can be characterised as the epitome of worldly philosophy – man without God. This way, the conclusion can be categorised as a detached consideration of the examples and musings of the body of the poem. However, such an interpretation denies the doctrinal and thematic unity of the poem, and so the conclusion becomes a mere commentary on pagan philosophy. More recent attempts have been made to show the entire poem is a thematic unity and that the Wanderer is in fact *progressing* towards a realisation of stability in Heaven.[9] Klein (1975: 215) notes that the poem is easily made Christian if the *eardstapa* had turned his attentions and longing towards a heavenly home. Given that God makes only a token appearance in the first 110 lines, if the last five were lost the poem would probably be analysed as almost wholly pagan. However, this drives home the point even further: there is not only an incongruity of tone, but an incongruity of doctrine. This shows the sudden jarring change in the last five

lines. To this point, all have failed to achieve this doctrinal synthesis: uniting the philosophy of the exposition with that of the conclusion. The fact remains that up to line 111, *Wan* shows no recognition of Christian values; the final passage is a sudden and seemingly discordant break with the body of the poem.

The tonal aspect is equally as telling. Up to line 110, the Wanderer has been affirming the transitory nature of existence, and the physical and emotional devastation this fact causes. Yet, suddenly and inexplicably, this tone of desolated despair changes from anguished resignation to hope. In order to resolve this change, Doubleday (1969: 190–193) suggests that *Wan* is a narrative of progression – a soul finding consolation and security.[10] However, his division into three stages of realisation is too narrow, as criticised by Mullen (1974: 81). Also, it does not explain the suddenness of the speaker's rise out of despair to pray for grace in the last five lines. Alternatively, Lumiansky (1950: 108) proposes that the *eardstapa* is not in fact despairing about life at all, as he has gained wisdom through experience. He sees the concluding five lines as the *eardstapa*'s explanation as to why he is no longer saddened by his exiled condition. However, this view again denies any unity the conclusion has with the rest of the poem, it must instead be seen as a detached commentary on what has passed before. This is again unconvincing as it still does not explain the sudden change from despair to hope in lines 110–111. If Lumiansky's proposition was true, the *eardstapa* should have become appreciably more hopeful in the second half of the poem, as he had undergone enough experience in the first half to make himself wise. Instead, the second half is as "sad" in tone as the first part. The last five lines require a sudden leap in experience and wisdom to reach the hopeful realisation of stability in Heaven. From a more radical perspective, Taylor (1972: 455) believes the poem has affinities with charms to thaw out Nature; notably he points out that these "charms" ultimately fail in their task, again affirming an inexplicable change in tone.[11]

Hait (1984: 278) endeavours to resolve this thematic and doctrinal disjunction by proposing that the Wanderer recognises that there is stability in God, but is held back by the past. This is a weak argument, as the second half of the poem's exposition has already reanalysed the experience of the first half, and judged it to be transitory. There is no intimation that he is held back by a vain hope for what he has distinctly pronounced to be unattainable – stability on Earth.

It is evident that no interpretation has adequately solved the problem of the conclusion. So far, no genre or theory of composition has managed to convincingly unite the doctrinal and thematic disparity inherent in *Wan* while affirming the unity of the poem as a whole. To such a morass of interpretation, I have suggested above that there is an analogue to this poem in terms of structure – Ecclesiastes (*Eccles*).

Relations to Ecclesiastes

From a thematic point of view, *Wan* has an overwhelming sense of the transitory nature of existence. This is exemplified in the *anhaga*'s description of his former life (8–63), the description of past civilisation (77–87), and in the powerfully direct statements of lines 108–110:

> her biþ feoh læne,   her biþ freond læne,
> her biþ mon læne,   her biþ mæg læne,
> eal þis eorþan gesteal   idel weorþeð!

This theme of mutability is one of the most forcefully stated in OE poetry, although many other works show a similar philosophical outlook. In comparison, *Eccles* is the only Biblical book to relentlessly pursue this same theme. It opens with the memorable "vanitas vanitatum dixit Ecclesiastes [,] vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas" ("Vanity of Vanities, said the Teacher, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity" – 1: 2), immediately declaring the mutability of all things. In fact, this theme makes *Eccles* read more like a Hellenistic philosophical treatise than a Jewish religious work. The Ecclesiastes questions the ethic of work many times, totally opposing the Old Testament maxim of working as both divine punishment (Gen. 3: 19), and as a means to wealth, indicative of God's blessing. Indeed, the few mentions of God in *Eccles* seem like interpolations – the attempt of some pious scribe to bring a Hellenistic work within the pale of orthodox Jewish thought.[12] Despite this, it is evident that *Wan* and *Eccles* in its present form share common ground in a philosophical and doctrinal sense.

From a structural point of view, *Wan* is divided into two main sections: the specific example of mutability in experience, and the general consideration of earthly mutability. This is also the general narrative division in *Eccles*. The Ecclesiastes reminisces in 1: 12 – 2: 26, and chapters 3–7: 18 hold more generalised experiential advice in which the Ecclesiastes makes proverbial statements regarding matters such as Fate (3: 1–8), justice (3: 16), Temple etiquette (5: 1ff), and investments (5: 3–17). General proverbs on aspects of existence follow, analogous to *Wan* lines 64–80, finally summing up with the statement that all is futile (12: 8, cf. *Wan* line 110).

Apart from these general correlations, the structural and thematic disjunction discussed above finds its resolution in a consideration of the same disjunction in Ecclesiastes. Firstly, consider the end of the exposition, and the transition to the conclusion in *Wan*:

> 109   her biþ mon læne,   her biþ mæg læne;
> 110   eal þis eorþan gesteal   idel weorþeð!'
> 111   Swa cwæð snottor on mode;   gesæt him sundor æt rune.
> 112   'Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ,   ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene,
> 113   beorn of his breostum acyþan00000   nemþe he ær þa bote cunne;
> 114   eorl mid elne gefremman.   Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
> 115   frofre to Fæder on heofonum,   þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð.'

After stating that all earthly things are transitory (108–110), the *snottor* sits apart from society, at thought (111). At this point the *anhaga* does not seem to have gained anything by this insight. He has realised the transience of the world, but does not seem to have discovered any solution to it. In fact, the poem states explicitly that he has not found a solution. Lines 112b–114a counsel the wise man not to criticise *out loud* unless he has some notion of how to effect a cure. The fact that he has no solution to the transience of life is therefore stated explicitly in line 111: *Swa cwæð snottor on mode* [emphasis mine]. The entire poem has been said in the wise man's mind – he has not voiced these criticisms out loud, because he has no notion of how to effect a cure.[13] However, the *snottor* has at least gained part of the understanding of lines 73 and 74: *Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið/ þonne eall þisse worulde wela weste stondeð. . . .* But there is no intimation that he has realised the solution to earthly transience – that Heaven is the only stability – by line 110. The culmination of the *anhaga*'s meditations is that everything is constantly decaying, and a resolution to the problem of transience is not forthcoming. The high point of the poem's depressive vision comes in the pronouncement : *. . . eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð* (110). The question is, how can hopelessness and a depressive vision of ultimate destruction change so rapidly to one of resolution and anticipatory bliss?

The answer lies in Ecclesiastes. Near the end come the proclamation that "vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas" ("everything is absolutely mutable" – 12: 8) once more, parallel to the same announcement in 1: 2b.[14] The author has considered life, and realised that it is transitory, just as the Wanderer has. He also has realised that Fate is not selective in bestowing hardships (12: 2), analogous to the Wanderer's statement that *wyrd biþ ful aræd*! (5). After the assertion that life is transient and hopeless comes a declaration that is totally opposed to this sentiment :

> finem loquendi omnes pariter audiamus
> Deum time et mandata eius observa hoc est enim omnis homo
> et cuncta quae fiunt adducet Deus in iudicium
> pro omni errato sive bonum sive malum sit (12: 13–14)
> ('Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,
> Fear God, and keep His Commandments; this applies to every man;
> And God shall bring every work into judgement,
> all that is hidden, whether it is good, or evil.').

The Ecclesiastes suddenly becomes hopeful, just as the Wanderer does. As in *Wan*, there is no thematic justification in *Eccles* for doing this. Throughout, the Ecclesiastes has dismissed everything as being "vanitas" ("ephemeral"). Because of this disparity between the philosophy of the exposition and that of the conclusion, the final passage seems to be an interpolation. However, by the time the book reached the Anglo-Saxons, the

conclusion, with its sudden philosophical and tonal change, was indistinguishable from the rest of the text. This gave the *Wan* poet an exemplar by which to loosely construct a poem. So, both works begin with an introduction by the poet (*Wan* 6–7, *Eccles* 1: 1); they both consider the futility of their experiences (*Wan* 8–63, *Eccles* 1: 12–12, 26); they both meditate on the transitory nature of existence in a more general sense (*Wan* 76–110, *Eccles* 3: 1–7, 18); they both have proverbial wisdom passages (*Wan* 64–75, *Eccles* 7–8: 8); they both intersperse references to God throughout the text (*Wan* 4, 85, 111, *Eccles* 1: 13, 3: 14–18, 9: 7), and they both express a philosophy that has no place for God, resulting in a strong declaration of the hopelessness engendered by mutability (*Wan* 110, *Eccles* 12: 8). Finally, they both have a sudden doctrinal and tonal change in the conclusion, which affirms both God's supremacy, and hope. As such, the disjunction that has been an enigma to scholars for so long is a case of analogy. Searching for an internal justification for the sudden doctrinal and tonal change is as futile as the Wanderer's vision of life; the only justification is in the external analogue of Ecclesiastes.

Other affinities

Apart from the structural and tonal similarities, it is interesting to note the number and pattern of voices in *Eccles* and *Wan*. In the OE poem, there is a short prologue (1–5), then the *eardstapa* is introduced (6). He obviously speaks at least until 28. It is possible that he stops speaking here, as the third-person pronoun in 29–57 can be construed as referring in an anaphoric fashion to the *eardstapa* of 7–28. The first person pronoun is resumed in 58. However, it does not occur again, with 64–110 being a generalised commentary on life's mutability. Finally, the commentator speaks in 111. It is unclear if 112–115 is spoken by the *snottor*, or by the commentator. Some analysts have seen three voices in the poem – the commentator, the *eardstapa*, and the *snottor*. However, it is equally as easy to posit two: just the commentator, and the *eardstapa*/*snottor*.

Richman (1982: 476), Leslie (1966: 3), and Hollowell (1983: 82) see the commentator (poet) as speaking 6–7 and 111. Pope (1965: 164–165) differs, identifying his speech as extending over 1–7, and 110–115. Richman (1982: 476) points out that the *swa cwæð* construction in 6 and 111 can refer to both preceding and following speech, more accurately glossed as "and he spoke further". This suggests that the final 4 lines are part of the *snottor*'s speech, as are lines 1–5. Apart from this, the principal contention is over how many personae there are. Pope (1965: 164) maintained that the *eardstapa* spoke lines 8–110, with a subordinate speech spoken by a hypothetical wise-man. Similarly, Huppé (1943: 529–530) and Green (1976: 450§3) recognised two personages – the Wanderer (8–62a), and the *wis wer* or *snottor* (92–110). In opposition to this, Lumiansky (1950: 105), Rumble

(1958: 229) and Greenfield (1969: 213, 220) maintain that the two are in fact the same person. Pope (1974: 75) later retracted his view, and subscribed to Lumiansky's theory.[15]

Certainly, the two voices of the commentator and the *eardstapa/snottor* are now the preferred analysis. From this, parallels between *Eccles* and *Wan* are immediately apparent. In *Eccles*, there is a one line "introduction", with a commentator cursorily stating the topic of the book and the persona, who is about to speak (1: 1). This is followed by the Ecclesiaste's speech in the first person, until 12: 9. Here, the commentator interjects, referring to "the Ecclesiastes". It is unclear whether the final two verses are those of the commentator, or of the Ecclesiastes himself. There is a directly comparable situation in *Wan*. The two voices are the commentator and the *eardstapa/snottor*. These voices occur in similar positions – to introduce the speaker (*Eccles* 1.1, *Wan* 6–7), and to introduce the sudden change in outlook at the end (*Eccles* 12: 10–11, [12?], and *Wan* 111). Unfortunately, apart from indicating that there are in fact only two speakers – the commentator and protagonist – comparing with *Eccles* does not fine down the analysis any more. This is because *Wan* is only loosely related to *Eccles*, not being a dependent adaptation, such as "Judith" was to its source.

To return to elements of doctrine, it is notable that Fate/*wyrd* plays a significant role. Lines 15–16 point out that despair cannot change Fate's course, and neither can worrying, analogous to *Eccles* 8: 7–8, 9: 2. Even so, Fowler (1967: 3) points out that *wyrd* had probably lost its overtly pagan connotations by the time this poem was written. However, it seems likely that there was some semantic contrast between *wyrd* and God's will. *Wyrd* was probably an attempt to appeal to the notion of fate in Ecclesiastes – a notion not wholly pagan, but abstracted and distinct from conventional Christian doctrine. Certainly, it is inadvisable to posit a wholly Christian sense for *wyrd*. With a tradition of non-Christian usage behind him, the poet probably used this consciously and deliberately to create a doctrinal contrast, and to indicate the relation to the Fate of *Eccles*, and perhaps to other wisdom poetry.

There are also several minor imagistic and philosophical parallelisms. All wealth passes away (*Wan* 73–77, 108 cf. *Eccles* 1: 4a), and only the desolated earth remains (*Wan* 99–105, *Eccles* 1: 4b). With this, the realisation that wisdom brings in *Wan* is *gæstlic* (73) – it is appalling that the world will be laid waste. Aptly, *Eccles* 1: 18 comments that "eo quod in multa sapientia multa sit indignatio et qui addit scientam addat et laborem" ("in much wisdom is much grief: whoever increases knowledge [in himself] increases sorrow"). Certainly, the *eardstapa* is wise. He has spent a good deal of time in the world – a prerequisite to being wise (64–65), and realises the mutability of all things. By 110, he has realised that *eall þis eorþan*

gesteal idel weorþeð!. Certainly, knowledge and wisdom has only increased his sorrow. There is no traditional sense that the wise prosper and the wicked suffer, as in Proverbs. Even the *snottor* experiences much suffering, consistent with *Eccles* 2: 15–17. There is also something reminiscent about the wise man who has worked hard to insure his own security in *Eccles* 2: 23. It sounds like a particularly apt description of the *eardstapa*: "cuncti dies eius doloribus et aerumnis pleni sunt nec per noctem mente requiescit" ("all his days are sorrowful and full of hardship; neither can he find rest at night"). Certainly, the *eardstapa* is sorrowful (8, 15–17) and restless at night (39–48).

The *eardstapa* also takes a while to learn that "melius est ire ad domum luctus quam ad domum convivii . . ." ("it is better to go into a house of mourning than a house of feasting" – *Eccles* 7: 2). The *eardstapa* is searching constantly for a feast-hall (25), finally realising how transitory this all is, and ends up sitting apart at thought. Indeed, the realisation of transience induces anguish in the wise-man (*Wan* 55–56, 76), agreeing with the same notion in *Eccles* 7: 5: "cor sapientium ubi tristitia est" ("The heart of the wise is where sadness is"). *Eccles* 12: 1–2 is also somewhat illuminating. It warns about remembering God in one's youth, while the light of the sun, moon, and stars are not extinguished, "et revertantur nubes post pluviam" ("not the clouds return after the rain" – 12: 2b).[16] The *anhaga* is in the totally opposite position – he is old, and, indeed, "darkness comes" both emotionally and physically (95, 96, 104).[17]

The extent of analogy

It is unwise to search for external imagery analogues for every case in *Wan*. The poet has obviously used the traditional images at his disposal, such as the sea (cf. *Seafarer*), battle – with beasts of battle (82–84), and assaults (80–82), and the pleasures of the hall (25–26).[18] He uses these well, employing the Anglo-Saxon stock character "the Exile" (cf. *Seafarer, Wife's Lament, Dream of the Rood*) which compare to *Eccles*' stock Jewish epitome of Wisdom – King Solomon.[19]

Apart from imagery, it is obvious that the author of *The Wanderer* did not aim to create a poem exactly parallel in structure to Ecclesiastes. Certainly, such a suggestion is obviously untenable. However, it is fruitful to realise that the poet knew about the non-New Testament wisdom books, their philosophy, aspects of their imagery, and aspects of their structure (especially that of *Eccles*'). With this knowledge taken into account, the enigma of the sudden change in tone can be satisfactorily accounted for: the Anglo-Saxon poet was following a structural precedent, emulating a well-known work of the same genre. What obscures these ties to the Biblical wisdom books most is the expert adaptation of traditional elements and imagery into the fabric of the poem. It is this expert fusion of Bible-

derived philosophy and structure with traditional elements that has caused so much confusion, and eluded explanation for so long.

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<div align="center">Notes</div>

*   All quotations from the Old English poem *The Wanderer* are taken from Leslie's (1966) edition. All quotations from the Vulgate are taken from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* (1994).

1.   Interpolation theory: Craigie (1923); Mixture: Fowler (1967: 1–2); Christian theory: Timmer (1944: 180–185), Burrow (1965: 168). Kintgen (1975: 119) points out internal parallelisms in the poem, consistent with analysing the work as a unified whole.

2.   Also include the seemingly related *Seafarer*. I will avoid discussing this poem, as it offers little insight into the main thesis of this paper, although it bears imagistic and poetic relations to *The Wanderer* (see Cornell 1981: 307).

3.   Cf. Pope (1965: 172) and Bately (1984: 3).

4.   See also Lumiansky (1950: 109–111), Cross (1961: 64), Leslie (1996: 89–90), and Horgan (1987: 40, 46) who also gives a good study of Boethian analogues.

5.   Fowler (1967: 3) cautions against looking for analogues in case the Germanic elements of the work are minimised or disregarded. I think there is now no danger of this. More recently, Pasternack (1991: 122) recommends that the search for analogues "that the manuscript badly represents" be given up. However, finding such an external analogue will hopefully resolve what an internal approach has failed to do.

6.   That it is Christian is obvious from the references to God (3, 85, 114). Further discussion below will enhance this point.

7.   That the OT and Apocrypha were the more popular parts of the Bible for the Anglo-Saxons is witnessed by the relatively large number of adaptations and variations on these works: *Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, Judith*, and so forth. Even apocalyptic works (*Dream of the Rood, Christ and Satan*) have elements of Old Testament events or apocalypticism in them. This popularity probably stemmed from certain cultural similarities between the Anglo-Saxons and the Israelites, such as aspects of the warrior ethic.

8.   By "non-proverbial" I refer to the fact that the poem has a setting external to the wisdom precepts themselves, unlike the bare maxims of the Old Testament book Proverbs. Even so, it is undeniable that *Wan* has wisdom passages in it. Its appeal to a *snottor* is equivalent to the "wise-man" persona of Ecclesiastes. Its blend of experience and general musing is also paralleled in *Eccles*, as is its sudden change of tone – doctrinally, and emotionally. Given this, it is evident that *Wan* is part of the Wisdom genre. I identify the other non-NT Wisdom books as Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and Job. These can be sub-categorised according to a gradation from pure experientially-derived wisdom, to purely abstract contemplation. However, most of this books are not at the polar ends of the scale, but a mixture. Even Proverbs attempts to place its maxims within an experiential narrative framework (1: 1–4). Nearer the other end of the scale, Job couches everything within a narrative framework, although there are some proverbial passages (e.g. 18: 7–21). Ecclesiastes is probably the most centrally located on the spectrum, having both narrative and proverbial elements. Lamentations also bears some relation to the tone of *Wan* as it is a book of mournful exile.

9.   Hollowell (1983: 85) utterly rejects this notion. Indeed, there is no evidence that the speaker's attitude alters at all throughout lines 8–110. The transition to the conclusion is undeniably sudden.

10.   For a similar view, see Whitbread (1970: 174).

11.   Another opinion is that of Tripp (1972: 345–349), who proposes that the *anhaga* is in fact dead. This seems distinctly unlikely, as he is contrasted with the ghostly dead in 49–57. Also, Hollowell (1991: 86, 7) claims that the poem is a seer's vision. This goes part-way towards explaining the apparent sense of Christian interpolation in the poem, but again denies any purposeful thematic unity.

12.   It may be the case that the extreme nature of *Eccles*' view is condemned in Wisdom of Solomon 2: 1b–9, whose refutation of ungodly philosophies seem similar to several of *Eccles* statements. Even if this is not so, *Eccles* is certainly not orthodox.

13.   Richman (1982: 473) likewise points out that the *snottor* does not speak aloud, because of lines 11b–14.

14.   This parallelism is somewhat equivalent to the semi-directive in *Wan* that *biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw /þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his hordcofa*n . . . (12–14a), which is repeated in an extended version in 112b–114a. Of course, parallelism of this sort is a well-used literary device, and hardly unique to these poems, yet is useful to keep this in mind when one considers the tonal similarities of the two works.

15.   Another attempt to determine the number of voices has been made by Bolton (1969: 7) and to a lesser extent by Pasternack (1991: 102), who appeal to the variation in pronominal forms. However, this has its limitations, as different literary strategies allow for a speaker to refer to themselves in the third person.

16.   Similar images of dark places and remembering affliction also occur in Lamentations 3: 6, 9.

17.   By way of note on other imagery, the referents in the famous "ubi sunt" passage (92–95) seem to be quite random. There is a mixture between the human – *mago, maþþumgyfa, byrnwiga* – and the non-human *mearg* and *symbla gesetu*. Certainly, these items are related. They bespeak the warrior comitatus, with the battle-horse, the warrior, the patron, and the feast-hall. However, there is an interesting mix here which suggests that the poet is aiming to point out that whatever happens to man happens to beasts – man has no pre-eminence above a beast, or above an inanimate object (cf. *Eccles* 3: 19); all die, or are eventually destroyed. A related image is the ruined city (77–87). This was a motif in other Wisdom books (*Eccles* 9: 14–15, and Lamentations 1: 1–7 – a city laid waste by God, cf. *Wan* 85–87).

18.   For a fuller account of the traditional heroic elements in the poem see Richardson (1990). Malmberg (1973: 220) points out that much of the imagery is formulaic. Even so, the originality of the poet lies in his blending of traditional and Christian elements.

19.   Bjork (1989: 119) suggests the poem reflects the contemporary Anglo-Saxon culture. It is this process of literary cultural adaptation that obscures the analogues and sources of certain poems.

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