

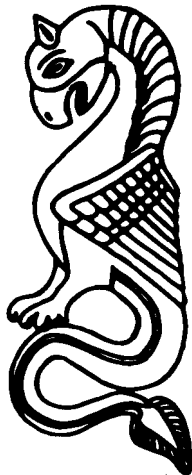
Leeds Studies in English

Article:

W. F. Bolton, 'The Dimensions of The Wanderer', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 3 (1969), 7-34

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=122566&siloleft=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

THE DIMENSIONS OF *THE WANDERER*

By W. F. BOLTON

I

We are presented with so many contradictory interpretations of this poem that the student of recent criticism might believe nothing of demonstrable truth and validity had been or could be written.¹ That would perhaps not be altogether odd on the level of what the poem *says*, the level of interpretation; but actually critics have been refining the notions of B. F. Huppé for the last twenty years or more without for the most part substantially departing from them.² On the other hand, the level of what the poem *is*, the level of description, reveals no unanimity or even common drift. Again Huppé was an early advocate of one point of view, that the poem is textually sound and that it presents a structure which can be described in terms of "voice" (introduction, monologue, conclusion, and the like). Huppé even provided, in the second part of his article, an elaborate schematic description of this structure.

Perhaps Huppé's failure to influence and direct most later writers on the more or less physical side of the poem's analysis lay precisely in his rejection of the most obvious physical materials for such an analysis. Although he believed that "Only through a detailed study of the poem itself can there be any assurance that the poem does indicate the presence behind it of a conscious unifying plan, revealed in its structure and rhetorical pattern," he soon went on: "Actually the grammatical changes in person (at 29b and 58a) when they are taken in the context of the whole passage from 8a-62a can be shown to be in effect rhetorical, so that they do not actually indicate a change in subject or shift in point of view."³ Huppé gives priority to meaning ("context," "theme") and style over grammatical forms in his analysis, even though—the notion was not, admittedly, very widespread in 1943—grammatical forms are the most unambiguously and hence demonstrably structured features of any utterance. So the structure by way of the theme became the highway of *Wanderer* critics following him, and as they quibbled over theme, they diverged about structure. Only one has really reasserted that the text is disordered,⁴ but the adequacy of Huppé's view of the existing text has been repeatedly questioned. Lumiansky thought it "an artistically unified dramatic monologue. . . . According to this view, only lines 6 and 7 and line 111 would be classified as necessary expository comments by the poet"; and he consequently presented a drastically simplified schematic outline.⁵ Lumiansky did not question why in a poem 115 lines long the poet should have managed to sustain the *persona* of the wanderer in all but three lines, none of them initial or final.

In 1951 Greenfield returned to Huppé's work and found himself able to agree with much of it, but thought that the definition of structure (in this case,

where a speech does or does not end) by theme (the sentiments in the speech) was "circular" and, in fact, wrong.⁶ He did refer to "syntactic evidence and rhetorical patterns" to break the circularity, but acknowledged them to be "insufficient for a final judgment; this must come from an examination of the content of the lines involved."⁷ As a result, he arrived at a simple scheme which saw the wanderer's speech as a continuous monologue throughout lines 8-110, on the basis of their content. One further source for this simplification was Greenfield's belief that Huppé had been wrong to hold that the poet had used the same rhetorical devices both to link and to distinguish the two speakers; but Greenfield's is an extra-linguistic logic that overlooks the kind of jolt that paronomasia gives, or the kind of insight that phonemic minimal pairs provide: the juxtaposition of similar sounds, notions, or things, is the surest way to highlight their differences.

In 1955 Stanley once again invited us to expect a rigorous investigation when he asserted that poetic diction was the "key" to difficult poems, although in the event he meant that rhetorical similitudes imply a world-view that accepts analogies, which seems likely enough; but it enabled him to say that "occasional interchange of the first and third person singular indicates that the convention of the first person could be used without the poet's feeling personal attachment to the first person in his poems."⁸ In 1958 Rumble, who believed the structural unity of the poem had been substantiated, held that the "structural principle" required the poem to be a soliloquy, not a monologue.⁹ Cross, writing in 1961 about the poem's *genre*, referred at the outset to "problems of structure," but went on to specify that "The major problems have been the lack of a clear sequence of thought throughout the poem," that is, that the structural problems have to do with sequences of meaning.¹⁰ In the same year, Elliott believed he had demonstrated that the poem was "an artistic and structural whole" by recreating the biographical events that lay behind it.¹¹

A much more important publication in 1961 was that of Erzgräber, who subsumed and extended the work of Grubl in analysing the poem in a schematic *Bauplan*.¹² This significant step will be reviewed later. In 1964 Rosier employed a three-dimensional model to describe the poem: "a conical spiral, since the progress of its ratiocination moves from a base of literal experience . . . to a vertex at which the experience has become conceptualized and abstracted."¹³ But the focus of his attention was word, not pattern; item, not scheme; the thing structured, not the structure. In 1965 Dean adopted the "position of R. M. Lumiansky and S. B. Greenfield that there is only one speaker in the poem,"¹⁴ but of more interest that year was the appearance of J. C. Pope's article on "Dramatic Voices in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*."¹⁵ Pope rightly went back to Huppé as the man who had prepared the way for the monologue theory, although he had not believed it himself. Pope sought to restore the "two speakers" view and put it on a firmer basis than Huppé had done: "What did not occur to Mr. Huppé . . . was that if there are two speakers in a poem they can both use the pronoun of the first person. Suppose we start with the possibility that the *eardstapa* and the *snottor on mode* are different characters . . . and ask ourselves how much of the poem . . . is appropriate to each."¹⁶ I shall return to Pope's theory later; for now, it is important only to notice that he holds that the "appropriateness" of content is a surer indication of who is speaking than are pronoun form and reference.

In 1966 appeared the first separate critical edition of the poem by R. F. Leslie, who employed Huppé's terminology in calling one section of his introduction (and of his bibliography) "Theme and Structure." He acknowledged that "The determination of the limits of the main monologue and of the number and extent of any other speeches, has an important bearing on any interpretation of the structure of the poem"; but he held at the same time that "there is alternation between the first and third person throughout much of what is generally accepted as the wanderer's speech," and later that "Because the use of *ic* extends to the sentence ending in line 62, it has generally been assumed that the wanderer's speech goes as far as this line at least. . . . It is difficult, however, to separate the philosophic tone of lines 58-62 from that of the lines which follow,"¹⁷ thereby becoming—so far as I know—the first critic to find "tone" more distinctive than the personal pronoun. Most recently Fowler has shown the difficulties which arise from the poem's "heterogeneity" and suggested that "because of the miscellaneity of its contents, and their apparent looseness of connection, a single theme, or enveloping structural device, is difficult to agree on."¹⁸ Fowler's odd miscellaneity or heterogeneity of content and structure, theme and connection, makes a fitting culmination for this sequence.

Indeed, most writers have meant little more by "structure" than (a) whether the poem was intact or not, (b) where speeches began and ended, or (c) what the sequence of thought may have been. And in general they have used (c) to unravel (a) and (b). In a poem with so many striking formal features—including but not only lines 32-3 (the *nales* passage), 66-69 (the *ne sceal* to passage), 80-83 (the *sum* passage), 92-95 (the *hwær cwom* and *eala* passage) and 108-109 (the *her bið* passage)—it really is remarkable that the distinctive features of form have been rejected as materials for investigation, and that the question of structure has rarely taken the word in the sense of "The mutual relation of the constituent parts or elements of a whole as determining its peculiar nature or character" (*OED*, s.v. *Structure*, sb.3). Huppé and Lumiansky did present schematic analyses of "the mutual relation of the constituent parts or elements," and so did Grubl/Erzgräber. None of these went on to satisfy the remainder of the definition, "as determining its peculiar nature or character," nor did Pope when he returned to the two-voice view; but at least Grubl/Erzgräber did break away from the simplistic view that structure is a matter of linear coherence or sequential organization.

All critics, whether working on intrinsic evidence (Huppé, Stanley, Pope, Fowler, *et al.*) or extrinsic evidence (Smithers, Cross, *et al.*),¹⁹ have taken a deductive approach to the poem, and their deductions have been more or less subjective, personal or interpretive, as suited them. It appears that no understanding of the poem will gain broad acceptance unless it takes an inductive approach, objective, impersonal and quantitative.

What I propose is a look at the poem as a physical object, making the most of those aspects of it that can be objectively demonstrated: linguistic features, especially tense, case, number, person, part of speech, as well as lexical clusters; prosodic features; rhetorical features; and numerical features, including proportion. These are the "constituent parts or elements" we can agree about; their "mutual relation" is the access we shall have to the "nature or character" of the whole.

Forþon ne mæg wearþan wis wer ær *he* age . . .

and the passage so begun continues (with *he* at 69, 70) until the question of voice is handled yet a different way, in lines 88-91, although introduced with the important *se*:

Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte
 ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð
 frod in ferðe, feor oft gemon
 wælsleahta worn ond þas word acwið. . . .

The passage that follows contains neither first- nor third-person pronouns, but the introduction has clearly fixed the point of view as different from that of the speaker who habitually and exclusively employs the third-person pronoun. That speaker returns—with his characteristic grammatical *leitmotiv*—at line 111:

Swa cwæð snottor on mode; gesæt him sundor æt rune.
 Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal næfre his torn
 to rycene,
 beorn of his breostum acyþan nemþe he ær þa bote
 cunne;
 eorl mid elne gefremman. Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
 frofre to Fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung
 stondeð.

Here both *he* (*him, his*) and *se þe* set the concluding lines off aggressively in their recurrence. In the final line occurs the only appearance of the fused first- and third-person singular—that is, the first-person plural—in the poem.

So far we have seen that the pattern of the early lines of the poem makes it clear that point of view, as expressed in the personal pronouns singular, is a deliberate and unambiguous device to distinguish the speakers of the poem. Pope's error was in thinking that *ic* could refer to each of two speakers; closer examination shows that one speaker always talks about *ic*, and that the other—who always talks about the first speaker—has consequently no need for the first-person pronoun but relies very heavily on the third-person personal and relative constructions. Their utterances can be charted thus:

A1 Lines 1-7 (*him, he*; no *ic*). 7 lines.

B1 Lines 8-29a (*ic, etc.*, 7 times and in one emendation; *he, etc.*, only in subordinate relation). 21½ lines.

A2 Lines 29b-57 (*se þe, he, etc.* 15 times; no *ic, etc.*). 28½ lines.

B2 Lines 58-63 (*Forþon ic, min, ic*; no *he, etc.*). 6 lines.

A3 Lines 64-91 (*Forþon . . . he, he* twice more, *se*; no *ic, etc.*). 28 lines.

B3 Lines 92-110 (introduced *Se . . . acwið*; no personal pronouns). 19 lines.

A4 Lines 111-115 (*se þe, etc.* twice, *he, etc.* 5 times; no *ic, etc.*). 5 lines.

Two points should be made about this scheme. One is that the systems it depends on are of course available within the grammar of Old English, but that this articulation of them is entirely an effect of the poet's. He has used

the resources of his language grammatically, but he has restricted the "rules" of his grammar to make special distinctions according to the needs of his poem. The "rules" of his grammar do not break any of those of Old English in general; on the contrary they are more stringent and particular. A second point is that the seven sections thus defined in terms of a continuous and progressive system present a sequence of interesting symmetry:

7 lines—21½—28½—6—28—19—5;

or, in terms of "small, medium and large":

S : M : L : S : L : M : S
A1 B1 A2 B2 A3 B3 A4

Thus A dominates not only by having the first and last say, but also by having the two longest of the other speeches. (The sigla A and B assume two speakers because of the two-term contrast, first person: third person; but B3, although certainly distinct from A3 and A4, perhaps does not alternate with them. This is a matter for later discussion.)

The coherence of this scheme is, I submit, much greater than that proposed by Leslie, who adopts with a modification the scheme of Lumiansky

- Lines 1-5, Wanderer
6-7, poet
8-91, Wanderer
92-96, Wanderer quoting the *Wis Wer*
97-110, Wanderer
111, poet
112-116 Wanderer as *Snottor on Mode*.

Leslie accepts Lumiansky's rather odd notion that the poet fell three lines short of sustaining a monologue; introduces the awkward idea that lines 92-96 are a quotation within a quotation; and obtains a result in seven sections to be sure, but sections of almost entirely arbitrary length-distribution (5, 2, 83, 5, 14, 1, 5,) except for the 5-line unit at beginning, middle and end (which he does not comment on anyway). Like Leslie, Grubl/Erzgräber arrive at their scheme by way of meaning rather than by way of overt formal features. Deprived of the interpretive titles for each section, it appears thus:

I. Epic introduction [7 lines]

1. 1-2a
2. 2b-5
3. 6-7

II. Monologue of the Wanderer

i. [50 lines]

1. 8-11a
2. 11b-18
3. 19-29a
4. 29b-36
5. 37-40

ii. [53 lines]

1. 58-63
2. 64-72
3. 73-80a
4. 80b-87
5. 88-91

- 6. 41-44
- 7. 45-50a
- 8. 50b-53a
- 9. 53b-55a
- 10. 55b-57

- 6. 92-95a
- 7. 95b-96
- 8. 97-100
- 9. 101-105
- 10. 106-110

III. Epic-learned conclusion [5 lines]

- 1. 111
- 2. 112-114a
- 3. 114b-115.²¹

This attractive scheme seems to fail because the corresponding items in II. i and II. ii do not really correspond in sense. Nor do they correspond in shape: II. i. 1, 7, and 10 are especially dissimilar from the same sections in II. ii. If such a scheme is meant to be an interpretive tool, its subjectivity may make it misleading. If it is meant to represent, or at least be a paradigm of, the poet's scheme, then it is either wrong or right, and there should be a way to test that. Unfortunately, the test in this case is our agreement or otherwise with the critics' sense of what each passage is "about," and with their assumption of a two-part monologue throughout all but the opening and closing few lines. The evidence, on the contrary, is for a purposefully shifting point of view.

Huppé's diagram does not seem to have influenced others, as Lumiansky did Leslie or Grubl did Erzgräber. It is too long to reproduce here, but may be summarized:

- | | |
|--|---|
| A1 (1-5) Introduction | |
| X1 (6-7) Introductory formula | |
| B1 (8-62a) Wanderer's Monologue | { 8-29a first person
29b-57 impersonal
58-62a first person
62b-65a introduction
65b-84 body
85-87 conclusion |
| A2 (62b-87) Bridge Passage | |
| X2 (88-91) Introductory formula | |
| B2 (91-110) Wise-man's Monologue | { 91-96 introduction
97-105 description of ruin
106-110 conclusion |
| X3 Concluding formula (111) | |
| A3 (112-115) Conclusion, parallel with A1 in construction. ²² | |

This summary leaves out much of Huppé's delicacy—he was able to distinguish further subdivisions to the right of those in B1 and A2—but it may serve to show the outline of the poem's structure, as he saw it. Although he used structural terminology, he did so unsteadily and sometimes not really accurately: 29b-57 are not "impersonal" in the same sense that 8-29a are "first person," and those terms are not categorical in the same way that "introduction" and "conclusion" are. Moreover, the distribution is once again haphazard and fragmentary so far as length is concerned: B1 and B2 are nothing like the same size. Indeed, the scheme does not so much represent an analogue of the poem's structure as it does a paragraph outline, which is quite a different matter.

As Pope based his analysis on Huppé, we may best glance at it here. It is "structural" only in the sense that it seeks to assign lines to speakers, and arrives at the scheme:

Lines	1-5	<i>Eardstapa</i>
"	6-7	Poet
"	8-57	<i>Eardstapa</i>
"	58-110	<i>Snottor on mode</i> (not the same as the <i>Eardstapa</i>)
"	111-115	Poet.

It will be seen that this scheme is not unlike Grubl/Erzgräber's, except that it makes a division at 5/6, and assigns the two long central speeches to different speakers and makes no parallel between them. Pope's analysis does away with the feature of Huppé's that most closely approached that of this paper, the alternation of speakers, although it is still not so homogeneous as the systems of Lumiansky and those others who see the poem as a monologue, save for these or those few lines.

III

So far we have observed the way that a pattern which the poet designates from the outset as one of particular importance has had a distinguishing effect on the speakers and a shaping effect on the poem; but the pattern itself is grammatical, not poetic in any direct way. We may now turn to the more directly poetic devices available to the poet, and to his organizing use of them, to see whether it corresponds with the use he has made of grammatical devices. Such poetic devices include assonance and echoism, alliteration, and rhetorical shaping. In the second and third of these the effect of "design" is most marked; but critics have pointed out that the first makes its contribution as well.

Once again it is Huppé whose remarks are most far-reaching. He pointed out the parallelism of such phrases as *Sorg bið geniwad* (50) and *Cearo bið geniwad* (55) and the sequence of *Wat se þe cunnað* (29b), *wat se þe sceal* (37) and *þam þe . . . sceal* (56) as unifying devices in the passage 29b-57. He noted the cohesive effect of *geond* and its compounds in 58 and *geondhweorfeð* 51, *geondsceawað* 52, *geondþence* 60. And he gave appropriate importance to the way the *hwær-eala* series (92-95) is recalled in the *her-eal* series (106-110); in the latter case echoic effects heighten the existing rhetorical patterns.²³

More evidence of a similar kind can be added to Huppé's. Much of it partakes of the nature of assonance or slant-rhyme, and like rhyme makes its appearance in the off-verse—where, in any case, the headstave draws the focus of attention. These "off-verse harmonies" include patterns like *fæste binde/binðað fæste* (13, 18); *his goldwine/his winedryhtnes* (35, 37); *geare cunne/cunne gearwe* (69, 71); *weste stondeð/weallas stondaþ* (74, 76). They also include the more elaborate series *stormas cnyssað, hrusan bindeð, won cymeð, norþan onsendeð* (101-104), which prepares for the final set: *rune, rycene, cunne, secedeð, stondeð* (111-115), a pattern more extended and more elaborate than those which went before and alerted us to it.

Of these patterns, all except the *geond* series are contained within one or another of the seven sections defined above: *fæste binde* in B1; *bið geniwad, wat se þe sceal*, and *goldwine/winedryhtnes* in A2; *geare cunne* and *weste/*

weallas in A3; *hwær/her, eala/eal*, and the four lines in *-ð* in B3; and the *-ne/-eð* pattern throughout the whole of A4. The technique is not consistent: there are no obvious examples in A1 or, apparently, B2. But B2 shares with A2 the *geond* series that runs over the border between them. The exact context of these employments is instructive:

þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð,
greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað
secga geseldan . . . (51-53)

Forþon ic geþencan ne mæg geond þas woruld
for hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce
þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence. . . . (58-60)

The technique appears to be a reiteration of the *Oft him/Oft ic* juxtaposition that created the important distinction in the early lines of the poem: the vocabulary of *geond* and its compounds is in both cases in the context of *þonne, mod-*, but the difference in point of view is explicit in the forceful specification of pronoun reference. In A3 *geond* and *geondþenceð* recur (75, 89), the former in *geond þisne middangeard* and the latter in *lif . . . geondþenceð*, repeating the contexts of B2 as B2 did those of A2; so it really appears that this series, with its associated vocabulary, is being used to set off A2, B2 and B3 with progressive sets of *geond*-words in the off-verses of two lines in each section, which are so related to their grammatical context as to make the shift in point of view from third to first and back to third person perfectly clear.

Another pattern which the poet elaborated is that of alliteration. Of course the alliterative pattern is part of the obligatory organizing principle of the Old English verse line, no less than the grammar of Old English was part of the organizing pattern of the sentence. But here, as with the grammar, the poet has introduced his own specialized practices which represent a restriction on, and hence clustering of, the patterns available to him. Of the nineteen possible staves, two (*p* and *sp*) do not occur in the vocabulary of the poem, and two more (*r* and *sc*) occur but not in the alliterative scheme. The fifteen remaining options should occur on average seven or eight times, once in every 15 lines. In fact, one staff—*w*—occurs twenty-three times, on average once in every five lines; and the next most common staff, which has only fourteen appearances, is the nondescript vowel alliteration. The dominance of *w* even enters into a little scheme of alternating lines (74-80):

þonne eall þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard
winde biwaune weallas stondaþ,
hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
Woriað þa winsalo, waidend licgað
dreame bidrorene; duguþ eal gecrong
wlonc bi wealle. Sume wig fornom. . . .

I do not know why the poet gave *w* such prominence. Of course, some words central to his argument begin with it: *woruld, waldend, wyrd, wine, wis,*

wræclast, *wyn*, and *word* itself; but that does not seem to be the reason. In all, the effect is that of harmonizing the acoustic aspect of the entire poem, for the stave first appears at line 5 and continues without a major break, except between 45 and 57, right up to 107. It participates in the unity of what we might loosely call "style." But it also participates in the sectional structure in seven divisions. It occurs fairly uniformly over the poem, although sometimes it is organized into short lyric sections like the one quoted above, and it is absent from the last section entirely—but, as we have seen, that section is bound by particularly great pronoun coherence and endline assonance. What is more, it occurs at each of the internal section boundaries (except of course the one which modulates to section A4) in lines 7, 29, 57, 64 and 91. When the use of the stave is so widespread as to refute any suggestion of accident, is it really probable that its employment at these structural cruxes is by chance?

In addition to the five passages of rhetorical shaping mentioned above (p. 9), we should perhaps add the neat little couplet (15-16)

Ne mæg werigmod wyrde wiðstandan
ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman,

with its compact apophthegmatic parallelism. We then have six passages, counting the continuous *hwær cwom* and *eala* passages as one:

Lines	15-16	(2 lines)	B1
„	32-33	(2 lines)	A2
„	66-69a	(3½ lines)	A3
„	80b-83	(3½ lines)	A3
„	92-95a	(3½ lines)	B3
„	108-109	(2 lines)	B3

I think the lesson of this is in the first place obvious. The passages given overt rhetorical shaping have also a gradation of extent which parallels the symmetrical gradation that our structural analysis has revealed. It is moreover noteworthy that the "purple passages" do not occur in the sections designated S in the schema (A1, B2, A4) and that they do not, of course, run over any borders as the schema defines them; they hardly could, given the alternation in point of view which the schema argues. There is also a regularity of occurrence in which the first set ends on line 16, $2 \times 16 = 32$; the second set begins on 32 and ends on 33, $2 \times 33 = 66$; the third set begins on 66. Returning to the first interval, $5 \times 16 = 80$, the fourth set begins on 80. The fifth set begins on 92; $16 \text{ plus } 92 = 108$, the last set begins on 108. Of course I am not arguing that there is a strict numerical progression here; the "formula" has had to be adjusted somewhat to get even this degree of regularity. But uniformity of a significant sort does exist as a matter of structural principle in these lines as the calculations reveal it, and this kind of structure continues and substantiates the structure outlined in the overall analysis and already elaborated in the patterns of assonance and alliteration.

A number of writers have talked about another kind of word-pattern in *The Wanderer* in addition to the one I grouped with alliteration and assonance because of its phonetic features, and that is the lexical cluster. Rosier is among those who talk most usefully about this kind of pattern, which he regards as one of "generation." He emphasizes that the

distinctive unit of the first thirty-three lines is articulated by the multiple recurrence of *mod* (-*cearig*, -*sefa*), *ceare* (together with the adjective form in compounds, *mod-cearig*, *earm-*, *winter-*), and *bindan* (together with the noun, *gebind*). *Ceare*/*-cearig* finds variation in *dreorig* . . . and *sorg* . . . *bindan* is varied in *healdan* . . . and the striking use of *sælan* . . . ; the ideas of *mod* and *bindan* coalesce in *ferðloca* . . . *hordcofa* . . . and *breostcofa* . . . the idea of both [*loca* and *cofa*] recurs in the locution for grave, *hrusan heolstre*. . . . *Cofa* also means 'cave' . . . which . . . very likely was the poet's intended meaning of *hrusan heolstre*, because in line 84 he returns to this same experience of burying one's lord and there uses the word, *eorðscræfa*, 'earth-cave.'²⁴

Later Rosier goes on to say similar things about the cluster in lines 74-115 involving, among other items, *eal*, *weal*, *stondan*, *woruld*, *eorþe*, and *bindan* again. But a study of the first cluster he analyzes will suffice to reveal his method and some of its fruits. He brings together morphological groupings like *mod*, *modcearig*, *wintercearig*; grammatical groupings through "variation" like *bindan*, *healdan* (13, 14); semantic groupings like *-cearig*, *dreorig* which, although Rosier says they "find variation" in one another, are not in fact variants even in lines 24-25,

wod wintercearig	ofer waþema gebind,
sohte seledreorig	sinces byrttan,

where they are not appositives but morphemes in words which are; coalescence of ideas, like *mod* plus *bindan* → *ferðloca*; and recurrence of experience. His "clusters," then, range from the morphological and syntactic to the semantic and existential. They are revealing, but they seem to occur sporadically on a number of disconnected parameters, and they correspond with no overt features of structure as we have defined them.

Yet if we look at the central concept in his interpretation, we shall see that it is perfectly valid; more than one critic has agreed with Leslie that the poem is especially rich in compounds, that is, words made up of two free morphemes. And it is true that many of these compounds include morphemes that occur elsewhere, either on their own or in other compounds. The following concordance lists only those free morphemes that appear more than once, and only when at least one appearance is in a compound:

an(a) 8 -haga 1 -hoga 40
 breost 113 -cofa 18
 cear(o) 9, 55 earm-ig 20 mod-ig 2 winter-ig 24
 -cofa breost- 18 hord- 14
 -cwide- -giedd 55 lar- 38
 dream 79 sele- 93
 dreorig 17 -hleor 83 sele- 25
 eard- -geard 85 -stapa 6
 earm 40 -cearig 20

eorþe 106, 110 -scræf 84
ferð 54, 90 collen- 71 -loca 13, 33
fugol 81 brim- 47
-geard eard- 85 middan- 62, 75
geond 3, 58, 75 -hweorfan 51 -sceawian 52 -þencan 60, 89
georn(e) 52, 69 dom- 17
gold 32 -wine 22, 35
feoh 108 -gifre 68
gifre feoh- 68 wæl- 100
hægl 48 -faru 105
heorte 49 hat- 66
hrim 48, 77 -ceald 4
hweorfan 72 geond- 51
last 97 wræc- 5, 32
mæg 51, 109 freo- 21 wine- 7
mod 41, 51, 111 -cearig 2 -ig 62 -sefa 10, 19, 59
mon 109 -dryhten 41
niht -helm 96 -scua 104
rice 106 woruld- 65
secg 53 sele- 34
sefa 57 mod- 10, 19, 59
sele -dream 93, -dreorig 25 -secg 34
sinc 25 -þege 34
(ge) steal 110 weal- 88
(ge) þencan 58, 88 geond- 60, 89
wæl -gifre 100 -sleht 7, 91
weal 76, 80, 98 -steal 88
werig 57 -mod 15
wiga 67 byrn- 94
wine gold- 22, 35 -dryhten 37 -mæg 7
winter 65, 103 -cearig 24
woruld 58, 74, 107 -rice 106.

The connexions among these may be diagrammed:

```

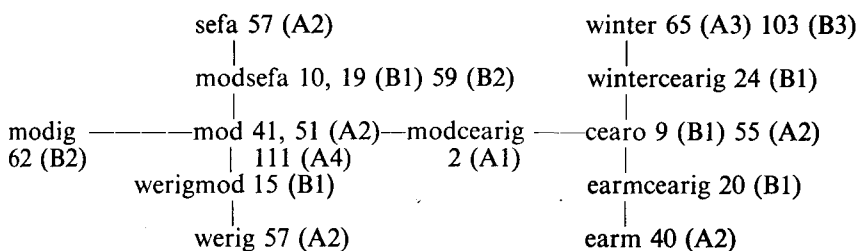
108 feoh                                wælsleht 7, 91
   |                                     |
68 feohgifre-----wælgifre 100
  
```

The scheme can be amplified for more numerous and more complex systems:

```

                                     21 freomæg-----mæg 51, 109
                                           |
32 gold                                winemæg 7
   |                                     |
22, 35 goldwine-----winedryhten 37
   |                                     |
53 secg                                dream 79    17 dreorig-----dreorigleor 83
   |                                     |
34 selesecg-----seledream 93-----seledreorig 25
  
```

All these are morphologically closed systems, that is, the morphemes do not occur elsewhere alone or in compounds. If we are to open the systems, we shall have to adopt one of Rosier's several other nuclear principles, of which co-existence in syntactical parallel, "variation," is the most rigorous. But even that introduces an alien principle, and it is perhaps sufficiently revealing to keep to the principles of compounding when dealing with compounds rather than to accept in addition the environment of compounding, particularly as "variation" is usually, but by no means always or exclusively, the only environment. The adequacy of the pattern of derivational morphology can be illustrated by a larger system than the ones so far studied:



This schema presents several features. In the first place it is almost perfectly symmetrical morphologically: each of the vertical columns alternates simplex with compound in the same order, and (except for *modig*) the horizontal column does the same. The eighteen occurrences listed are evenly divided between A and B sections. And this balance is roughly preserved, when reading along any axis, by the alternation of A and B occurrences. Such a pattern reveals that the participation of compounding in the other structural features of the poem grows greater the larger the system involved, that is, greater number and complexity become contained in systems of greater coherence. This kind of pattern is discovered without recourse to ideas of meaning or referential content.

As mentioned above, the only other pattern of lexical items which can be defined as independent of semantic considerations is that of variation, that is, grammatical apposition or parallelism (excluding additive situations where the conjunction is simply missed out) of the same parts of speech (which excludes pronoun-noun or pronoun-adjective appositions by themselves). This technique, looked at as a technique, is neither restricted to nor does it subsume the list of compounds above, as a catalogue reveals:

ar/milts	lines	1-2	
hreran/wadan		4-5	A1
earfoð/wælsleahht/hryre		6-7	
bindan/healdan		13-14	
earmcearig/bidæled/feor		20-21	
wintercearig/seledreorig		24-25	B1
wadan/secan		24-25	
frefran/weman		28-29	

weg/brimfugol/hrim ond snaw	46-48	
baþian/brædan/hreosan	47-48	
hefig/sar	49-50	A2
gretan/geondsceawian (?)	52	
eorl/maguþegn (?)	60-62	B2
beorn/collenferð	70-71	A3
bryþ/wæpen/wyrd (?)	99-100	
hrið/woma	102-103	B3
nipeð/onsendeð	104	
beorn/eorl	113-114	
ar/frofor	114-115	A4

The examples in 52 and 104 may well be additive, as may the third member of the example in 99-100; while the example in 60-62 is not strictly in grammatical parallel:

þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence,
 hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon,
 modge maguþegnas,

although the plural pronoun serves the relation in such a way as to make the result "felt" as parallel.

Be that as it may, the list tells us a number of things. Taken with the concordance of compounding morphemes, it may be held to represent the core of the systematic vocabulary in the poem, that is, the vocabulary used in formal systems as distinct from the vocabulary used on two or more occasions of which no more than one is within a system. Although "mere" lexical clustering is not without its interest, it is hard to measure how far such a phenomenon represents an aspect of the poet's design and how much simply his preoccupation with certain referential considerations. It is this distinction which Rosier failed to make.

A second point which the list makes is the distribution of variation, which turns out—not surprisingly, considering the kind of thing it is—to be very much like that of what we have called rhetorical shaping. Except for the marginal case in A3, there is at least one instance of variation in every section, and no instance overruns a border between sections. Again, the distribution of variation is similar to the distribution of the *mod/cearo* morphological nexus as we studied it before. Thus we have the following instances of rhetorical shaping:

Section	Variation	<i>mod/cearo</i>	Rhetoric
A1	3	1	0
B1	5	6	1, 2 lines
A2	4	6	1, 2 lines
B2	1 (?)	2	0
A3	1	1	2, 3½ lines each
B3	3	1	2, 3½ and 2 lines
A4	2	1	0

What is more, the instances of variation—like the instances of rhetorical shaping—are not uniformly distributed over the whole poem, but themselves occur in clusters:

- Cluster I: 1-29 (8x in 29 lines, longest break 7 lines)
 Break I: 30-45 (0 in 16 lines)
 Cluster II: 46-71 (6x in 36 lines, longest break 9 lines)
 Break II: 72-98 (0 in 17 lines)
 Cluster III: 99-115 (5x in 17 lines, longest break 10 lines).

Cluster I takes in A1 and B1; cluster II takes in the central three sections, A2, B2 and A3 (which constitute a unity already in terms of the *geond*-pattern); and cluster III takes in B3 and A4. In this, as in other matters of cluster and break, there is a considerable regularity and correspondence with the sevenfold sectional pattern, and considerable independent symmetry as well.

It remains to speak of the vocabulary of the variations in its membership and reference. *Ar* appears in the first and last sets, justifying the importance that Huppé gave it in his analysis. *Wadan* also appears twice, as do *-cearig*, *frofor/frefran*, *hreosan/hryre*, *eorl*, and *beorn*. Indeed, the common vocabulary of this particular form of lexical focus—and this is true of the compounding morphemes as well—stands very close to our overall impression of the poem's "drift"; it is substantiating rather than revealing. At the same time, a number of the items in it do appear in "dual relation": even at this central point in the development of the lexical store, it varies in referential meaning. The *hryre* of line 7 is the fall of kinsmen; *hreosan* in line 48 is the fall of snow. The first is of men and caused by men; the second is natural and outside men. The *frefran* of line 28 is also of men and by men; the *frofor* of line 115 is outside of humankind and divinely given. The *eorl* of 60 typifies human evanescence; the *eorl* of line 114, human sapience. Here too alternation, especially alternation in point of view, operates within a stable and symmetrical pattern, as also it does in assonance, alliteration, rhetorical shaping, and morphological compounding, the formal features of the poem whose structure coincides with that which grammatical devices define.

We must now relate this multiply-effective design to what the poem seeks to say. The following interpretation is by no means original in every point. It seeks merely to render the paraphrasable meaning of the poem in terms of the patterns that our investigations up to this point have elucidated.

IV

The opening sentence of *Wanderer* establishes a number of points of reference for what follows. The subject of the poem is a third person whom the narrator will describe (1-7):

Oft him anhaga	are gebideð,
Metudes miltse,	þeahþe he modcearig
geond lagulade	longe sceolde
hreran mid hondum	hrimcealde sæ,

5 wadan wræclastas; wyrd bið ful aræd.
 Swa cwæð eardstapa earfeþa gemyndig,
 wraþra wælsleahta, winemæga hryre.

The appositions offer and resolve ambiguities. *Ar* can be either honour, the recognition accorded to the man of success, or mercy, the recognition accorded to the man of failure; the word wavers between the opposites until the apposition *miltse* selects the latter possibility. Similarly, *hreran mid hondum sæ* equivocates between the voyage of triumph and the voyage of exile until *wadan wræclastas* distinguishes the second as the intended meaning. The wanderer's situation is characterized as adverse in the context of possible prosperity.

But *gebideð* can mean either "awaits" or "experiences," and it—like the next sentence—offers an ambiguity it does nothing to resolve. In line 5 the term *wyrd*, from its primitive sense of "that which happens" (*weorðan*), can extend to that which brings about the happening, and to that which chooses it, whether fortune or providence, as Boethius came to distinguish them. Here *wyrd* shares the uncertainty of its Latin twin *fatum* "event, fate," settling neither for the fate which rules the world but is subservient to God, in effect the principle of earthly mutability, nor for the providence which is the Word of the divine Thought, in effect the principle of celestial eternity. Like *ar*, *gebideð* and *hreran mid hondum*, *wyrd* refers to both members of an opposite pair which are mutually defining, and it represents at the verbal level the apparent identity of the opposites from the point of view of Boethius in prison, or of the wanderer in exile.

The narrator opens out his description of the wanderer, picking up *anhaga modcearig* and extending it with the similar *eardstapa earfeþa gemyndig*, a phrase which like the first one depicts its subject as a solitary traveller beset by thoughts of trouble. The reiteration, moreover, contains the syntactical foundation for further development in the genitive plural *earfeþa*, with its appositives *wraþra wælsleahta* (the troubles are massacres) and *winemæga hryre* (the massacre was of kinsmen). The first speech, then, is naturally enough expository. It identifies the subject of the poem; it establishes a relationship between the subject and the narrator; and it prepares the way for a fuller exploration of the subject's situation. But in accomplishing these simple and necessary tasks, it has also concerned itself with ways of looking at the situation. These ways have involved the introduction of opposites and of a choice between them, culminating with ambiguities which are for the time being left unresolved.

The opening of the next sentence entails the introduction of a new speaker:

10 Oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce
 mine ceare cwīpan; nis nu cwicra nan
 þe ic him modsefan minne durre
 sweotule asecgan.

It is in terms of voice that the new speaker receives his introduction (*Swa cwæð*) and first describes himself (*ic sceolde ana . . . cwīpan; ic . . . durre asecgan*). This continuity, a technique of linking between the first and second speeches, both differentiates them and draws attention to the fact that they

are speeches; it simultaneously predicates sameness and difference. Just as the third-person voice has identified his relationship with his subject, the wanderer about whom the narrator speaks to an audience, so the first-person now does so in his turn. He too seems to address an audience (although it could be argued that his speeches are soliloquies, as his first words would imply), but he is in any case never overtly aware of the third-person who introduces and discusses him. So within the first ten lines we find ourselves at one corner of a triangular complex representing three points of view, but unbalanced by discrepancies in mutual awareness: the narrator addresses us about the wanderer, the wanderer addresses us about himself, but the wanderer does not address or speak about the narrator. In terms of "voice," the wanderer is isolated.

When, at this point, the wanderer becomes aphoristic, his maxims, although they all concern the problem he outlined in his first words, are by no means compatible with one another in what they say about this problem:

		Ic to soþe wat
	þæt biþ in eorle	indryhten þeaw
	þæt he his ferðlocan	fæste binde,
	healde his hordcofan,	hyge swa he wille.
15	Ne mæg werigmod	wyrde wiðstondan
	ne se hreo hyge	helpe gefremman.

The first half of the sentence exhibits the same kind of appositive technique already encountered, here setting off the finite *binde ferðlocan*, *healde hordcofan* against the earlier infinitives *cwiþan ceare*, *asecgan modsefan*, continuing the object but reversing the meaning of the verb phrase. But the sense of the whole is different in another way: it is not the same thing to speak one's woe alone because one is left alone, as to keep one's counsel because it is an *indryhten þeaw* (unless in the trivial sense of making a virtue of necessity). The second half of the sentence likewise takes up the concern with *mod* and *hyge*, but the ideas about it are different still again. Neither resignation nor defiance avails against *wyrd*. Around this difficult word are here ranged three attitudes with divergent rationales for a single situation: "I speak alone because (a) my companions are all dead, (b) reticence is best, (c) protest is fruitless."

The gnomic passage ends with a pointed conclusion:

	Forðon domgeorne	dreorigne oft
	in hyra breostcofan	bindað fæste.
	Swa ic modsefan	minne sceolde,
20	oft earmcearig,	eðle biðæled,
	freomægum feor	feterum sælan. . . .

The language is all carried forward from the foregoing: *breostcofa*, *bindað fæste*, *modsefa*, and the isolation of *freomægum feor*; but the force of *forðon* is obscure because the argument it sums up is unclear. *Domgeorn*, certainly, looks back to *ar* and even more to *wyrd*, for *dom* can be either earthly reputation or heavenly glory, that is, the reward either of fortune or of providence. At this point, however, the dilemma seems to be purposely sustained.

Forðon is always followed by *swa* in this poem (although *swa* also appears in other contexts). Sometimes the pair are like a correlative construction, although the meaning seems to vary (cf. lines 37-43, 58-62, 64-75). The force of the correlation here is strengthened, but not clarified, by the repeated adverb *oft bindað, oft earmcearig*; the meaning may be "because they often . . . therefore I often. . . ." The construction introduces the remainder of the sentence.

25

sibþan geara iu	goldwine minne	
hrusan heolstre biwrah,	ond ic hean þonan	
wod wintercearig	ofer waþema gebind,	
sohte seledreorig	sinces bryttan,	
hwær ic feor oþþe neah	findan meahte,	
þone þe in meoduhealle	[me] mine wisse	
oþþe mec freondleas[n]e	frefran wolde,	
weman mid wyllum.		

The second section ends here with the wanderer's most elaborate sentence, and indeed the sentence patterns have become increasingly intricate from his first words. The first was simple; the second complex; the third complex-compound, and this last again complex-compound in a variety of hypotactic and paratactic relationships:

Forðon bindað oft	}	sibþan	{	biwrah	}	hwær þone	{	wisse	{	oþþe	{	frefran
swa sceolde oft				ond				wolde		weman		
				wod, sohte								

Throughout the section, the first-person voice has made use of third-person illustration and gnomic generalization, but without changing his point of view.

Change comes in the return to the third-person voice and the introduction of his distinctive *se þe* mode of reference:

30

	Wat se þe cunnað
hu sliþen bið	sorg to geferan
þam þe him lyt hafað	leofra geholena. . . .

The change in viewpoint is bridged, as before, by a carrying forward of the subject-matter. Both voices describe the wanderer as a man without friendly companions. The narrator goes on to develop the description by detailing the consequences of privation:

warað hine wræclast	nales wunden gold,
ferðloca freorig	nalæs foldan blæd.

In saying what the wanderer has not, the narrator has extended the wanderer's own account of the loss of his *goldwine* and his search for one who would *weman mid wyllum*. In saying what he has instead, the narrator has recalled his own opening lines of description *hreran . . . hrimcealde sæ, wadan wræclastas*. And in the term *ferðloca* he has adopted the wanderer's terminology

55 fleotendra ferð —no þær fela bringeð
 cuðra cwidegiedda. Cearo bið geniwad
 þam þe sendan sceal swiþe geneahhe
 ofer waþema gebind werigne sefan.

These difficult lines have been the subject of many explanations and a number of emendations. Among the latter, the commonest is to read *swimmað eft on weg* in line 53, but I think this misses the point: the hallucination is a recurrent one (*sorg ond slæp oft gebindað; Sorg bið geniwad; Cearo bið geniwad . . . swiþe geneahhe*), and its very repetition is part of the dreamer's suffering. To retain the MS reading, moreover, provides a third example of the linking-contrastive use of *oft . . . oft*. Other emendations are usually part of the critic's attempt to come to terms with the passage, which I should prefer to attempt with the text as it stands. The difficulties grow out of the complexity of the thematic and structural point of development we have reached. To resolve the difficulties by altering the text only annuls the force of the development.

The lines are difficult to understand partly because they are about a failure of understanding: they represent the mind returning to the body but imperfectly reunited with it. The distinction between the two has been stated by the wanderer and elaborated by the narrator. The hallucination is the outcome of the disintegration of their unity in extreme adversity. Our vision of the seabirds is through the undisturbed narrator, but the wanderer's vision is disrupted. His attempt at what has become the crucially significant act of speech frightens the creatures away and restores him to a true sense of his own situation, indeed of his own identity in the material world where he can listen to *no fela cuðra cwidegiedda*.

The thematic situation is paralleled by the structural. The *se þe* construction closes the episode. The loose correlative *Forþon . . . swa* in the previous passage is balanced by the equally loose but cohesive temporal sequence *Ðonne . . . þonne . . . þonne*. The central themes of cold and isolation (the physical state) and depression (the intellectual state) are explored by the separation of the physical and intellectual, and by their subsequent, apparently inevitable, reunion in the cold again.

The thematic and the structural, then, work together into a peak of rhetorical shaping, imaginative depiction, and emotion. We have reached the midpoint of the poem with one speech by the narrator, one by the wanderer, and a second by the narrator. A linking second speech from the wanderer summarizes the first half and provides an introduction to the second.

60 Forþon ic geþencan ne mæg geond þas woruld
 for hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce
 þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence,
 hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon,
 modge maguþegnas. Swa þes middangeard
 ealra dogra gehwam dreoseð ond fealleþ.

The linking here depends on the correlative *forþon . . . swa*, the vocabulary of point of view (*modsefa*), and the echo of the *geond-* compound from the hallucination episode. The passage is retrospective and summary. In terms of

Ne mæg werigmod wyrde wiðstondan ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman, the third-person voice argues the irrelevance of both extremes through an exercise in rhetorical *repetitio*. It is not simply a plea for the golden mean; it is a rejection of both the polarities between which such a mean could be found, an insistence on a different scale of values entirely:

70 Beorn sceal gebidan þonne he beot spriceð
 oppæt collenferð cunne gearwe
 hwider hreþra gehygd hweorfan wille.

The insistence remains in these lines; they are part of the *sceal*-maxims of the foregoing passage, and they restate the need to wait for wisdom until one *cunne gearwe*. The experience of this world, says the narrator, is *not* sufficient for an understanding of it. Understanding comes from another source:

 Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið
 þonne eall þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
 75 swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard
 winde biwaune weallas stondaþ,
 hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
 Woriað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
 dreame bidrorene; duguþ eal gecrong
 80 wlonc bi wealle. Sume wig fornom,
 ferede in forðwege; sumne fugel oppær
 ofer heanne holm; sumne se hara wulf
 deaðe gedælde; sumne dreorighleor
 in eorðscræfe eorl gehydde.
 85 Yþde swa þisne eardgeard ælda Scyppend
 oppæt burgwara breahntma lease
 eald enta geweorc idlu stodon.

This long section falls into three parts: the first two sentences, the *sumne* sentence, and the last sentence. The first part is linked with what has gone before by the opening hemistich, where the attention of the *gleaw hæle*, the *wis wer*, is turned from his own actions to the world around him, just as the attention of the wanderer had shifted from his own predicament to his environment. But already in the first sentence the difference between the wanderer's ideal of the *eorl* and the narrator's ideal of the *wis wer* is extended to include a difference in their attitudes toward earthly mutability. The wanderer can see only that earthly prosperity is transitory; the narrator takes it as a maxim (*sceal*) that the wise man will understand the implication of a *dies irae* in the evidences of commonplace decay.

The lyricism of the passage contrasts with the pessimism of the wanderer's remarks on the same phenomena precisely because of this difference in understanding. A mutability canto in miniature, it has a high degree of formal cohesion. In the first part, lines 2, 4, 6 and 8 all have the same alliterative stave. Words (*stondeð*, *stondaþ*, *stodon*) and phrases (*hrime bihrorene*, *dreame bidrorene*) echo throughout. For the second time in the poem, a subsection is set off by *repetitio* (*sumne*). The works of men—*weallas*, *ederas*, *winsalo*, *enta geweorc*—perish in a way which betokens the final devastation

of *eall þisse worulde wela*, and God is significantly referred to as *Scyppend*.²⁵ It is the possibility of employing this final paradox without irony that enables the third-person voice to avoid the pessimism of the wanderer, and to introduce an expanded paraphrase of the wanderer's remarks:

90 Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte
 ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð
 frod in ferðe, feor oft gemon
 wælsleahta worn ond þas word acwið.

The emphasis is on *wise geþohte*, *deope geondþenceð*, *frod in ferðe*, and the second line echoes by contrast the wanderer's *þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence*. The wanderer's mind grew dark in these reflections, but for the *wis wer* it is life that is dark, not the mind. Like the wanderer, too, he is introduced as a man remembering *wælsleahta*. In both cases the speaker takes up the dialogue in the line following this word, but the speech of the *wis wer* is formally different, and in this poem a formal difference often signals a difference in meaning:

 Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom
 maþþungyfa?
 Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?
 95 Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
 Eala þeodnes þrym! Hu seo þrag gewat,
 genap under nihthelm swa heo no wære.
 Stondeð nu on laste leofre duguþe
 weal wundrum heah wyrmlicum fah.
 100 Eorlas fornoman asca þryþe,
 wæpen wælgifru, wyrd seo mære;
 ond þas stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað;
 hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð,
 wintres woma; þonne won cymeð
 nipeð nihtscua norþan onsendeð
 105 hreo hæglfare hæleþum on andan.
 Eall is earfoðlic eorþan rice;
 onwendeð wyrda gesceaft weoruld under heofonum.
 Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
 her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne.
 110 Eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð.

Like the wanderer, the *gleaw hæle* is *earfeþa gemyndig* (*eall is earfoðlic*) and ponders *winemæga hryre* (*her bið mæg læne*). As the similarities of the storm descriptions and the departed-*duguþ* scenes show, the *gleaw hæle* is familiar with adverse experience, and sees the hand of *wyrd* in the events. The difference is in the scope of his vision. The alliteration in line 106 places the headstave on *eorþan*, giving it a kind of contrastive stress which the next line explains. The earthly kingdom, *unlike* the heavenly, is under the decree of the fates (the plural genitive is significant of their arbitrariness). Since *heofonum* is not a part of the alliterative pattern, we can take its introduction here to be intentional; the poet is using both the exclusive and the inclusive features of the verse form to point his meaning.

This meaning is further stressed in the passages of *repetitio* which open and close the section. The first is an adaptation of the *ubi sunt* form, associating the section with a long tradition of Christian poetry on the subject of earthly mutability. The features of earthly life which the speaker chooses to discuss are drawn from the world of the *comitatus*, but the significance of *ubi sunt* poetry, including these lines, is suggested in the second group of refrain-like lines, and particularly in the word *læne*. It means something given or imparted temporarily (*leon*), and implies thereby the place of wealth, friend, man and kin in a purposeful universe. God gives and takes away. Only an earth-bound vision of mutability is *earfeþa gemyndig* in a nihilistic sense. The wiser view is that the passing of material things and the end of the perishable world point to the eternity of the world to come. *Eal idel weorþeð*: it becomes empty just as the *geweorc idlu stodon*. But *ubi sunt* is a rhetorical question, and this formal characteristic implies the contrast of the wise man's view with the wanderer's:

Swa cwæð snottor on mode; gesæt him sundor æt rune.
 Til biþ se þe his treowe gehealdeþ, ne sceal næfre his torn
 to rycene,
 beorn of his breostum acyþan nemþe he ær þa bote
 cunne;
 eorl mid elne gefremman. Wel bið þam þe him are seceð,
 115 frofre to Fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung
 stondeð.

The final lines subsume what has gone before. The *se þe* construction signals the return of the third-person voice, speaking of the *snottor on mode* contemplating mysteries (*rune*). The thinker is apart from men, not as an exile from false security, but in voluntary solitude, as one who recognizes the impermanence of human society and understands that all men in this world are exiles from their heavenly home. The vocabulary of speech (*acyþan*) returns as well, but in maxims that deny the wanderer's aphorisms even as they recall them. A man is not to speak his anger at the world's failings until he knows the heavenly remedy.

In a similar way the language of the earthly search returns in the last sentence, recalling the poem's first sentence and *ic . . . sohte . . . sinces bryttan . . . þe . . . mec . . . frefran wolde*. Instead, concludes the narrator, *ar* and *frofre*—indeed all *fæstnung*—are to be sought in heaven. The culmination of the second half of the poem, these lines continue and complete the concerns of the first half, but oppose their point of view.

The two halves are balanced entities within the ultimate construction, and within the halves the individual speeches are similarly balanced. The articulation of the halves and the smaller sections is like the articulation of syntactic elements in sentence structure. It is hierarchical, not serial; that is, it is built up in layers, not along a line:

The Poem						
Part I: 1-57 (57 lines)			Link	Part II: 64-115 (58 lines)		
Speech 1 1-7 (7) Narrator	Speech 2 8-29a (21½) Wanderer	Speech 3 29b-57 (28½) Narrator	Speech 4 58-63 (6) Wanderer	Speech 5 64-91 (28) Narrator	Speech 6 92-110 (19) Wis Wer	Speech 7 111-115 (5) Narrator

V

In conclusion, we may ask what kind of poem this is. I think the first thing that arises out of the essentially dialectic organization is that the poem is in the medieval tradition of the *conflictus*, *débat* or *Streitgedicht*.²⁶ The subject under discussion remains the same, raised by the wanderer's situation and his account of it, but the speeches progress by alternation from one interpretation to another. There is no synthetic progression because the assumptions and imagery of the poet are those of type and antitype. The ambiguities are not resolved by harmonization of the two views, but by selection of one and rejection of the other. For this reason I am inclined to regard the *wis wer* of B3 as the *eardstapa* in a state of conversion from his previous wanhope rather than as a new figure in the poem or, what is equally difficult, a fictive speaker within the discourse of the narrator.²⁷

The second question concerns the role of voice or point of view in this poem. In part, the identification of the *conflictus* assists in explaining the two speakers' confrontation; but the way that the B speaker talks about himself, while the A speaker talks about B, is somewhat different: we have a common topic but divergent outlooks and standpoints. The only Anglo-Saxon handbook of composition that serves our purpose is Bede's *De schematibus et tropis*, because most of the others—Aldhelm's and Alcuin's, for example—are really textbooks of the Latin hexameter only. In his last chapter, Bede wrote:

... poematos genera sunt tria. Aut enim activum imitativum est ... aut enarrativum ... aut commune vel mixtum ... Dramaticon est vel activum, in quo personae loquentes introducuntur sine poetae interlocutione. ... Exegematicon est vel enarrativum, in quo poeta ipse loquitur sine ullius interpositione personae. ... Coënon est vel micton, in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur, ut sunt scripta Ilias et Odyssea Homeri et Aeneidos Virgilii et apud nos historia beati Job. ...²⁸

Bede's remarks are doubly noteworthy. In the first place they argue that the literate Anglo-Saxon reader would have regarded both voice and point of view as generic matters in poetry, as defining one of three "kinds." And secondly they associate the third type, to which *The Wanderer* obviously

belongs, with the classical epics and with *Job*. Without wishing to open topics which cannot be treated here, I would submit that a generic identification is suitable which places our poem in the company of the best-known poems of war, exile and affliction. Be that as it may, it appears that *The Wanderer* is in its alternation of voices with opposed viewpoints a *conflictus*, but that it differs from, say, Alcuin's poem in the same genre in that the poet is one of the voices.²⁹

We may finally ask what kind of taste it is that makes of a dialectic proposition such an elaborate structure through the use of every formal device of grammar, phonology, morphology and lexis available, and which achieves a result of such complexity. The result is one in which the function is carried out, but we may agree with Rosier that the poem is one of those which, though "so simple in fundamental ways, are intriguing and elusive."³⁰ It has a physical shape—the hierarchic skeleton—and a dialectic shape, the philosophical topic. The shaping of the topic coincides with the physical structure because the speeches, quasi-stanzaic intermediate structures, participate in both the physical and philosophical categories. It has in addition a cellular level, the verbal material, which is the vehicle for the philosophical topic and a formal feature of the physical shape. These three categories are ordered in different ways: the skeletal on an arithmetical basis, the philosophical on a differentiating basis, the verbal on a reiterative basis. The principles of structural elaboration and interlacing which are at work here recall those works of Anglo-Saxon plastic art which are equally "so simple in fundamental ways," but "intriguing and elusive." I do not wish to liken what are essentially verbal devices to devices which belong to illumination or to the goldsmith, for that is to trivialize them all and rob them of the distinctive features of their media. I merely wish to suggest that the taste which finds one agreeable will perhaps find the other congenial.

Beyond taste there is a matter of theory, the familiar medieval theory that a truth arrived at by intellectual effort will be prized more highly than the same truth plainly stated.³¹ The intellectual effort which goes into a decipherment and appreciation of *The Wanderer* is something quite apart from "inspiration" or "feeling." It involves, we have seen, a careful investigation of all the formal devices at the poet's command; and the conclusions all point the same way. What is intriguing and elusive proves to be simple in fundamental ways, but the simplicity is revealed only by approaching the complexities in a complex manner. In this technique of poetic composition, we must take the poem's measurements before we can understand its dimensions.³²

NOTES

¹ The substantially complete bibliography in R. F. Leslie, ed., *The Wanderer* (Manchester, 1966), pp. 49-58, is completed by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, eds., *The Wanderer* (London, 1969). See note 20 below. To it should now be added J. Burrow, "The Wanderer, lines 73-87," *N&Q*, N.S. XII (1965), 166-68; C. Dean, "Weal Wundrum Heah, Wyrmlicum Fah and the Narrative Background of The Wanderer," *MP*, LXIII (1965), 141-43; R. Fowler, "A Theme in *The Wanderer*,"

- Medium Ævum*, XXXVI (1967), 1-14; B. Mitchell, "An Old English Syntactical Reverie: *The Wanderer*, lines 22 and 34-36," *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, LXVIII (1967), 139-49, and "Some Syntactical Problems in *The Wanderer*," *ibid.*, LXIX (1968), 172-98.
- ² "The Wanderer: Theme and Structure," *JEGP*, XLII (1943), 516-38.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 517, 520.
- ⁴ A. A. Prins, "The Wanderer (and the Seafarer)," *Neophilologus*, XLVIII (1964), 237-51.
- ⁵ "The Dramatic Structure of the Old English *Wanderer*," *Neophilologus*, XXXIV (1950), 104-12.
- ⁶ "The Wanderer: A Reconsideration of Theme and Structure," *JEGP*, L (1951), 451-65.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 456.
- ⁸ "Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*," *Anglia*, LXXIII (1955), 413-66; see 448.
- ⁹ "From *Eardstapa* to *Snottor on mode*: The Structural Principle of 'The Wanderer'," *MLQ*, XIX (1958), 225-30.
- ¹⁰ "On the Genre of *The Wanderer*," *Neophilologus*, XLV (1961), 63-75.
- ¹¹ "The Wanderer's Conscience," *English Studies*, XXXIX (1958), 193-200.
- ¹² "Der Wanderer. Eine Interpretation von Aufbau und Gehalt," *Festschrift zum 75 Geburtstag von Theodor Spira*, ed. H. Viebock and W. Erzgräber (Heidelberg, 1961), pp. 57-85; E. D. Grubl, *Studien zu den angelsächsischen Elegien* (Marburg, 1948), pp. 14-34.
- ¹³ "The Literal-Figurative Identity of *The Wanderer*," *PMLA*, LXXIX (1964), 366-69.
- ¹⁴ Dean, *op. cit.*, 142.
- ¹⁵ In *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun*, ed. J. B. Bessinger and R. P. Creed (New York and London, 1965), pp. 164-93.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.
- ¹⁷ Leslie, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 3, 9.
- ¹⁸ Fowler, *op. cit.*, 2.
- ¹⁹ G. V. Smithers, "The Meaning of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*," *Medium Ævum*, XXVI (1957), 137-53; XXVIII (1959), 1-22; J. E. Cross, "On The Wanderer lines 80-84, a Study of a Figure and a Theme," *Vetenskaps-Societetens i Lund Årsbok* (1958-59), 77-110, and " 'Ubi Sunt' Passages in Old English — Sources and Relationships," *ibid.* (1956), 25-44. The review of scholarship here concluded refers only to those who have in one way or another concerned themselves with "structure," whatever they have meant by the word. [Written in 1967, since when N. D. Isaacs, *Structural Principles in Old English Poetry* (Knoxville, 1968), has appeared. His chapter on *Wanderer* (pp. 35-55) does not warrant inclusion in this review, because — despite its title — it is not concerned either with structure or with principles, but rather with narrative content and thematic display.]
- ²⁰ All my quotations are from the edition of Leslie, whose readings I follow; but I disregard his paragraphing, occasionally alter his punctuation, and always suppress his square brackets except where the reading therein is central to the point I am making.
- ²¹ Erzgräber, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.
- ²² Huppé, *op. cit.*, 537.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 530-36.
- ²⁴ Rosier, *op. cit.*, 367.
- ²⁵ Burrow, *op. cit.*, makes clear the reference of these lines to the Flood and Last Day, answering the question of Fowler, *op. cit.*, 10, who holds that "the eschatological content of this poem simply is not proven." Fowler does not mention Burrow's article.
- ²⁶ See especially H. Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (München, 1920), and H. Jantzen, *Geschichte des deutschen Streitgedichtes im Mittelalter* (Breslau, 1896).
- ²⁷ The "conversion" theory would account for the unique appearance of the first-person pronoun plural in the last line of the narrator's last speech, which is also the last line of the poem.
- ²⁸ Ed. C. von Halm, *Rhetores latini minores* (Frankfurt, repr. 1964), p. 259, here slightly normalized.

- ²⁹ I mean, for example, his *Conflictus veris et hiemis*; but cf. also his *Disputatio Pippini cum Albino* (sc. *Alcuino*) where the author appears in his own person as one side of a debate. (The attribution of the *Conflictus* to Alcuin is doubted.)
- ³⁰ Rosier, *op. cit.*, 366.
- ³¹ Frequently stated and frequently studied; see, for example, B. F. Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry* (Albany, 1959), Chap. 1 *et passim*.
- ³² I have avoided reference to other materials in the course of this paper, partly because it was already long enough, partly because inductive study should work on intrinsic evidence. But I believe that the approach would yield similar results for *The Seafarer* and *The Dream of the Rood* and, *mutatis mutandis*, for much other Old English poetry as well.