

THE EIGHTH DEADLY SIN: DEJECTION AS PASSION IN *THE WANDERER*

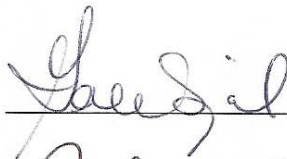
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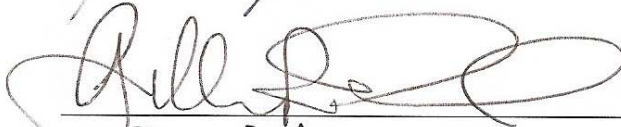
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INTRODUCTION

What has Coptic Egypt to do with Anglo-Saxon England? This question, itself a paraphrase of a similar question posed far earlier by Tertullian, is both the primary motivation behind my project and one of its central concerns.¹ It is perhaps a mark of our willingness to stay safely within our own academic borders that in the field of Anglo-Saxon Studies we have not posed this question before and can think of no answers to it. I intend to suggest one, or perhaps several, by considering a fourth century eastern monastic framework—the deadly passions—as a context and background for the tenth century Old English poem, *The Wanderer*. This attempt to engage with *The Wanderer* using such an unfamiliar context, from the very outset, means I will (methodologically at least) step far enough outside of the traditional approaches to the poem as to arrive somewhere else entirely. At least, that is my hope. In positing this new context, I also hope to reconsider the limitations of our traditional interpretive approaches—limitations almost always present in the poem’s scholarship yet rarely acknowledged—and open the door to rethinking how we interpret and understand *The Wanderer* and our relationship to it. In doing so, I also hope to accomplish several additional tasks.

First, and perhaps most importantly, I wish to call attention to an oversight on the part of Medieval Studies in general and Anglo-Saxon Studies in particular. We have frequently tended to limit our study of medieval literature to the medieval west, and in doing so we have perpetrated at best a forgetting and at worst an ignoring of the varied

¹ Tertullian’s question—What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?—is one with profound metaphysical and philosophical implications for students of western history. David Bradshaw takes it up in his more recent work, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge, 2004), in which he critiques historians of philosophy for “limit[ing] the study of Christian philosophy during the Middle Ages to the medieval West” and presents “a philosophical backdrop to the schism between the eastern and western churches” (Bradshaw i).

ideas, contexts, cultures, and beliefs that can be loosely (and not unproblematically) collected under the umbrella of Byzantine Studies. As a result, we continue to remain relatively unaware of the significant and substantial alternatives to western medieval thought and practice that coexisted simultaneously in the literature and life of the Byzantine medieval world. Reasons for this oversight are numerous and debatable. For example, English historian Edward Gibbon's profoundly influential and controversial *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which shaped the formation of modern historical method, contained a rather disparaging narrative of Byzantine culture that has long persisted. In addition, the evolution and development of contemporary academic disciplines has resulted in departments that often maintain strict separation between "western" and "eastern" literatures and histories, reinforcing the somewhat arbitrary nature of academic historical categories. Of course, scholars of the western medieval world are not completely at fault. Byzantinists have long been content to remain relatively isolated in their academic pursuits. More recently, however, joint sessions between western and eastern medievalists at CAA, the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, and the Byzantine Studies Conference at Dumbarton Oaks have shown that collaborative and comparative work is not only possible, but more likely in the near future.

In spite of these advances, Anglo-Saxon Studies remains arguably one of the last places where such comparative and collaborative work with Byzantine scholarship might actually take place, simply because we as Anglo-Saxonists often work within strict historical categories that maintain the distinction and separation of our academic discipline through a superficially imposed periodization that frequently aligns itself with

the most problematic aspects of medieval histories: political boundaries, racial essences, and linguistic differences. Consider, for example, all that we might challenge regarding the primary object of our scholarly endeavors: Anglo-Saxon England. Is it appropriate to consider ourselves scholars of “England” when during the mid-fifth century there was arguably no such geopolitical space in the British Isles which bore that name? Why should we label ourselves primarily as scholars of the “Anglo-Saxons” (culturally) or even “Anglo-Saxon” (linguistically), when the geographical space of medieval “England” contained a variety of alternative languages, cultures, and voices? To be fair, many Anglo-Saxon scholars have taken these challenges seriously, and today we are as likely to find panels at many Anglo-Saxon conferences on the connections between Norse sagas and Northumbrian hagiographies as we are to find papers on the metrical analyses of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* or the *Meters of Boethius*. To date, however, Byzantine Studies has yet to play any sort of role in the academic life of Anglo-Saxonists. As a result we have built up an incredible body of scholarship that remains largely ignorant of eastern medieval literatures, cultures, histories, and languages, as well as the potential interconnectedness of Byzantine Studies and our own field.

Arguably nowhere is this oversight more evident than in the prevailing academic approach to “medieval Christianity,” which is reinforced, for example, whenever we refer to Catholicism as “*the* medieval church,” failing to recall that by the twelfth century at least two other major ecclesiastical branches of Christianity coexisted in the eastern medieval world: the Orthodox and Coptic churches. Both of these differed radically from western Catholicism in the development of their ecclesiology, theology, philosophy, and administration. Both remain largely unknown to Anglo-Saxonists, even though there is a

strong possibility that early Anglo-Saxon spirituality shared more in common with eastern forms of Christianity than with Rome. At least as early as the 1960s, scholars began to demonstrate “the extent to which the early Anglo-Saxon church came under the influence of Irish Christianity” and many scholars continue to do so.² In his edition of *The Wanderer*, R. F. Leslie highlights possible stylistic and thematic similarities between Irish and Hiberno-Latin sources and the poem; Dorothy Whitelock and Clair McPherson have both published on Irish influences in *The Seafarer*.³ More recently, Gregory Telepneff persuasively posited a direct as well as mediated influence by early Coptic monasticism—which flourished in Egypt from the third century—on Celtic Christianity, noting that “the major source of Eastern influence on Celtic monasticism appears to have been Saint John Cassian the Roman, who ended his days in Southern Gaul in the early fifth century” (Telepneff 12).⁴ Collectively, these studies suggest connections between the intellectual and religious life of Coptic Egypt, Celtic Ireland, *and* early Anglo-Saxon England.

I find Telepneff’s overall argument, though like many medieval scholarly histories lacking in any explicit textual “proof,” to be compelling, not least because it lends historical credence to my use of the deadly passions as a legitimate context for

² C.f. Laistner 136 ff, Chadwick 323-52, and Dunleavy in Works Cited.

³ C.f. Leslie 27-30 and 34-7, Whitelock, and McPherson in Works Cited.

⁴ In “The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs: The Byzantine Character of Early Celtic Monasticism,” Gregory Telepneff traces the fifth, sixth, and seventh century “Eastern, and primarily Egyptian, influences on both the internal forms (such as monastic spirituality) and external forms (such as liturgics and Christian art) of Celtic monasticism” (Telepneff 11). By considering parallels between the structures and contexts of their respective forms of monasticism, the linguistic and liturgical similarities, and artistic and architectural representations, Telepneff persuasively argues that Coptic monasticism greatly influenced Celtic forms of monasticism in Hibernia and present-day Scotland, both directly (presumably from the travel of Egyptian monks) and also via Gaul, where it owed much to the widespread influence of John Cassian, a Gallic monk who studied in Egypt under Evagrius Pontus. The writings of both Cassian and Evagrius comprise the majority of our literature on the deadly passions, and therefore make up a substantial portion of my project.

interpreting *The Wanderer*.⁵ It is, however, a history at odds with the traditional narrative of Christianity's arrival in the British Isles, a narrative with roots that stretch all the way to Bede's eighth century *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, or *Ecclesiastical History*. Recent scholarship has questioned Bede's narrative of church history in England, which constructs a land "Christianized" and "unified" primarily by the efforts of Roman missionaries even as it clearly shows that there were Irish monastics in Anglo-Saxon England prior to the advent of the Roman missionaries, and that the Celtic understanding and practice of Christian spirituality differed significantly from its western counterparts.⁶ Bede's narrative has proved one of the most longstanding and influential historical assumptions governing *The Wanderer*'s critical tradition, and indeed it seems all the subsequent poetic scholarship has engaged in some way with the religious tension constructed by this narrative.

Therefore, when I claim that the framework of the passions could have been easily transmitted to an Anglo-Saxon monastic context via the work of early Celtic missionaries and the widespread influence of medieval Gallic monasticism, I take up a position outside of the mainstream scholarly assumptions regarding Anglo-Saxon spirituality. In adopting this position I am searching for a way to comment on the secular/religious binary that seems so prevalent in discussions surrounding the Old

⁵ When I say that Telepneff's argument lacks textual proof, I mean that there is no extant literature which explicitly states that Celtic monasticism was influenced by eastern and Coptic forms of spirituality, thus much of his argument is built on the significant similarities and parallels between the two, which *is* rooted primarily in comparisons of the extant literature and therefore "textual" in that sense.

⁶ In Book 1, Chapter 13, Bede mentions the sending of Palladius as a bishop "to the Irish who [already] believed in Christ" (Bede 60), over 100 years before the arrival of Augustine in Canterbury. In his Introduction to the Penguin edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*, D. H. Farmer writes: "Bede's ambivalent attitude to Celtic Christians has often been noted. He admired the Irish bishops and abbots, whom he regarded as personifying the simplicity and poverty that had apparently become rare by 731. His repeated reservation about them was their attachment to an Easter calculation which seemed to him wrong" (Bede 30).

English elegies, and of which Ezra Pound's heavily edited translation of *The Seafarer* is one example.⁷ These are "archaeological approaches to our poetry (almost never made by archaeologists themselves) which identify the strata of Christian rite and dogma lying atop older varieties of pre-Christian cultural production" (Conner 251). Closely linked to considerations of genre, the questions of secular vs. religious are questions of classification and categorization, and therefore also questions of how to position oneself in relation to the text. They are questions of what is "in" and what is "out," and underlying these questions are assumptions regarding who is qualified to make such a decision.

In my first chapter, I present two "histories," both of which are foundational to my project. The first is a literary history of the Old English poem *The Wanderer*, the primary literary text which I will consider in this paper. Due to the historical development of Anglo-Saxon Studies as a discipline, this history is of necessity entwined with another history—that of the elegiac genre. Almost since Benjamin Thorpe first identified *The Wanderer* as a poetic work in its own right, scholars have included it in the category of "elegies," and that trend continues to this day in the preoccupation with genre in *The Wanderer*'s scholarship. By tracing a history of *The Wanderer* as an "elegy" from the seventeenth century to the later twentieth century, I hope to briefly point out some overarching trends in the poem's critical tradition, as well as note the way in which our contemporary approaches to the poem, besides being indebted to earlier methodologies, continue to make specific assumptions without subjecting them to critical interrogation.

⁷ In his frequently anthologized translation of *The Seafarer* (often taught to undergraduates alongside *The Wanderer*), Ezra Pound excised all references to Christian ideology and the "moral content" in an attempt to leave only the "genuine expression of native (i.e. pagan) sensibilities" (c.f. Alexander 145-46; Conner 257).

The second history presented in the first chapter is that of the seven deadly sins. Although this paradigm remains relatively familiar even to academics outside of Anglo-Saxon Studies in particular or Medieval Studies in general, most of us know very little about the origins and development of the tradition of the deadly sins, which can be traced to the writings of Evagrius Ponticus, a monastic writer of fourth century Coptic Egypt, and to John Cassian. In an earlier form and context, the tradition of the deadly sins (or rather “deadly passions” as they were called by Evagrius and Cassian) bears little resemblance to their contemporary manifestations. What began as a diagnostic tool for eastern monastic spirituality and psychology later became little more than “a convenient guide to eternal damnation” (Wheeler n.p.), most likely under the influence of the Augustinian and Anselmian theology that came to dominate western medieval Europe but was ultimately rejected in the east. The original inclusion of *lype* and *akedia* (dejection and despondency) in the framework of the passions is of particular relevance to my project, which poses a textual and historical link between *The Wanderer* and both those passions, therefore a substantial portion of this history in my first chapter will engage with describing the evolution of the tradition of the deadly passions, as well as the Platonic and Aristotelian psychological contexts which informed them.⁸

In my second chapter, “Dejection as Passion in the Wanderer,” I will bring the framework of the passions to bear textually on *The Wanderer* itself. By engaging closely with the passions of *lype* and *akedia* and the poetic vocabulary in Old English, I will outline the various linguistic and textual connections between these two seemingly

⁸ Due to my unfamiliarity with Greek, I will rely extensively on David Holden’s article, “The Christian Ascetic Tradition on Dejection and Despondency” for the material in this “history.” I am extremely grateful to Holden, whose scholarship introduced me to the deadly passions, for his personal help in contextualizing and understanding this tradition within an eastern Christian context.

dissimilar subjects: on the one hand, *The Wanderer* as an Old English poem, on the other, the framework of the deadly passions. I believe that this close lexical scrutiny will suggest a likely contextual link between the tradition of the deadly passions and the poem itself. Although I hope, ultimately, that the textual justification for my imposition of this framework on the poem proves sound, I do not intend to argue that this is *the* context for interpreting the poem, but rather offer this framework as *one* of many contexts through which interpretation of *The Wanderer* may continue to develop.

In my third chapter, “Who is the Wanderer? What is *The Wanderer*?” I will reconsider the poem’s critical tradition in light of the observations in my second chapter. By tracing the double-joining of two distinct interpretive questions through the work of Benjamin Thorpe, R. F. Leslie, T. P. Dunning, A. J. Bliss, and Anne Klinck, I hope to tease out some of the larger methodological and interpretive assumptions that continue to inform our academic approaches to the poem. In closing, I will offer three ways in which using the framework of the deadly passions as a context for interpretation might help to stretch our traditional approaches to the poem beyond their comfortable limits and ask us to reconsider exactly what we are doing when we engage with *The Wanderer* and how we intend to do it.

What I hope to offer in making the connection between the deadly passions and *The Wanderer* is a reconsideration both of the poem’s meanings (in the plural sense, for the text operates on many different levels) and our own process of interpretation. What questions, if any, does this framework raise about the way we as medievalists read history and particularly our own academic history, as well as the assumptions we bring to our classifications of the cultural, literary, historical, and spiritual? Can an early eastern

monastic tradition offer a potential interpretive framework that is supported by both the language of the poem and the culture that produced this text? I believe so, but will using this approach necessitate a re-conceptualization of our categories for classifying the “elegies” and the way we study them? I am sure that I will raise more questions than answers, but this project will be an important part of not only suggesting alternative interpretive frameworks for *The Wanderer*, but also undertaking a methodological strategy that attempts to be both critically self-aware and consciously a part of productive, collaborative, and creative modes of scholarship.

CHAPTER ONE: TWO HISTORIES

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WANDERER AS “ELEGY”

Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501, also known as the *Codex Exoniensis*—or more commonly, the Exeter Book—contains almost one-sixth of the surviving Old English corpus and remains “the largest extant collection of Old English poetry” (“Exeter Book”).⁹ Housed in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, the manuscript is composed of 131 folio-sized leaves of parchment, on which are written more than ninety riddles and more than thirty poems, including *The Wanderer*.¹⁰ The origins of the Exeter Book remain largely unknown. Scholars of the manuscript generally accept that Leofric, the first bishop of Exeter, donated the book to the cathedral upon his death in 1072. This is due in part to a catalog of Leofric’s donations, extant in two Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the latter eleventh century and one Middle English manuscript of the fifteenth century, which mentions “i mycel englisc boc be gewhilcu(m) þingu(m) on leoðwisan geworht” and which scholars assume to mean the Exeter Book, although “the ground of proof is limited to the fact that no other book is known to have

⁹ Among the 400 extant manuscripts containing Old English, there are three poetic codices besides the Exeter Book. Codex CVII (also known as the Vercelli Book) is preserved in the library of San Eusebio Cathedral in Vercelli, Italy, and contains *The Dream of the Rood* among other poems and prose texts. Cotton Vitellius A.xv (generally referred to as the Nowell Codex) is arguably the most famous—it contains *Beowulf*—and is located at the British Library in London. MS Junius 11 (sometimes called the “Caedmon manuscript”) is housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University and has the distinction of being the only illustrated codex of the four.

¹⁰ I have listed (in order of their appearance in the manuscript) the contents of the Exeter Book exactly following Bernard J. Muir’s format in the first volume of *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: The Advent Lyrics, The Ascension, Christ in Judgment, The Life of Saint Guthlac (A), The Life of Saint Guthlac (B), The Canticles of the Three Youths, The Phoenix, The Passion of Saint Juliana, The Wanderer, God’s Gifts to Humankind, Precepts, The Seafarer, Vainglory, Widsith, The Fates of Morals, Maxims I (A), Maxims I (B), Maxims I (C), The Order of the World, The Riming Poem, The Panther, The Whale, The Partridge, Homiletic Fragment III, Soul and Body II, Deor, Wulf and Eadwacer, Riddles 1-59, The Wife’s Lament, Judgment Day I, Contrition (A) and (B), The Descent into Hell, Almsgiving, Pharoah, The Lord’s Prayer I, Homiletic Fragment II, Riddle 30b, Riddle 60, The Husband’s Message, The Ruin, Riddles 61-94*. For another similar, though slightly different arrangement, see Elaine Treharne and Phillip Pulsiano’s entry in “An Introduction to the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Vernacular Literature.”

been among Leofric's donations to which the descriptions would apply" (Krapp ix).¹¹

Whether or not this *mycel englisc boc* is indeed *MS 3501*, the manuscript is generally believed to have been at Exeter at least since Leofric moved the episcopal see there from Crediton in 1050. Based on codicological and philological evidence, scholars generally date the manuscript somewhere within the second half of the tenth century and specifically from 960-990, making it "perhaps the oldest surviving book of vernacular poetry from Anglo-Saxon England" (Muir 1).

Although *The Wanderer's* specific critical tradition is primarily a result of nineteenth century scholarship, Anglo-Saxon Studies as an institutionalized discipline was well underway by the seventeenth century. In "The Study of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the Seventeenth Century and the Establishment of Old English Studies in the Universities," Angelika Lutz writes, "The beginnings of Old English studies . . . are known to have been closely linked with the efforts of the early Elizabethan regime to represent the break with the Catholic Church under Henry VIII as a return to the greater independence from Rome that the English Church had known in the Anglo-Saxon period" (Lutz 1). Although remnants of this religious and political tension are evident throughout the critical history of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, it would be, as Lutz notes, "a mistake to see the achievements of . . . [early scholars] in the study of Old English texts and of the Old English language . . . as nothing more than the planning and execution of a propaganda exercise in the modern sense" (Lutz 3). Many early Anglo-Saxonists also shared a profound interest in Old English literature for a variety of less polemic reasons,

¹¹ This list appears in the first seven folios of the Exeter Book, though those pages actually "belong to Cambridge University Library MS Ii. 2.11, but were probably removed from that codex and bound with *The Exeter Anthology* when the former manuscript was given to archbishop Parker in 1566" (Muir 2). The second copy can be found in the Bodleian Library's *MS Auct. D. 2.16*, folios 1-2v. The Middle English version is Exeter Dean and Chapter *Charter no. 2570*.

and most seventeenth and eighteenth century Old English scholars had a “longstanding interest in antiquarian studies . . . [though it] mingled with ideology and politics” (Lutz 3).

Regardless of their motivations, scholars of the seventeenth century failed to recognize most Old English poetry due to more pressing interests in Anglo-Saxon theological and legal literature. In “The Construction of Structure in the Earliest Editions of Old English Poetry,” Danielle Cunliffe Plumer writes, “Much of the interest in Old English at this time had a religious and polemical orientation. . . . The early polemicists, then, made enormous contributions to the study of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical and legal history but had little or no interest in Anglo-Saxon literature and art” (Plumer 248).

When Old English poetry actually made it into publication during those early centuries, as Plumer points out, it was often the result of the editor’s failure to recognize the text as poetic instead of prose, as was the case with Alfred’s *Metrical Preface* to Gregory’s *Regula Pastoralis*, published in Matthew Parker’s *Ælfredi regis res gestae* in 1574.

Scholars of the eighteenth century recognized Old English poetic verse more often than their seventeenth century predecessors, but frequently attempted to “modernize” the poetic structure in an effort to legitimize their antiquarian interests in the face of general public criticism.¹² Unfortunately, despite their best attempts, scholars of Old English and Anglo-Saxon poetry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “failed to popularize Old English poetry and the study of Anglo-Saxon” (Plumer 272), and it was not until the nineteenth century revival of interest in Anglo-Saxon literature that any criticism regarding the “elegies” or *The Wanderer* took shape.

¹² Plumer notes in particular Jonathan Swift’s staunch opposition to early studies of Old English literature: “[He] referred to antiquarians as ‘laborious Men of low Genius’ and took a contemptuous stance toward the studies of ‘the vulgar Tongue’ . . . [His] comments seem to have been typical of the times” (Plummer 271).

The terminological origins of the “elegy” as a genre in Anglo-Saxon Studies can be traced to William Daniel Conybeare, a distinguished nineteenth century English geologist. Although William was not particularly known for his medieval scholarship, his older brother, John Josias Conybeare, was Rawlinson Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford from 1809-1812.¹³ Two years after his brother’s death in 1824, William edited and completed John Josias’s *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, which contained several poems from the Exeter Book for the first time in publication and which made the first classification of an Exeter Book poem using a form of “elegy” as a poetic category. Among the texts cataloged in *Illustrations*, William includes *The Wife’s Lament*—titled *The Exile’s Complaint* under the assumption that the speaker was male—and describes it (along with the *Metres of Boethius*) as an example of “the only specimen approaching to the character of Elegiac ballad” (Conybeare lxxxi). In “The Invention of the Old English Elegy,” María José Mora notes Conybeare’s rather important differentiation between “elegy” (William catalogued *The Death of Edgar* and *The Death of Edward* as elegies) and “elegiac ballad” or “elegiac poetry”:

“Elegy” he obviously understands in the prevailing modern sense of funeral lament; his “elegiac poetry” seems to correspond rather to what has later been termed the elegiac *mode*. As a generic category, the mode evokes the atmosphere or tone of a literary kind without necessarily incorporating its structure or communicative purpose. (Mora 131).

¹³ In *Desire For Origins*, Allen Frantzen notes that “[J. J.] Conybeare’s achievements were many. . . . he began the study of Old English meter . . . [and] he was the first to connect *Beowulf* not only to northern antiquities, but to the Orient” (Frantzen 195). Frantzen also emphasizes J. J. Conybeare’s role in the nineteenth century’s “rehabilitation of Anglo-Saxon studies” (195), which occurred in part due to Conybeare’s awareness of the need for method and his work in translating *Beowulf*, which he considered an historical document. See *Desire for Origins* pp. 146, 191-92, 195.

As a poetic category, then, “elegiac ballad” is more than merely a convenient classification for poems of similar emotional tone. Mora points out that “the reference to a poetic type of ballad—that after the work of antiquarians like Thomas Percy or Walter Scott had acquired considerable prestige—is revealing. It suggests that Conybeare is thinking in terms of the literary models prized in his own time as he reads OE texts” (Mora 131). As a method of cataloging literary texts, the category of “elegiac ballad”—our contemporary Old English genre of “elegies” in an embryonic form—started as an extrinsic classification imposed by a scholar’s interpretation of the poem, not a genre intrinsic to the poem or to Anglo-Saxon literature itself.

What about *The Wanderer*? It may come as a surprise—indeed, it came as a surprise to me—to learn that the Conybeares never mention it, primarily because they rely on an earlier source that conflates *The Wanderer* with another Exeter Book poem. In his continuation of George Hicke’s eighteenth century *Antiquæ Literaturæ Septentrionalis liber alter*—what John Muir describes as “the first modern catalogue description of the manuscript” (Muir 5)—Humfrey Wanley divides the Exeter manuscript into ten books, the seventh of which contains the lines later known as *The Wanderer* but which Wanley interprets as part of the poem *Juliana*. Because their method of classification in *Illustrations* owed much to *Antiquæ Literaturæ*, William and his brother never even knew of *The Wanderer*: to the Conybeares, it was merely the ending lines to *The Life and Passion of St. Juliana*, classified as “Narrative Poetry Founded on the Lives of Saints” (Conybeare lxxix). Indeed, if recognition is a benchmark of existence, I might argue that *The Wanderer*, as a poem unto itself, did not exist in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and that here, at the birthplace of the “elegies” as a genre for study,

The Wanderer remains hidden in the pages, elusive to the scholarship, unknown. Even so, in the *Illustrations* we see the beginnings of the Old English elegiac genre thanks in no small part to the work of William and John Josias and their methods of classification.

Although Anglo-Saxon poetic scholarship continued, the term *elegy* as a form of classification did not become popular until the latter half of the nineteenth century. For example, Benjamin Thorpe's 1842 edition of the Exeter Book, which was "the first edition to include the whole range of poetry in the book" (Pope 140), does not classify any of the poems as "elegies." Thorpe is, however, the first known Anglo-Saxonist to distinguish *The Wanderer* as a separate and distinct poetic text. In the *Codex Exoniensis*, about which more will be said in my third chapter, Thorpe describes the poem as unique: "*The Wanderer*, unlike the majority of Anglo-Saxon metrical compositions, bears internal evidence of originality" (Thorpe vii) and adds, somewhat in dismay, "It is deeply regretted that this piece (one of the few Anglo-Saxon productions not on a religious subject) should stand as it were isolated, apart from every historic or legendary notice, which, by contributing to its illustration, would infinitely increase its worth and interest" (Thorpe vii, parentheses his). Thorpe presumably singled out the poem primarily because he identified a secular—or at least "non-religious"—aspect within it. This tendency to distinguish between the secular and religious elements in the poem began to gain critical ground in the following decades.

By the early twentieth century, scholars had accepted the elegiac category as a standard part of discourse regarding poems in the Exeter Book, including *The Wanderer*.¹⁴ Perhaps the most influential development occurred in 1915, when a German

¹⁴ Mora notes, "Alois Brandl [*Geschichte der Altenglischen Literatur*, 1908] finds various sources of evidence (the texts themselves, the glosses, even the national character that the elegy was a blooming genre

Professor of English Philology named Ernst Sieper expanded the canon to include nine poems.¹⁵ In *Die altenglische Elegie*, Sieper also “argued that *The Wanderer* has within it an original (‘echt’) poem (lines 8-57) that has no organic connection (‘organische Verbindung’) with lines 58-115. . . . he called it a patchwork with highly visible seams . . . which was put together not by a poet but a mere compiler (‘Kompilator’)” (Pasternak 34). In 1923 W. A. Craigie argued that “the compiler of the Exeter Book made up the text of each from a defective original with misplaced leaves. In this the *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* were represented either by single leaves or by double sheets containing only the earlier portion of these poems, the reminder of each being lost” (Craigie 15). Craigie’s goal was “to restore these and other marred poems to their original state” (Pasternak 34), in other words, to get back to the poem’s origins. The positions of Sieper and Craigie reflected a methodological philosophy which in general not only elevated whatever was “folk” literature in the poems, but also claimed a “conflict between Germanic and Christian roots at the origins of Germanic civilizations” (Frantzen 69). These scholars posited a pre-Christian, pagan Germanic past in the Exeter Book poems as both historically indisputable and textually re-creatable, but as Mora points out, “The foundation on which the whole method rests—the assignation of each poem to the genre—is simply never questioned” (Mora 136).

In outlining *The Wanderer*’s critical tradition for *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, Carol Braun Pasternak notes that “a transformation took place in *Wanderer* criticism beginning in the 1940s. Although still concerned with the unity of the work,

in OE, and reconstructs the stylistic development of the poetic category. [Gustav] Ehrismann [“Religionsgeschichtliche Beiträge zum germanischen Frühchristentum,” 1909] analyzes the elegiac themes and *topoi* (the tragic sense of life, the reflection on transitoriness)” (Mora 130, brackets mine).

¹⁵ Sieper’s nine elegies include: *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, *The Husband’s Message*, *The Wife’s Lament*, *The Ruin*, *The Rhyming Poem*, and *Resignation*.

critics came to accept abrupt changes in topic and in style as qualities of single mind or perception of the world” (Pasternak 35).¹⁶ In *Old English Elegies* published in 1939, Charles Kennedy translated six of the Exeter Book poems (and a portion of Beowulf) into alliterative verse.¹⁷ In his Introduction to *The Wanderer*, Kennedy writes, “It has been suggested that the Christian element is not an integral portion of the original poem” (Kennedy 11) but he argues that “there seems to be good reason for regarding the Christian passages as constituting an original structural element in the unity of the poem” (Kennedy 12). Kennedy admits, however, that “lyric spontaneity diminishes in the religious passages” as opposed to the “elegiac passages” (Kennedy 12). Kennedy is indebted to the nineteenth century scholarly tradition for both his classificatory terminology and his methodological approach, hence he introduces the “intensity of poetic emotion, and [*The Wanderer’s*] realisms of detail and atmosphere” with a discussion of “the Old English social background against which the poem is projected,” including “the social unit in Teutonic and early Anglo-Saxon life . . . the institution called the *comitatus*” (Kennedy 7, *italics his*). Mora writes, “The lifestyle poetically recreated in these works is used to reconstruct a powerful image of the heroic society of the Germanic peoples” (Mora 135), thus so many early twentieth century articles and books on the Old English elegies began by making cultural connections to the *comitatus*: “Sieper’s *Die altenglische Elegie* begins Chapter V . . . with a discussion of the *comitatus* bond, and Alois Brandl observes that the elegies all deal with heroic themes: injured

¹⁶ In reality, this had happened much earlier in the twentieth century—W. W. Lawrence argued for a unified Christian interpretation in *The Wanderer* as early as 1902—but the 1940s and 1950s did mark a more determined critical shift towards viewing the unity of the poem as a product of a medieval Christian mind.

¹⁷ Kennedy translates *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Ruin*, *Deor*, *The Wife’s Lament*, *The Husband’s Message*, and lines 2231-70 of *Beowulf*.

noble ladies, suffering heroes or fallen cities; for Brandl, the OE elegy clearly belongs in the tradition of the *comitatus*” (Mora 135). Kennedy’s acceptance of a unified Christian perspective shows that even when scholars began to question previous analytical conclusions about the elegies, they still retained an earlier critical terminology that remained unchallenged.

In 1943 B. F. Huppé argued that the poem consisted of a dialogue between pagan (*eardstapa*) and Christian (*snottor*) perspectives, concluding that the poem emphasized “contrast between early insecurity and heavenly security: a contrast stated in the beginning, developed in the body, and summarized at the end of the poem” (Huppé 526). In 1950 R. M. Lumiansky objected to Huppé’s distinction between speakers in *The Wanderer*, but generally agreed that “the structure of the poem . . . consist[ed] not of an introduction, a central episode, and a conclusion, but of a single dramatic monologue, ‘wholly Christian in tone’” (Rumble 227).¹⁸ In 1958 Thomas Rumble objected to Lumiansky’s notion of a single dramatic monologue, but agreed that the poem expresses “a Christian theme which is entirely in keeping with the Christian thematic matter of a great deal of Old English literature” and exists “substantially as the original poet intended it” (Rumble 227-28). Single editions of *The Wanderer* by R. F. Leslie in 1966, and by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss in 1973, both of which I will return to in my third chapter, take essentially the same position, and by the time of their publication *The Wanderer* had already become a favorite anthology piece in the university classroom. While scholars of the mid to later twentieth century and more recent scholars have continued to focus their interpretations around the pagan/Christian dichotomy and the overall unity of *The*

¹⁸ See Lumiansky, p. 105.

Wanderer, they have yet to critically interrogate the terminology and the generic canon invented by earlier scholarship.

SINS AND PASSIONS: ANOTHER HISTORY

The earliest written reference to the seven deadly sins is found in the works of Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth century Christian monk and early church scholar, who was the first “to combine the deep and speculative theology of Origen, who had lived in Egypt in the Second and Third Centuries, with the practical spirituality of the desert monks” (Holden 2). Details of his life, which are generally pieced together from various (and variously reliable) early sources, suggest that Evagrius was born in Pontus (contemporary northeastern Turkey) around 345, ordained a deacon in Constantinople by Gregory Nazianzen, joined a double monastery in Jerusalem, and eventually migrated to Egypt, where he spent the remainder of his life among coenobitic communities in Nitria and Kellia until his death around 399.¹⁹ His *Praktikos* and *Chapters on Prayer* deal extensively with the deadly sins, although Evagrius refers to them not as sins, but as “passions.”²⁰ I believe an understanding of this terminology in context is essential to tracing the developing framework of the passions, which differs radically from the later western notion of “sins.” In his article, “The Christian Ascetic Tradition on Dejection and Despondency,” W. David Holden describes the passions as “things that happen to a

¹⁹ The primary textual reference for biographical information on Evagrius is the *Historia Lausiaca* (38, early 5th cent.), presumably written by his disciple Palladius, who devotes a whole chapter to Evagrius’ life and teaching. Other texts referencing Evagrius include the anonymous *Coptic Life of Evagrius* (c. 5th cent.), the anonymous *Historia Monachorum* (late 4th cent.), Gennadius’ *De Viris Illustribus* (6.11 and 6.17, late 5th cent.), Gregory Nazianzen’s *Will and Testament* (late 4th cent.), Jerome’s *Letters* (133.2-3, early 5th cent.), Jerome’s *Dialogue against the Pelagians* (Preface, early 5th cent.), Socrates Scholasticus’ *Historia Ecclesiastica* (3.7, 4.23, 7.17, mid 5th cent.), and Sozomen’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (6.30, 8.6, mid 5th cent.).

²⁰ I am primarily concerned with Evagrius’ understanding of the passions as outlined in *Praktikos*. The *Chapters on Prayer*, though they frequently refer to the deadly passions, do so within a context of understanding monastic approaches to prayer, which is extraneous to my project.

person, that overcome the person” (Holden 2), and notes that “the passions might more adequately be called compulsions or addictions. . . . habits of thought, feeling, and desiring over which we have little or no control” (Holden 2). In the *Praktikos*, a treatise outlining disciplines of the ascetic life (from the Greek πράκτικός, or *praktiké*), Evagrius writes, “There are eight general and basic categories of thoughts [*logismoi*] in which are included every [tempting] thought It is not in our power to determine whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are to stir up our passions ” (Evagrius 6).

According to Evagrius, passions are not actual thoughts, or *logismoi*, but rather unhealthy responses to various *logismoi*. In this monastic context, which I believe has much in common with both early Stoic philosophy and contemporary Buddhist philosophy, passions are not “sins” in the western sense of transgressions of religious or moral laws, but psychological and spiritual illnesses. According to Evagrius, a monk’s end goal—from a teleological standpoint—is *apatheia*, usually translated as “dispassion” or “detachment,” which supposedly freed the monk from these compulsions and thereby engendered love for God, creation, and all human beings: “From these [spiritual disciplines] is born *apatheia* [ἀπάθεια], which brings into being love [ἀγάπη]. Love is the door to knowledge of nature which leads to . . . supreme blessedness” (Evagrius Prologue).²¹ In *Praktikos*, Evagrius identifies eight deadly passions from which all other passions derive: gluttony (γαστριμαργία), lust (πορνεία), avarice (φιλαργυρία), dejection

²¹ Elsewhere in *Praktikos*, Evagrius defines the “Kingdom of Heaven” as “*apatheia* of the soul along with true knowledge [*gnosis*] of existing things” (Evagrius 15). Boniface Ramsay, the most well-known contemporary translator of Cassian’s works, points out similarities between the concept of “true gnosis of beings” and “the Hindu contemplation of the *tattva* (essence) of objects,” noting that “the parallels with Hindu psychology and asceticism are striking. See M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, trans. W. R. Trask, 2nd ed. (New York, 1969), 69.” (Cassian 16).

(λύπη), anger (ὀργή), despondency (ἀκήδεια), vainglory (κενοδοξία), and pride (ὑπερηφάνια). In the early monastic context in which Evagrius lived and wrote, these classifications serve a diagnostic purpose, providing monks with a way of identifying and remedying the passions in their own lives, thereby moving towards *apatheia*.

Though I am primarily interested in the passions of dejection and despondency, about which more will be said in my second chapter, a brief overview of the other passions will help to fill the gaps in our understanding of their early contexts (which do not pertain to my discussion of *The Wanderer*), and help to establish a framework for realizing how they differ from more contemporary perceptions of the deadly sins, the understandings prevalent in western forms of Christianity. The Greek word *gastrimargia* (γαστριμαργία) literally means “belly-madness” and it translates into English as gluttony, but the word does not imply a love of food or even difficulty controlling the desire to eat. Holden writes, “On the one hand, it [*gastrimargia*] is a way of comforting ourselves, of making ourselves slow and heavy, of taking away our energy from the work that lies before us. On the other hand, it (physically and emotionally) weighs us down and keeps us from fighting evil in ourselves and in the world” (Holden 5). The word *porneia* (πορνεία), translated as lust, remains one of the most misunderstood passions, particularly as a result of its later development in the context of western Catholic prohibitions against sexuality. In Greek it derives from *porne* (πόρνη), which means “whore” or “prostitute.” Holden writes, “The passion of lust is not simply having sexual desire, which is perfectly natural . . . [but rather when] a person has an impersonal and exploitative sexual desire. It is treating other people as if they were whores” (Holden 5).

The passion of *philargyria* (φιλαργυρία), or greed, literally translates as “the love of silver,” but implies more than merely desire for wealth. Holden notes that the meaning revolves around “having things and wanting to have things, thinking that having makes you a good person or insures a happy life” (Holden 5). It is perhaps materialism in its most numbing sense, of which I would argue contemporary oniomania is a symptom in the extreme. The Greek word *orge* (ὀργή) implies more than the simple emotion connoted by the English word anger. Holden describes it “rage, which is extremely and uncontrolled anger, or hate, which is anger that one nurses and holds onto. The passion of anger is a distortion of good and appropriate anger, which is a sign that injustices are occurring and need to be redressed” (Holden 5). *Kenodoxia* (κενοδοξία) in Greek means “empty glory,” from which the early English sin “vainglory” derived. Holden defines it as “empty beauty, empty knowledge, empty character . . . [having] to do with false power over people. It encourages flattery from others. It does not size a person up for what he or she really is” (Holden 4). The passion of *hyperephania* (ὑπερηφανία), or pride, is a Greek compound meaning “hyper-shining out” or “shining out too much.” Holden describes it as a distortion of “an appropriate recognition of one’s abilities and talents and achievement It thinks that we are ultimately self-sufficient . . . that we do not really need anything or anybody. This is the kind of pride that makes us stubborn and judgmental and self-righteous” (Holden 4).

The framework of these passions, established by Evagrius in *Praktikos*, underwent a more systematic development in the Latin writings of John Cassian, a monk of the fourth and fifth centuries who established two monasteries in Massilia, near contemporary Marseille. What little biographical information exists on Cassian almost

assuredly varies in its historical veracity; nevertheless, it provides an interesting picture.

He was born in Dacia or Scythia Minor (contemporary Romania) around 360, joined a monastery in Bethlehem in his early twenties, ordained a deacon in Constantinople by John Chrysostom, ordained to the priesthood in Rome by Pope Innocent I, and died in Gaul around 435. Cassian presumably traveled widely in monastic Egypt during the late fourth century, particularly in the areas of Kellia and Nitria where Evagrius lived.

Though it is highly likely that they met during this time, to what extent Cassian knew Evagrius personally remains a subject of debate.²² Regardless of the details of their relationship, there is little doubt that, in the words of Columba Stewart, “Evagrius was the single most important influence on Cassian’s monastic theology” (Stewart 11).²³ His *Institutes*, or as it is fully titled *The Institutes of the Cenobia and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Vices*, owes much to Evagrius’ *Praktikos* both thematically and in its organization.²⁴ During his lifetime Cassian also wrote *The Conferences* (or *Collationes*), a twenty-four volume companion piece to *The Institutes*. *The Conferences* and *The Institutes*, both composed as practical and spiritual guides to monasticism for monastics, contain the sum of his writings on the deadly passions. Like Evagrius, Cassian considers the passions to be negative or destructive habits of thought and behavior, not moral

²² Noted Evagrius scholar Luke Dysinger points out that “Cassian never mentions Evagrius by name, although it is likely that Evagrius is the subject of *Conference* 5.32” (Dysinger n.p.).

²³ According to Dysinger, “the most complete study to date of Cassian’s dependence on Evagrius is S. Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico, Dottrina sulla Carità e Contemplazione* (Scriptorium 5, 1951, pp. 195-213.)”; however, Dysinger also notes that “only fragments of Evagrius’ exegetical texts were available when Marsili wrote: a comparison of Evagrius with Cassian with regard to the use and interpretation of biblical wisdom literature would undoubtedly demonstrate even greater dependence” (Dysinger n.p.). Though I cannot read Italian and cannot verify Dysinger’s claim, I can recommend Columba Stewart’s *Cassian the Monk*, which convincingly details the textual evidence of Evagrius’s influence on Cassian.

²⁴ Ramsay notes that “the Latin *institutem* would perhaps better be rendered as ‘teaching,’ ‘instruction,’ or even ‘guiding principle,’ with the connotation of something established, determined, approved, worthy of being handed on” (Cassian 4).

transgressions.²⁵ He writes, “We are all *hurt by them* and they are found in everyone” (Cassian 117, *emphasis mine*), and proposes to set forth “cures and remedies for them” (*curationes eorum ac remedia*).²⁶ Cassian also follows Evagrius in identifying eight “principal vices” (*principalia vitia*): gluttony (*gastrimargia*), lust (*fornicationis*), avarice (*avaritia*), anger (*ira*), dejection (*tristitia*), despondency (*acedia*), vainglory (*cenodoxia*, or *inanis gloria*), and pride (*superbia*).

A thoroughly Platonic and Aristotelian physiological and psychological context forms the intellectual background for both Evagrius and Cassian’s literature on the deadly passions. Holden notes that Aristotle, in his treatise *On the Soul* [Περὶ ψυχῆς, or *De Anima*], “classified souls (*psychai*, ψυχαί) into three kinds: plant souls, which merely live and grow; animal souls, which can also move around; and intellectual souls, which are also able to think” (Holden 3).²⁷ In *The Republic* [Book 4, 439a-441c], Plato separates the soul itself into three aspects. Holden summarizes them succinctly: “They are, first of all, the *logistikon* (λογιστικόν), the “intelligent” or “rational” aspect of the soul. . . . The second part of the soul is the *epithymikon* (ἐπιθυμικόν), the “appetitive” aspect . . . that desires things . . . [and] the third part of the soul is the *thymikon* (θυμικόν), which . . . has to do with strong feelings of any kind”²⁸ In *The Conferences* Book IV, Chapter 15,

²⁵ Although Cassian continually translates “passions” into Latin as “vices” (*vitia*), he at least once refers to them specifically as passions: “Quarum passionum causae quemadmodum, cum patefactae fuerint traditionibus seniorum, ab omnibus protinus agnoscuntur” (Cassian 2.1).

²⁶ “Cum ab ipsis universi vastemur et in cunctis hominibus inmorentur” (Cassian 2.1). The Latin verb *vastare* appears in the English word “devastate,” so that I would also consider translating these lines as “We are all devastated by them.” For the Latin versions of Cassian’s writings and other Latin texts not in translation in this paper, I use the editions published online by Luke Dysinger.

²⁷ Holden notes that the Greek word translated into English as “soul” is actually *psyche*, which means “life or life force” (Holden 3).

²⁸ Holden also points out, “The part of the *logistikon* that thinks and reasons is called the *dianoia*, but it is not as important to Evagrius . . . as the *nous* (νοῦς), the ‘mind,’ or to be very precise, the part of the mind that knows when something is true just by perceiving it” (Holden 3).

Cassian (most likely following Evagrius) links the deadly passions to their respective aspects of the soul:

If the [passion] infects the reasonable part [*logistikon*], it will beget the vices of vainglory, arrogance . . . pride, presumption, contention, and heresy. If it wounds the irascible disposition [*epithymikon*], it will bring forth rage, impatience, sadness, acedia, faintheartedness, and cruelty. If it corrupts the concupiscible portion [*thymikon*], it will generate gluttony, [porneia], avarice, covetousness.²⁹ (Cassian 838, brackets mine)

This Platonic psychology forms a nuanced background to the early framework of the deadly passions, and I agree with Holden's claim that the primary original intellectual contribution offered by Evagrius and Cassian was the relating of the tradition of the passions to the three aspects of the psyche.

The monastic tradition described first by Evagrius and systematically developed by Cassian underwent further evolution via Pope Gregory I, also known as Gregory the Great, in whose writings the early framework of the passions begins to resemble (structurally, at the very least) the "deadly sins" in contemporary form. In Anglo-Saxon Studies, Gregory is most often referenced in light of a series of puns related in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.³⁰ Other details of Gregory's life can be gleaned (again, in varying

²⁹ In this chapter, Cassian actually lists eighteen passions, only eight of which are the "deadly" passions as outlined by Evagrius.

³⁰ This story, related in Book II.1 of *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, describes Gregory's response in the Roman marketplace after seeing some young boys "exposed for sale. . . [with] fair complexions, fine-cut features, and beautiful hair" (Bede 103). Upon being told that they were "Angles," Gregory replied "That is appropriate, for they have angelic faces" (103). Upon hearing that their native province was Deira, he replied "Good. They shall indeed be rescued *de ira*—from wrath—and called to the mercy of Christ" (Bede 104). Upon being told their king's name was Aelle, he exclaimed "it is right that their land should echo . . . the word *Alleluia* (Bede 104). This story can also be found in the earlier *MS 567* of the Benedictine Abbey at St. Gall, Switzerland: it is Gregory's first full length vita, thought to have been composed in the early eighth century at Streonshalch (contemporary Whitby in England).

degrees of reliability) from various medieval texts, such as Bede's *History*. Supposedly, Gregory was born around 540 in Rome to a wealthy family, tonsured as a monk around 574, ordained as Pope in 590, and died in 604. He is credited, among other things, with formulating the doctrine of purgatory, fostering the development of liturgical music known as Gregorian Chant, and beginning the "conversion of England" through the sending of Roman missionaries. Gregory apparently admired Cassian greatly and drew heavily from *The Institutes* for his *Morals of the Book of Job*, but he made several major changes to the passions as they had been outlined by Cassian and Evagrius. In addition to naming pride (*superbia*) as the "queen of sins" (*vitiorum regina*) and categorizing the remaining seven as either carnal or spiritual, Gregory adds the previously unmentioned vice of "envy" (*invidia*) to the list, and combines the passions of dejection (*tristitia*) and despondency (*acedia*) into "melancholy."

Gregory continues to use *tristitia* to describe the sin of "melancholy," but the text suggests that Gregory does indeed conflate two distinct passions, rather than merely (as would initially be suggested by his continued use of the earlier word for "dejection") neglecting to include *acedia*. In addition to a sense of sadness, Gregory describes *tristitia* as engendering bitterness; Evagrius and Cassian also mention bitterness in connection to the passions of sadness, but primarily as an aspect of *acedia*. Thus Gregory appears to be conflating two separate notions but retaining the word *tristitia* specifically. Holden, following Bliss, usefully translates Gregory's new, combined form of *tristitia* into English as "melancholy"—the Latin form of this passion eventually made its way into English as "sloth." Gregory's inclusion of *invidia* is an original addition to the writings on the deadly passions; however, I believe it likely that Gregory also conflates the two

similar passions partly in an attempt to make a numerically-symbolic point. He writes, “Because He grieved that we were held captive by these seven sins of pride, therefore our Redeemer came to the spiritual battle of our liberation, full of the spirit of sevenfold grace” (Gregory 490).³¹ Technically, Gregory’s list still contains eight sins; however, he makes room for his numerical “insight” by categorizing the passions hierarchically, placing pride (*superbia*) in a superior position to the other seven. Given his interest in making the sins fit a specific numerical framework, and given the similarity of the two passions dealing with forms of sadness, Gregory’s conflation is perhaps understandable, though it remains something of an oversimplification in comparison to the nuances of Cassian and Evagrius.³² At some later point, the passions of pride and vainglory were also conflated, presumably (as Holden suggests) by Gregory’s followers, thus bringing the total number of deadly sins to seven.³³

³¹ *Morals on the Book of Job*: Book 31, Chapter 45, Section 88.

³² I also believe it likely that Gregory, though he relied heavily on Cassian (and via Cassian, Evagrius) for information regarding the passions, did not have as intimate a knowledge of the Aristotelian contexts within which Evagrius and Cassian both wrote, and which fundamentally informed their thinking. Thus his contribution to the literature regarding the passions seems somewhat less complex to me by comparison.

³³ Finding and tracing this later development, though it is outside the scope of my paper, would be a valuable addition to understanding the evolution of this tradition historically.

CHAPTER TWO: DEJECTION AND DESPONDENCY IN *THE WANDERER*

In this chapter, I intend to use *The Wanderer* as a textual site for bringing the two seemingly disparate histories outlined in my first chapter—that of the “elegies” and that of the “deadly passions”—into contact and context with each other. Most scholars would agree that *The Wanderer*, as a poem, deals with sadness; however, I offer the tradition of the deadly passions as a framework through which sadness in the poem can be textually and thematically interpreted anew, specifically as indicative of *lype* [dejection] and *akedia* [despondency].³⁴ By reconsidering the particular implications of the Old English words used to describe the Wanderer and by engaging with Old English vocabulary and imagery throughout the poem, I hope to suggest that there is both strong lexical support for this position from within the poem and useful interpretive reasons for employing this framework as a hermeneutical lens.³⁵ In order to do so, I will begin by discussing the speaker in the poem, an issue which most of the poem’s critical scholarship has made into a fundamental component of poetic interpretation, and about which I will have more to say in my third chapter.

Traditionally, questions regarding the poem’s speaker(s) have been the subject of much scholarly debate. How many are there? When and where do they speak, and how does one delineate their speech boundaries? This problem is complicated by the very nature of the Exeter Book manuscript, which in the manner of medieval manuscripts contains nothing like modern punctuation. No doubt interpretation would come easier

³⁴ I have eschewed translating *lype* as “sadness” due to that word’s connotation in English of grief or sorrow in general, which (as will hopefully become evident) is something entirely different from *lype*; instead, I have (following Holden) rendered the Greek word into English specifically as “dejection” and likewise *akedia* as “despondency.”

³⁵ In this chapter and my third chapter, I will use “the Wanderer” (standard formatting) to refer to the character or poetic speaker in the text most often called by that name, while I will use *The Wanderer* (in italics) to refer to the poem itself.

had the scribe, or whomever wrote the poem down, added quotation marks; nevertheless, there are none, and scholars have interpreted the poem as having as few as one poetic speaker and as many as three. The most popular contemporary scholarly position is to interpret the poem as basically the “monologue” of one speaker: an Anglo-Saxon warrior or former member of the *comitatus*, whose loss of lord and kin has resulted in a state of exile.³⁶ Three main words are used in the poem to refer to this speaker—*anhaga*, *eardstapa*, and *snottor*, all three of which contemporary scholars interpret as describing different moments of spiritual and intellectual development in a single character. I will outline some of the problematic aspects of this position in my third and final chapter, but for now I intend to explore first, textually and linguistically, a way in which the framework of the deadly passions might enable us to shift and revise our interpretive focus, thus I will also assume for the moment that the poem is a monologue, and that various words including *anhaga* and *eardstapa* all refer to a single speaker.³⁷

In the opening lines of *The Wanderer*, the poetic speaker is called *anhaga* (and later the variant *anhoga*), an Old English noun that appears in the Old English corpus no less than twelve times in ten different texts, of which nine are poetic and six of those included in the Exeter Book. Contrary to frequent scholarly assumptions that “the meaning of the word . . . is clear enough” (Klinck 106), we have no way of definitively

³⁶ Muir, adopting this popular contemporary perspective, interprets the speaker as “a poet-philosopher, who speaks lines 1-7 and 111-115, [. . . who] knows where to find wisdom and security against the hostile forces of this world, and is presenting the enveloped text (lines 8-110) as a fictional *exemplum* illustrating for others how he achieved this wisdom” (Muir 503).

³⁷ I will be reconsidering the implications of both *anhaga* and *eardstapa* because they are the two Old English words that are most often inform the scholarly assumptions that the Wanderer as a poetic speaker is a former Anglo-Saxon warrior and current exile. *Snottor*, the Old English word for a wise person, is nowhere near as problematic in a monastic interpretive context and thus I have excluded it from my discussion.

identifying what *anhaga* actually means.³⁸ In translation it most often implies a sense of physical isolation, such as John C. Pope's "one who dwell's alone, a solitary" (Pope 166) and Anne Klinck's "one who is alone" (Klinck 106); however, I believe that the word in Old English implies a state-of-being, an emotional or psychological isolation beyond mere physical isolation. My interpretation of *anhaga* as a word with ontological implications is a subtle but important distinction that supports my reading of the poem, which views the *anhaga* as someone suffering from *lype* and *akedia*.³⁹

The poem opens with a rather cryptic statement: "Often the *anhaga* waits for grace, / the mildness of the measurer, though he sad-in-mind / a long time over the waterways / is destined to move the ice-cold sea with his hands, / wade the *wræclastas*."⁴⁰ The ontological implications of the word *anhaga* are reinforced in these lines by the noun *wræclastas*, usually translated as "paths of exile" but which can be "better understood by the ontological status of its inhabitants than by its shape and size" (Ramein n.p.).⁴¹ For example, in *Christ and Satan*, the word is used three times to describe the space which

³⁸ The etymological debate surrounding both words can be divided into two camps. In *Altenglisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, F. Holthausen glosses *anhaga* as the German *einsiedler*, or "recluse"; he derives it as a compound of *an*, the Old English word for "one," and *haga*, a word for "dwelling, enclosure," thus it would translate generally as "one who dwells alone." In "Traditional Themes in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*," Ida Gordon connects the word with the Old English verb *hogian*, which means "to think," therefore translating *anhaga* as "one who meditates alone." Anne Klinck notes that "both Leslie and Dunning-Bliss think it likely that the two forms originally developed separately and then fell together; as the latter suggest, close similarity in meaning would facilitate this" (Klinck 106), and scholars have generally accepted that the two forms are indeed interchangeable.

³⁹ This word cannot connote mere physical isolation, because it appears in *The Phoenix*, *Guthlac*, and *Elene* to describe characters that are not strictly alone in the physical sense. In *The Phoenix*, it glosses the Latin *unica* and implies that the Phoenix is a "one of a kind" creature, socially unique. It is used similarly in *Guthlac* to describe a personified Death, who is a social and emotional "loner" even when in the company of Guthlac himself. In *Elene*, the word refers to Judas, a Jew handed over to Elene by his own people as a hostage.

⁴⁰ "Oft him anhaga are gebideð, / metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig / geond lagulade longe sceolde / hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ / wadan wræclastas" (1-4). Where I translate from the Anglo-Saxon for *The Wanderer* or any other Exeter Book poem, I will provide the lines in Old English from Muir's edition of *The Wanderer* in *The Exeter Book Anthology* for comparison. Line numbers in this edition are standard.

⁴¹ For a more detailed interpretation of *wræclastas* as an ontological space specifically in *Christ and Satan*, see the online version of Ramein's paper delivered at the ASSC graduate conference in 2009: "Exile, Old English, ASSC" (Ramein n.p.).

Satan inhabits as a being ostracized from communion with God. In *The Wanderer*, I believe the word's occurrence implies an ontological status above and beyond any physical isolation. Thus if we decide, as scholars have often done, to identify the Wanderer with the *anhaga*, we should realize that the poem may be emphasizing a state-of-being instead of merely describing the physical situation of the poetic speaker. Either way, this ontological emphasis fits very well within the context of the deadly passions because it reinforces the internal (and therefore perhaps also the psychological) aspects of the *anhaga* as a character. Whereas traditional scholarship interprets the *anhaga* as “one who dwells alone” out of necessity because he has lost his lord and *comitatus*, the framework of the passions suggests that the *anhaga* may be a different kind of solitary: Cassian, for example, claims that *akedia* is “the peculiar lot of solitaires and frequent foe of those dwelling in the desert” (Cassian 219), thus there may be a monastic context that has been overlooked by Anglo-Saxonists in their interpretive approaches to this poem.

The strongest textual link between the word *anhaga* and the passions does not occur in the poem itself, but rather in the margins of Lambeth Palace *MS 427*, also known as the Lambeth Psalter. The manuscript presumably dates from the eleventh century—hence, I suspect, the reason it has garnered little attention from Anglo-Saxonists—and contains Latin translations of the Psalms with Old English glosses, including the only non-poetic occurrence of *anhoga* in the Old English corpus: an Old English gloss of *spearwa anhaga* [*anhaga* sparrow] for the Latin *passer solitarius* [solitary bird] in Psalm 101. Taken by itself, the gloss is striking but not especially revealing; however, when considered within the context of Psalm 101 as a whole, the gloss becomes particularly important. One of seven penitential psalms in the western Christian tradition, Psalm 101

contains a superscript that reads “A prayer of one afflicted, when suffering from *akedia*” (Holden 7), and the psalm’s speaker describes a state of severe emotional distress: “My heart is stricken and withered like grass; I am too wasted to eat my bread. / Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my skin. / I am like an owl of the wilderness, like a little owl of the waste places. / I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird [*spearwa anhaga*] on the housetop. . . . / I eat ashes like bread, and mingle tears with my drink” (Psalm 101:4-12).⁴²

In order to understand *akedia* (ἀκήδῖα) as it is mentioned in this psalm (and possibly in *The Wanderer*), one must first understand the Greek noun *kedos*. Among other things, Holden describes it as a way of relating to other beings, whether they are alive or dead:

Kedos means “care for others,” especially the kind of care that you show when someone dies. To have *kedos* for the dead means that you care so much . . . that you wash the body, attend the funeral, and see the remains of the person respectfully buried, even though the person you loved is now dead and gone and will do nothing more for you in this life. *Kedia*, therefore, is the action of showing *kedos*. (Holden 7)

Thus *akedia*—a compound of the Greek words *ἀ-* (a negative prefix) and *kedia*—means “not showing *kedos*.” Cassian defines it succinctly as “a weary or anxious heart”

(Cassian 219).⁴³ According to both Cassian and Evagrius, the passion is often marked by

⁴² “Percussus sum ut fenum et aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comederer panem meum. A voce gemitus mei adhaesit os meum carni meae. Similis factus sum pellicano solitudinis, factus sum sicut nycticorax in domicilio. Vigilavi et factus sum sicut passer solitarius in tecto. . . . Quia cinerem tamquam panem manducabam et potum meum cum fletu miscebam.”

⁴³ Sextum nobis certamen est, quod Graeci vocant ἀκήδῖα, quam nos taedium siue anxietatem cordis possumus nuncupare” (Cassian 10.1). See also my footnote 24 for information regarding the Latin versions of these writings.

hyperactivity of the mind combined with an inability to focus on any task at hand.⁴⁴

Evagrius describes *akedia* as “the one [passion] that causes the most serious trouble of all” (Evagrius 12, brackets mine) and notes that it produces such dissatisfaction, such anxiety of mind and weariness of heart and exhaustion, that the monks will often leave their cell and ultimately give up their way of life. The Lambeth Psalter gloss of the psalm dealing with the passion of *akedia* may simply indicate, as Klinck concludes, that *anhoga* is the Old English equivalent of the Latin *solitarius*: ergo her translation of *anhoga* as “one who is alone” (Klinck 106); however, in light of my suggestion that *anhoga* cannot refer merely to physical isolation, and in light of connections between Psalm 101 and *akedia*, the implications of *anhoga* as used in this specific psalm and in *The Wanderer* suggest that the tradition of the deadly passions may not be an entirely foreign and improper framework through which to explore the poem.

The Wanderer also refers to the *anhoga* as the *eardstapa*, a compound of the Old English noun *eard*, meaning “homeland, country, native land, soil” (Pope 177, Bosworth-Toller 231, Clark Hall 95) and *stæppan*, the verb meaning “to step, go, advance, proceed” (Pope 211, Bosworth-Toller 908).⁴⁵ We are told that the *eardstapa* is “mindful of hardships / of cruel combats / of the fall of beloved kinsmen” (6b-7).⁴⁶ The *eardstapa* describes himself as “always wretched and sorrowful, deprived of my native land, / far from kinsmen” (20-21a), later lamenting, “In years gone by I covered / my lord with the

⁴⁴ Evagrius writes that *akedia* “constrains the monk to look constantly out of the windows, to walk outside the cell, to gaze carefully at the sun to determine how far it stands from the ninth hour, to look this way and now that to see if perhaps [one of the brethren appears from his cell]” (Evagrius 19, brackets his)

⁴⁵ In an attempt to account for the variations in Old English lexical definitions, and in order to provide readers with constellations of meaning from which to draw their lexical conclusions, I will cite wherever possible the linguistic definitions from three of the most respected Old English lexical texts in the critical tradition: John C. Pope’s glossary in *Eight Old English Poems*, Bosworth and Toller’s *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, and J. R. Clark-Hall’s *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

⁴⁶ “Earfeþa gemyndig, / wraþra wælsleahta, winemæga hryre” (6b-7).

darkness of earth and I, downcast, traversed / from there, winter-sad over the binding waves / homesick, sought a giver of treasure” (22-25).⁴⁷ And the *eardstapa*’s search for “myne wisse” (27)—a phrase meaning “those who might feel affection for me” or “who might know of my people”—dominates the entire first half of the poem, establishing the reoccurring pattern of loss and longing, a pattern also depicted by Evagrius and Cassian as indicative of *lype*.⁴⁸ In *Praktikos*, Evagrius notes that *lype* “tends to come up at times because of the deprivations of one’s desires. . . . Certain thoughts first drive the soul to the memory of home and parents, or else to that of one’s former life” (Evagrius 10). In *The Institutes* Cassian also claims that it “arises out of the desire for some gain that has not been achieved, when a person sees that he has failed in his hope of acquiring the things that his mind was set on” (Cassian 212).⁴⁹

In arguably the most heart-wrenching scene of the poem, the *eardstapa* dreams or imagines that he is again in a hall, embracing and kissing his lord, yet when he wakes he sees “in front of him the fallow waves / bathing sea-birds spreading feathers / falling frost and snow mingled with hail” (46-48).⁵⁰ Somewhere between waking and dreaming, the *eardstapa* initially greets the birds with joy, eagerly looking for his companions, but they in turn float away as reality sinks in upon him.⁵¹ As a result of this illusion, the speaker cries, “Then the wounds of the heart are heavier, / grievous *with longing* for his lord” (49-

⁴⁷ “Oft earmcearig, eðle bedæled, / freomægum feor” (20-21a); “Sipþan geara iu goldwine minne / hruse heolstre biwrah, ond ic hean þonan / wod wintercearig ofer waþema gebind / sohte seledreorig sinces bryttan” (22-25).

⁴⁸ “Hwær ic feor oþþe neah findan meahte / þone þe in meodhealle [minne] myne wisse” (26-27).

⁴⁹ “Subsequi seu concupiscentiae luciue cuiusdam minus indepti generari solet, cum se harum rerum quadam spe mente concepta quis uiderit excidisse” (9.4). Cassian also notes that “occasionally we are even provoked to fall into the misfortune for no apparent reason, when we are suddenly weighed down with great sorrow” (Cassian 212, see note 6).

⁵⁰ “Gesihð him biforan fealwe wegas, / baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra, / hreosan him ond snaw haegle gemenged” (46-48).

⁵¹ “þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð; / greteð gliwstafum, georne geondsceawað / secga geseldan; swimmað oft on weg -- / fleotendra ferð” (51-54a).

50a, *emphasis mine*).⁵² The harsh emotional consequence of this experience is emphasized in the phrase immediately following: “Sorrow is renewed.”⁵³ This exact phrase is also repeated later in the poem and explicitly underscores the *eardstapa*’s emotional predicament: “Sorrow is renewed / when the mind moves through / the memory of kinsmen” (50-51).⁵⁴

The scene with the sea-birds is striking not only for its emotional power, but also for its similarity to the scenario mentioned in Evagrius’s description of *lype*: “When these thoughts [of home, family, one’s former way of life, etc.] find that the soul offers no resistance but rather follows after them and pours itself out in pleasures *that are still only mental in nature*, they then seize her and drench her in sadness, with the result that these ideas she was just indulging no longer remain. In fact they cannot be had in reality, either, because of her present way of life” (Evagrius 10, *emphasis mine*). Holden thus points out that “dejection has to do with . . . the kinds of loss that constitute normal sadness and grief. On the other hand, dejection has to do with unreality. It distorts normal sadness and grief into hope for things that can never be” (Holden 6). Indeed it seems that the entire poem’s “action” is predominately this type of mental action: remembering, contemplating, dreaming, desiring. The *eardstapa* is “mindful of hardships” (6), he “remembers hall-warriors and the giving of treasure” (34), and it

⁵² “þonne beoð þy hefigran heortan benne, / sare æfter swæsne” (49-50a).

⁵³ The phrase “Cearo bið geniwad” (55) also appears in similar form in *Beowulf* when Æscere is killed when Grendel’s mother carries off Æschere from Heorot: “Cearu wæs geniwod, / geworden in wicun” (1303-1304). The difference between each occurrence stems from the tense of the verb—present in *The Wanderer*, past in *Beowulf*. I believe use of the present tense in *the Wanderer* emphasizes the immediacy of the emotional sentiment. (All Old English lines from *Beowulf* are taken directly from Klaeber’s third edition of the poem.)

⁵⁴ “Sorg bið geniwad / þonne maga gemynd mod geondhweorfeð” (50-51).

“seems in his mind that he his lord / embraces and kisses” (41-42).⁵⁵ Both *gemyndig* and *gemon* are variants of *gemunan*, a verbal form of the noun *gemynd* from which derives the English word “mind,” emphasizing the mental aspect of the *eardstapa*’s lament, but the *eardstapa*’s emotional distress is not the result of simply remembering the past, but of an intense desire for the past—past kinsmen, past way of life—that can never be fully actualized or recovered, and that I believe can be interpreted in this context as a “passion.”⁵⁶

The poetic vocabulary in *The Wanderer* also suggests that the dominant emotional feeling in the poem—dejection—finds a ready home within the interpretive context of the deadly passions. Old English forms of the words for sorrow and hardship occur more than 25 times in 115 lines, and the intensity of the vocabulary and context indicate that the *eardstapa*’s sustained emotional distress is more than merely sadness. The *eardstapa* is described throughout the poem as “mind-sad” [*modcearig*], “miserable-sad” [*earmcearig*], “winter-sad” [*wintercearig*], and “homesick” [*seledreorig*]. He is “mindful of hardships” [*earfeþe gemyndig*], and the Old English noun *earfeþe*, glossed by Bosworth-Toller as “hardship, labour, difficulty, trouble, suffering, woe” (Bosworth-Toller 232), appears elsewhere in the Exeter Book to describe Christ’s crucifixion.⁵⁷ The *eardstapa* twice describes himself as “friendless” [*freondleasne*, 28; *wineleas*, 45]. His only companion, aside from the sea-birds, is *sorg*, the Old English word for “sorrow, anxiety, pain, grief” (Pope 210, Bosworth-Toller 895, Clark Hall 313). Sorrow is also accompanied by anger in several key moments of the poem. The speaker claims that

⁵⁵ “Earfeþa gemyndig” (6); “Gemon he seleseccgas ond sincþege” (34); “þinceð him on mode than he his mondryhten / clyppe ond cysse” (42).

⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, Evagrius describes this tension between the reality of one’s present situation and the psychological desire to avoid that reality as an important condition of *lype*.

⁵⁷ *Christ in Judgement*, line 561 (Muir 98).

“*hreo* thoughts will not bring about help” (16), the adjective *hreo* connoting “rough, fierce, angry, troubled” (Pope 191, Bosworth-Toller 558, Clark Hall 192).⁵⁸ In another passage, we are told that a wise man will not ever be *hat-heort*, which literally translates “hot-heart.” Bosworth-Toller glosses it as “fury, anger, wrath” (Bosworth-Toller 511), pointing out that the word often translates the Latin *iracundia*. Incidentally, Alfred’s Old English translation of Gregory’s *Pastoral Care* uses the term to mean “passionate.”⁵⁹

Again, towards the end of the poem, we are told that a good man must not speak too quickly of his *torn*, a word meaning “pain, grief, passion, anger, indignation” (Pope 213, Clark Hall 346); Bosworth-Toller defines it as “a violent emotion of anger or grief . . . [and] bitterness” (Bosworth-Toller 1003). The appearance of anger in the poem can be a puzzling addition to readers—we may not often think of such strong anger accompanying such heavy sorrow, particularly as we are told that the speaker is remembering events that supposedly occurred a long time ago; however, within the framework of the passions this anger makes sense. Both Evagrius and Cassian point out that anger and bitterness often accompany *lype* and *akedia*, and Evagrius posits that both anger and *lype* stem from the same aspect of the soul, the *epithymikon*. In *Praktikos* Evagrius notes, “On other occasions it [*lype*] accompanies anger” (Evagrius 10). In *The Institutes* Cassian writes, “Sometimes it follows upon the vice of anger, which precedes it” (Cassian 212), and notes one particular effect: “We are unable to welcome with our usual courtesy the arrival even of those who are dear to us and our kinfolk . . . and do not give them a gracious response, since the recesses of our heart are all filled with the gall of

⁵⁸ “Hreo hyge helpe gefremman” (16). In *Beowulf* the word is used to describe Hrothgar’s response upon learning that Æschere is dead (1307), Beowulf’s mood in killing Grendel’s mother (1564), and the dragon’s response to Beowulf’s attack (2581).

⁵⁹ I use the title *Cura Pastoralis* to distinguish Alfred’s translation, as opposed to Gregory’s Latin versions.

bitterness” (Cassian 212).⁶⁰ Cassian claims that *akedia* “makes a person horrified at where he is . . . and also disdainful and contemptuous” (Cassian 219). Evagrius notes that it “instills in the heart of the monk . . . a hatred for the place, a hatred for his very life itself, a hatred for manual labor” (Evagrius 19).⁶¹

The poetic vocabulary also supports the understanding of passions as “things that happen to a person, that overwhelm the person” or as “habits of thought, feeling, and response over which we have little or no control” (Holden 2). The *eardstapa*, for example, does not merely “fall asleep” but rather is “held captive” by sleep, indicating his total subjection to the overwhelming influence of sadness: “Then sorrow and sleep both together / the miserable *anhogan* often bind” (39-40).⁶² The Old English verb *gebindan* is also used in Hrothgar’s speech after the death of Grendel, where he warns that a person, weighed down by cares and anxiety, can be bound and captured by pride.⁶³ Cassian indicates that passivity is indeed the dominant intellectual and psychological response in the onslaught of *lype* and *akedia*. He claims that *lype* “weakens and oppresses the mind

⁶⁰ “Interdum vero etiam nullis existentibus causis, quibus ad hanc labem conuere provocemur, inimici subtilis instinctu tanto repente maerore deprimimur, ut ne carorum quidem ac necessariorum nostrorum adventum solita suscipere adfabilitate possimus, et quidquid ab eis competenti fuerit confabulatione prolutum, inopportuno nobis ac superfluum iudicetur, nullaue eis reddatur a nobis grata responsio, universos cordis nostril recessus felle amaritudinis occupante” (9.4).

⁶¹ This quote by Evagrius makes it easier to understand why, in our modern English classification of the sins, *akedia* is rendered “sloth.” According to Evagrius and Cassian, both *lype* and *akedia* cause inactivity: *lype* by immobilizing the psyche through sorrow, *akedia* by allowing the psyche to evade manual labor through activity of other sorts. The general connotations of our English word “sloth,” which we tend to define as “laziness” or an “unwillingness to work,” are merely descriptions of the symptomatic aspects of these two passions, not the passions themselves—a major difference between our understanding of the seven deadly sins as they are contemporarily expressed and their earlier framework.

⁶² “ðonne sorg ond slæp somod ætgædre / earmne anhogan oft begindað” (39-40). The word *oft* here can also be translated as “always,” so that I can also (and perhaps, in the context of *lype*, more appropriately) render the lines as “Sorrow and sleep both together / the miserable *anhogan* always bind.”

⁶³ “Ofer-hygda dæl / weaxeð ond wridað, þonne se weard swefeð, / sawele hyrde; bið se slæp to fæst, / bisgum gebunden” (1741-43). In his dual-language edition of the poem, Howell Chickering translates these lines, “His portion of arrogance, begins to increase, when his guardian sleeps, the soul’s shepherd. Too sound is that sleep, bound up in cares” (Chickering 149).

itself” (Cassian 211).⁶⁴ He writes, “It does not suffer [the soul] to be peaceable and gentle with the brothers, makes it impatient and abrupt with regard to every duty of work . . . and, having destroyed all salutary counsel and driven out steadfastness of heart, crazes as it were and stupefies the intellect, *breaking and overwhelming it with a punishing despair*” (Cassian 211, *emphasis mine*).⁶⁵ Cassian writes that *akedia* “makes a person horrified at where he is, disgusted with his cell, and also disdainful and contemptuous of the brothers who live with him or at a slight distance . . . Likewise *it renders him slothful and immobile* in the face of all the work to be done within the walls of his dwelling. It does not allow him to stay still in his cell or to devote any effort to reading” (Cassian 219, *emphasis mine*).⁶⁶ In *The Wanderer*, the *eardstapa*’s captivity to “sorrow and sleep” also parallels an occurrence of *lype* in the Synoptic Gospels, where in the Garden of Gethsemane Christ returns from prayer to find all the disciples asleep “because of sorrow [ἀπό τῆς λύπῃ]” (Luke 22:45).

In addition to sorrow and sleep, the poem’s depicted environment, the sea, plays a crucial role in emphasizing the *eardstapa*’s overwhelming helplessness in the face of this emotional onslaught. The sea is twice explicitly described as the *eardstapa*’s captor, again using forms of the verb *gebindan*: “Sorrow is renewed / for he who is destined to

⁶⁴ “Quae si passim per singulos incursus et incertos ac varios casus obtinendi animam nostra hauerit favultatem, ab omni nos per momenta singular separat divinae contemplationis intuitu ipsamque mentem ab universe puritatis statu deiectam funditus labefactat ac deprimit” (9.1).

⁶⁵ “Tranquillum quoque ac mitem fratribus esse non patitur et ad cuncta operationum vel religionis official inpatientem et asperum reddit, onmique perditio salubri consilio et cordis constantia proturbata velut amentem facit et erbium sensum frangitque et obruit desperatione poenali” (9.1). The English word “desperation,” derived from the Latin *desperatione* used here, also works here, and I would also translate the ending to these lines: “overwhelming it with a punishing desperation.”

⁶⁶ “Qui cum miserabilem obsederit mentem, horrorem loci, cellae fastidium, fratrum quoque, qui cum eo vel elminus commorantur, tamquam neglegentium ac minus spiritalium aspernationem gignit atque contemptum. Ad omne quoque opus, quod intra saepta sui cubilis est, facit desidem et inertem: non eum in cellula residere, non operam sinit inpendere lectioni” (10.2.1).

send very often / over *the binding of the waves* a weary mind” (55b-57, *emphasis mine*).⁶⁷ Remembering the burial of his dead lord, the *eardstapa* laments, “I, downcast, traversed / from there, winter-sad over *the binding waves*” (23-24, *emphasis mine*).⁶⁸ Both references to “wāpema gebind” underscore the emotional context of this captivity: the *eardstapa* goes “winter-sad” over the waves, and they hold captive the *eardstapa*’s “weary mind.”⁶⁹ Imagery of the sea as a place of emotional captivity appears also in the description of *wræclastas*, the ambiguous “paths of exile or suffering” experienced by the poem’s speaker(s). The *anhaga* must “*wadan wræclastas*” (5), the verb *wadan* meaning “go through” and “pass through” but also “wade”—it is used in *Elene* to describe ships floating on the sea.⁷⁰ The same verb is used in line 24, which I translated earlier as “traversed” but which also could be translated as “waded,” again echoing the poem’s sea imagery.⁷¹ The poem clearly indicates that these *wræclastas* forcefully act in some way upon the *eardstapa*, emphasizing that the speaker is being controlled or overwhelmed by them and whatever emotions they imply: “The *wræclast* holds him, not at all twisted gold; / frozen thoughts, not at all the joy of the earth” (32-33).⁷² The noun *ferðloca*, which can be translated as “the soul’s enclosure” or “spirit” (Pope 180, Bosworth Toller 283), also emphasizes the psychological nature of the *eardstapa*’s imprisonment. This is not just sadness, but sadness that is overwhelming, sadness that binds the mind and heart.

⁶⁷ “Cearo bið geniwad / þam þe sendan sceal swiþe geneahhe / ofer wāpema gebind werigne sefan” (55b-57). Pope also glosses the noun *sefa* as “heart” or “spirit” (Pope 208). Bosworth-Toller’s definition adds “understanding” (Bosworth Toller 856), while Clark Hall includes all four definitions (Clark Hall 301).

⁶⁸ See my footnote 43.

⁶⁹ The phrase “wāpema gebind” occurs nowhere else in Old English poetry. I translate it as “binding of the waves,” but Pope’s attempt to translate the phrase poetically illustrates its lexical ambiguity: “Congregated waters? Confinement of the waves? The waves embrace?” (Pope 170). Within the framework of the passions, I believe viewing the waves as “binding” makes sense, underscoring the *eardstapa*’s overwhelming emotional situation and echoing the poem’s reoccurring theme of binding and captivity.

⁷⁰ “Se ðone sið beheold, / breca ofer bædweg, brimwudu snyrgan / under swellingum, sāmearh plegean, / wadan wægflotan” (244-246).

⁷¹ “I, downcast, *waded* / from there, winter-sad over the binding waves” (23-24, *emphasis mine*).

⁷² “Warað him wræclast, nales wunden gold, / ferðloca freorig, nalæs foldan blæd” (32-33).

The poem's use of the sea as a locus for exploring the *eardstapa*'s psychological and emotional captivity has further contextual implications as well. In his article "The Sea a Desert: Early English Spirituality and The Seafarer," Clair McPherson uses the context of fourth century Egyptian ascetics—the same monastic communities in which Evagrius and Cassian presumably lived—to argue that early Anglo-Saxon monastic literature frequently uses the sea to symbolically represent the desert as a place of spiritual challenge. In *The Egyptian Desert and the Irish Bogs*, Gregory Telepneff reinforces the validity of this interpretation by pointing out that "the general name adopted for such [coenobitic] settlements by the Celtic missionaries . . . [is] *dísert* in their native language" (Telepneff 36) even though "no deserts *per se* existed in Hibernia [or in England]" (Telepneff 36-37, *italics his*). If we apply this early Coptic context to *The Wanderer*, the sea becomes more than merely the geographical setting for the poem's activity: it becomes a place, like the desert, in which one naturally encounters one's passions. Thus dejection and despondency in the poem again readily fit within the monastic framework of *lype* and *akedia* offered by Cassian and Evagrius.⁷³

The poem interweaves the theme of emotional captivity with the more personal act of "binding" one's own thoughts and mind. Scholars have often understood this as the *eardstapa*'s unwillingness to speak of his sorrow, the construction of a heroic hyper-masculinity that must keep everything emotional locked inside. The irony, of course, is that the entire poem is the product of the speaker letting all his feelings out! I believe that the poem is not describing the *eardstapa*'s unwillingness to verbally acknowledge his feelings, but rather a more mental action, possibly akin to the early monastic notion of

⁷³ In *The Institutes*, Cassian claims that *akedia* "is the peculiar lot of solitaires and a particularly dangerous and frequent foe of those dwelling in the desert" (Cassian 219, *emphasis mine*): "Adfinis haec tristitiae ac solitariis magis experta et in heremo commorantibus infestior hostis ac frequens" (10.1).

apatheia. Early in the poem, the *eardstapa* comments, “I in truth know / that it is in a man a noble custom / that he his *ferðlocan* bind fast / guard his *hordcofan*, think as he will” (11-14).⁷⁴ The noun *ferðloca* mentioned earlier, usually translated as “mind” or “spirit,” is a compound of the Old English words *ferð*, meaning “soul, spirit, mind, heart” (Pope 180, Bosworth-Toller 282, Clark Hall 117) and *loca*, meaning “an enclosed place, a locker, a stronghold” (Pope 196, Bosworth-Toller 645, Clark Hall 221). In *Juliana* the word describes the place in a human person where the love of Christ supposedly dwells.⁷⁵ The noun *hordcofa* is an initially puzzling compound of the Old English words *hord*, meaning “hoard, treasure” (Pope 191, Bosworth-Toller 552, Clark Hall 190) and *cofa*, meaning “coffer, chamber, room” (Pope 173, Bosworth-Toller, Clark Hall 72); it literally means “treasure chamber” but is used poetically to connote one’s inner mind or heart.⁷⁶ The occurrence of a similar phrase in *Homiletic Fragment II* provides an illuminating context for reinterpreting *hordcofa* in *The Wanderer*: “Rejoice now in spirit and for comfort grow up / in thy lord, and thy praise raise up, / hold the *hordlocan*, bind fast the mind / with the heart” (1-4a).⁷⁷ The exhortation in this “homily” to “heald hordlocan”

⁷⁴ “Ic to soþe wat / þæt biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw / þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille” (11-14).

⁷⁵ “Hyre wæs Cristes lof / in ferðlocan fæste biwundan” (33-234). Kennedy translates these lines, “But the love of Christ was fast bound in her mind” (Kennedy, *Juliana*, 6). The similarity between *fæste binde* in *The Wanderer* and *fæste biwundan* in *Juliana* suggests that binding one’s *ferðloca* need not be viewed as a hyper-masculine stoic unwillingness to feel emotion.

⁷⁶ For example, in Psalm 118 (modern Psalm 119) of the *Paris Psalter* (*MS Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Latin 8824*), a tenth or eleventh century collection of parallel Latin and Old English versions of the psalms, the verses read: “Eadige beoð swylce, þa þe a wyllað / his gewitnesse wise smeagan, / and hille mid ealle innancundum / heortan hordcofan helpe biddað” (3-6). I translate these lines, “Happy is also he who always wills / to wisely meditate on his testimonies / and who with everything inside the *heortan hordcofan* seeks for help” (3-6). The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* renders the phrase “whole heart” (Prov. 119:2). Incidentally, the *Paris Psalter* manuscript also contains fourteen illuminated miniatures of Byzantine-style art, again suggesting connections between eastern Christianity and Anglo-Saxon religious culture.

⁷⁷ “Gefeoh nu on ferðe ond to frofre geþeoh / dryhtne þinum, ond þinne dom arær, / heald hordlocan, hyge fæste bind mid modsefan” (1-4).

and “fæste bind . . . mid modsefan” suggest that there is a natural monastic context in which to interpret the action of guarding one’s mind or thoughts.⁷⁸

Elsewhere in *The Wanderer*, the speaker cries, “Nor may a weary *mod* withstand *wyrd*, / nor a troubled mind bring about help. / Thus the *domgeorne* always dreary thoughts / in their breast-coffers bind fast” (15-18).⁷⁹ We do not know what the noun *mod*—from which we get the English word “mood”—actually means. Pope glosses it as “mind, heart, spirit, mood” (Pope 199); Bosworth-Toller as “the inner man, the spiritual man as opposed to the bodily man” (Bosworth-Toller 693), Clark Hall adds “temper, courage” (Clark Hall 239). Likewise the noun *wyrd*, which is frequently translated as “fate” but sometimes merely as “events” or “what happens,” is ambiguous and uncertain. Regardless, the verses suggest that in order to avoid a “weary *mod*” and a “troubled mind,” the *domgeorne* bind “dreary thoughts.” The word *domgeorn*—a compound of the words *dom* (glory, judgment) and *georn* (yearn, eager)—is most often literally translated as “those eager for glory” or figuratively as “the ambitious” (Thorpe 287), but elsewhere in the Old English corpus it connotes “the righteous.”⁸⁰

Using the framework of the deadly passions to read these lines results in a very different context for interpretation and for understanding the idea of binding and guarding one’s thoughts, and that context informs the poem’s later didactic verses as well:

⁷⁸ As with all titles given to medieval narratives, the title “Homiletic Fragment” has been construed from the text of the poem itself. In reality, we do not know in what context this poem would have been composed, received, interpreted, or transmitted; however, there is an explicit religious context to the verses, as evidenced by the later lines: “There is one faith, one living, there is one baptism” (8-9).

⁷⁹ “Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wiðstandan, / ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman. / Forðon domgeorne dreorigne oft / in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste” (15-18).

⁸⁰ See especially its occurrence in *Elene*: “Soðfæsste bioð / yfemest in þam ade, eadigra degryht, / dugoð domgeorne, swa hie adreogan magon / ond butan earfeðum eaðe geþolian, / modriga mægen” (1289-93). In *Andreas* it describes a prince, the apostle Andrew, and Christ: “Swa hleoðrodon hæleða ræswan, / dugoð domgeorne, dyrnan þohton / meotudes mihte” (692-94); “We ðær heahfæderas halige oncneowon / ond martyra mægen unlytel, / sungon sigedryhtne soðfæstlic lof, / dugoð domgeorne” (875-78); “Niht helmade, / brunwann oferbræd beorgas steape, / ond se halga wæs to hofe læded, / deor ond domgeorn, in þæt dimme ræced” (Andreas 1305-08).

Therefore a man may not become wise, before he has
 a share of winters in the world. A wise man shall be patient,
 not at all too *hat-heort*, nor too hasty of speech,
 nor too weak in battles nor too *wanhydig*
 nor too fearful, nor too rejoicing, nor too wealth-greedy
 nor never too eager of boasts, before he sees clearly.⁸¹ (64-69)

The formulaic structure of these verses echoes Evagrius's notion of *apatheia*, the practice of detachment or dispassion from strong and overwhelming passions, from extremes.⁸²

In addition to *hat-heort*, which as I mentioned earlier connotes rage, the adjective *wanhydig* implies more than merely, as it is often translated, someone who is "heedless, imprudent, foolish, thoughtless, reckless, rash" (Pope 218, Bosworth Toller 1166, Clark Hall 397). In *Christ in Judgment*, for example, the word describes the type of thinking that cuts one off from God and one's own spirit.⁸³

The somewhat puzzling notion of "seeing clearly" appears again several lines later in *The Wanderer*, when presumably the *eardstapa* comments, "A man must *gebidan*, when he speaks a vow, / until the brave [one] sees clearly / whither the thoughts of the heart will turn."⁸⁴ Scholars traditionally interpret these lines as a warning to Anglo-Saxon warriors about "boasts," generally believed to be an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon

⁸¹ "Forþon ne mæg wearþan wis wer, ær he age / wintra dæl in woruldrice. Wita sceal gepyldig / ne sceal no to hatheort ne to hrædwyrde, / ne to wac wiga ne to wanhydig, / ne to forht ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre / ne næfre gielpes to georn ær he geare cunne" (64-69).

⁸² In *A Guide to Old English*, Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson note that "the use of *to* 'too' here seems to be a rhetorical expression growing out of the Anglo-Saxon's predilection for understatement rather than absolute assertion" (Mitchell 285).

⁸³ "Nor cares he sin to perform, / the *wonhydig* man, nor has he at all / sorrow in his mind that his holy spirit / dies through sins, in this fleeting time" (689-92); "Ne bisorgað he synne to fremman, / wonhydig mon, ne he wihte hafað / hreowe on mode þæt him halig gæst / losige þurh leahtras on þas lænan tid" (689-92). In *Elene* the adjective describes demons, or fallen ("heedless") angels: "Ond thu womfulle / scyldwyrcende sceaðan of radorum awurpe wonhydige" (760b-762a).

⁸⁴ "Beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot spriced, / oþþæt colleferð cunne gearwe / hwider hweþra gehygd hweorfan wille" (70-72).

warrior culture.⁸⁵ However, the verb *gebidan*, usually translated in this specific instance as “wait,” also means “to endure, to abide” (Pope 170, Bosworth-Toller 373, Clark Hall 47), so that the lines may also be translated as “A man must endure, abide, when he speaks a vow.” In addition, the verb *hweorfan* connotes “turning, changing (one’s course), returning, departing, wandering” (Pope 192, Bosworth-Toller 574, Clark Hall 198), both as physical movement and as a spiritual or psychological movement.⁸⁶ The lines in *The Wanderer* are given further context by similar verses towards the end of the poem: “Nor shall never [the wise man] his anger too quickly / man from his breast make known, unless he before then knows the remedy” (112-113).⁸⁷ The noun *bot*, glossed as “help, assistance, remedy, cure” (Pope 171, Bosworth-Toller 118, Clark Hall 54), is a word whose occurrence in these specific lines can be somewhat puzzling when interpreting the poem traditionally, but which makes sense within the context of the passions, since Cassian included “cures and remedies” for the passions in *The Institutes*.⁸⁸

There is, then, in conclusion, a large amount of textual and linguistic evidence within the poem that supports using the framework of the passions as a context for interpreting *The Wanderer*. The particular lexical implications of the word *anhaga* and its occurrence as a gloss in the Lambeth Psalter, an emphasis on the mental and

⁸⁵ Mitchell and Robinson provide a perfect example of the traditional scholarly position in their interpretation and translation of these lines: “Whenever he makes a vow, a stout-hearted warrior must wait until he knows precisely where the thoughts of his heart will tend.’ Both here and in l. 69 the speaker is warning against rash vows . . . uttered in public, since a man would earn contempt if he failed to carry out what he boasted he would do” (Mitchell 285).

⁸⁶ For examples referring to physical movement, see *Beowulf* 717, 2832. For examples referring to spiritual movement, see *The Ascension* 37 (*Christ A*, 476); *Andreas* 117, 640; *Juliana* 703; *The Whale* 78-81. The word is also used figuratively to describe one’s death, a “leaving” of the world: see *Beowulf* 264, 1714. In *Homiletic Fragment III*, the verb refers specifically to turning away from sins in one’s mind: “In swa hwylce tiid swa ge mid treowe to me / on hyge hweorfað, ond ge hellfirena / swearta geswicað, swa ic symle to eow / mid siblufan sona gecyrre / þurh milde mod” (3-7).

⁸⁷ “Ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene / beorn of his breostum acypan, nemþe he ær þa bote cunne” (112-113).

⁸⁸ See my Chapter 1, footnote 24.

psychological aspects of the *eardstapa*'s condition, the particular intensity of vocabulary used to describe sadness and sorrow, the appearance of anger alongside dejection, the emotional "captivity" of the *eardstapa* by these overwhelming emotions, the implications of sea imagery as a site of ascetic struggle, and the echoes of *apatheia* in the act of binding one's own thoughts: all of these point to a textual and contextual link between the tradition of the deadly passions and *The Wanderer*. In using this lens to explore the poem, I am not trying to argue any definitive point about the poetic speaker(s)—that the *anhaga* is a monk for example, although that may indeed be one legitimate interpretation. Rather, I want to suggest that the tradition of the deadly passions provides a framework through which the *anhaga*'s emotional and psychological state-of-being become both relevant in a monastic context as well as a fundamental focal point of the poem in general. When interpreted using the deadly passions as a poetic context, the focus of the poem can shift, moving from the traditional emphasis on the character—the Wanderer, the *anhaga*, the *eardstapa*, an exile—to emphasis on the emotional condition of the character and on the feelings expressed in the poem. *Lype* and *akedia* become a new locus around which our interpretive questions can revolve.

CHAPTER THREE: WHO IS THE WANDERER? WHAT IS *THE WANDERER*?

Who is the Wanderer? What is *The Wanderer*? These two questions are the primary reference points by which I hope to bring the framework of the passions as a poetic context for *The Wanderer* to bear upon the poem's critical tradition. Any scholar who endeavors to study the poem must eventually engage with them in some form, and so must I. I believe that they are, in fact, two distinct questions but they have become inseparable, at least from a scholarly standpoint, to the extent that we often make the mistake of assuming that in order to answer one question we must also answer the other. The first is a question of identification, a question regarding the poetic speaker. As I intend to show, even to ask this question indicates that one has made several assumptions regarding poetic voices in the text. The second question is one of larger interpretative meaning: what is this poem and what are we to make of it? Traditional scholarship continues to ask this second question through the lens of genre, an approach that is not without its own limitations and hermeneutical "blind spots." The given scholarly answers to both these questions make use of essentially the same old interpretive paradigms: Anglo-Saxon "heroic" society and medieval Catholic Christianity. By considering the way in which these questions take shape and play themselves out interpretively in Benjamin Thorpe's *Codex Exoniensis*, in R. F. Leslie's single edition of the poem, in the other major single edition of the poem by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, and in the recent work of Anne Klinck, I intend to outline some of the more limiting aspects of the poem's critical tradition as well as suggest three ways in which using the context of the passions might enable us to move our interpretive assumptions in new

directions, or at least become more aware of their presence in our contemporary approaches to the poem.

Benjamin Thorpe was the first Anglo-Saxonist to take up these questions in relation to *The Wanderer*; he did so in 1842 in his *Codex Exoniensis*, the very first publication of the Exeter Book's entire contents. In his introduction to the poem as part of a larger and more general Preface, Thorpe states, "To judge from a text frequently very obscure and perhaps corrupt, it [*The Wanderer*] appears to be the lament of an exiled follower for the death of his beloved friend and chief, and of his associates" (Thorpe vii). This very brief statement, which contains the entire extent of Thorpe's interpretive analysis, remains arguably the most longstanding and influential piece of hermeneutics in the poem's scholarly history, and not unproblematic. On the surface, Thorpe is simply describing the poem's contents; however, his statement, which merely *appears* descriptive, actually takes up and combines both interpretive questions with which I began this chapter. Thorpe identifies the poetic speaker, but he does so by talking about the poem in general; that is, he identifies the Wanderer by means of describing the poetic contents of the text. Thus the poem becomes for Thorpe not merely a lament in any generic sense, but *the* lament of a specific type of character: the exile.

Thorpe's "description" is actually an identification, one which fails to recognize certain fundamental interpretive questions. For example, Thorpe's assertion that the poem is a lament by "*an* exiled follower" does not allow for the possibility of multiple poetic speakers in the text, and scholars who have since followed his example unintentionally collapse a very vexed and complicated issue into a single, unified, narrative interpretation. Thorpe's description of the poem as lament is also a

characterization in the more literal sense, because it presents distinctive elements of the poem (sadness, lament, grief) as essential features of the poetic speaker, even though what Thorpe presents as presumably the poem in its totality—the lament “for the death of his beloved friend and chief, and of his associates”—actually accounts for only the first half of poem. To be fair, Thorpe does rather cautiously note that the poem “appears” to be this-or-that, and I suspect that any interpretive foreclosure is the unintentional byproduct of Thorpe’s eager attempt to describe and catalogue what was for him a brand new piece of Old English literature. But whether intentional or not, his statement reveals a very subtle entwining of two distinct interpretive components, thus the question of the poem (What is *The Wanderer*?) becomes linked to the question of the speaker (Who is the Wanderer?), and the two have been linked ever since.

Thorpe’s choice of a title for the poem also occupies this double space of description and identification, for *The Wanderer* simultaneously acts for readers as both the title of the poem *and* the identity of the poetic speaker: the name of the poem is the name of the character. Thus, *The Wanderer* (and the Wanderer) become pre-given answers to the questions of how we identify the poem and how we identify the poetic voice(s) in the text. These answers become one answer, merely engaged in a double joining, a false joining of two distinct interpretive questions and which has serious implications for students of the poem, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the original language. For example, in their first encounter with the poem—most often as an anthologized translation from the Old English—students who engage with the title of the text are already directed towards a certain interpretive paradigm, by which I mean that they are encouraged to ask and answer a variety of questions that all fall within a larger

interpretive framework governed by the title of the poem. By naming the poem “The Wanderer,” students are immediately encouraged towards a certain character, a “Wanderer” or “exile.”

For example, introductory notes in the seventh edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, the edition in which I was first introduced to the poem as an undergraduate, describe the text similarly to Thorpe:

The loss of a lord, of companion in arms, of a mead hall (in which Anglo-Saxon life realized itself to the full) are . . . the emotional basis for such a poem as the present one. But nowhere more poignantly expressed than in *The Wanderer* is the loneliness of the exile in search of a new lord and hall . . . [the] yearning for a home and kin to replace those vanished ones that still fill his thoughts. (Abrams 100).

Questions of an interpretive nature, such as “Who is the Wanderer?” are already answered for the student in this “introduction” to the text, which simultaneously identifies the poetic speaker as it identifies the poem. Any debate regarding the number of poetic speaker(s) is already foreclosed, and the interpretation of the Wanderer as an “exile” is simply assumed, taken for granted and unquestioned. In this Norton edition of *The Wanderer*, there is no room for the speaker to be anything other than an Anglo-Saxon warrior and exile, no room for the Wanderer to be doing anything other than looking for a home and family. There is no room in this poem for the framework of the passions.

This double joining continues to influence the poem’s scholarship, and scholars continue to engage and answer in much the same way as Thorpe, even when they vehemently disagree with Thorpe’s own interpretation. In his edition of *The Wanderer*

published in 1966, R. F. Leslie acknowledges the interpretive importance of the question “Who is the Wanderer?” when he writes, “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” (Leslie 2). Unlike Thorpe, however, whose Preface to the poem assumed one unified poetic speaker, Leslie argues that “the whole poem is not intended to be taken as the utterance of the poet in his own person, as can be seen from lines 6-7, 88-91 and 111, in which reference is made to a speaker or speakers” (Leslie 2). Leslie argues that the poem contains two major speakers—the Wanderer and the actual poet—and one additional speaker, all three of which prove, as I intend to show, somewhat problematic.

Leslie continues to call his first major poetic speaker “the Wanderer” and describes him as “an exile” (Leslie 4, 6) and “an individual in the clutches of adverse fortune” (Leslie 9), reinforcing both the interpretation of the Wanderer as a member of Anglo-Saxon warrior culture and the narrative underlying that interpretation, which continues to inform much of our understanding of Old English literature. This underlying narrative is not called into question, merely assumed. Despite Leslie’s attempt to distinguish himself from “most nineteenth-century scholars [who] believed that the poem was fundamentally a product of pagan times and were concerned to show that the Christian references in it were interpolations by monastic revisers” (Leslie 1), he simply substitutes “heroic” for “pagan” and keeps the nineteenth-century interpretive paradigm in play:

This calculated ambiguity [between homiletic injunction and Anglo-Saxon “heroic” code] is repeated several times in the latter part of *The Wanderer*,

and embraces both Christian teaching in readily identifiable stereotyped forms and the noblest of the heroic virtues, as if to emphasise [sic] that the wise man postulated by the wanderer in his monologue is but a step from Christianity in his code of behavior. Yet his philosophy is ultimately one of despair, for he lacks the ultimate salvation of the Christian, permanent security under an all-powerful Lord. (Leslie 14-15)

This passage sets up a dichotomy between Christian teaching and ultimate salvation on the one hand and “heroic” virtues and despair on the other. Such an interpretive move merely reinforces the persistent tendency to view Anglo-Saxon literature as the site of an ongoing battle between Christianizing elements and Germanic pagan (or to use Leslie’s term, heroic) society, and indeed Leslie’s commentary continues a paradigm shared by earlier scholars even when his conclusions differ from his scholarly predecessors: instead of siding with the Germanic peoples, he appears to have “gone over” to the Christian camp.

Leslie’s second speaker is “the poet” (Leslie 4), a term and position in the text that Leslie never really defines or explains, and which, like the character of “the Wanderer” conflates the very vexing issue of the poem’s authorship into an easily-manageable interpretive device. In reality, we know next to nothing about the author of the poem, the so-called “poet.” Is the poem in its present form a result of oral composition over a long period by earlier (and pagan) sources? Is the poem the original work of a Christian writer? To what extent has the poem been composed or changed by the scribe who transcribed it, and how many scribes might there have been? Was there, as some have argued, an “anthologist” who placed the poem in a particular context in the

Exeter Book, and to what extent might the poem have been altered or re-edited by such a person? Scholars have proposed various explanations to answer these questions regarding the poem's authorship, but they remain merely theories and perennially debatable; to borrow a line from Bernard Muir: "We cannot know the answers to all these questions, and more could be framed along similar lines" (17). When Leslie speaks of the poet, then, does he mean an actual poet responsible for the composition of the text, and is the assumption of such a person justifiable? Does he mean a scribe responsible for the poem's transmission, or perhaps an anthologist? Or does he simply mean a poetic narrator, who occupies a certain textual space but bears no relation to any historical person related to the production of the text, and if so then why call that speaker the poet?

All the answers to these questions are ultimately as oblique and enigmatic as the questions of the poem's authorship, as the poem itself. Still, in order to take an interpretive stance, scholars continually condense such complex issues into definite conclusions. Leslie's "third speaker" again illustrates the lengths to which we as Anglo-Saxonists often must go in order to give textual credence to our interpretive positions. Between lines 73 and 96, Leslie identifies a third poetic voice: the "man of straw" (Leslie 18). According to Leslie, this straw man is not the Wanderer but merely the Wanderer's "puppet" (Leslie 18), a speaker identified as the *gleaw haele* [wise man] whose "this-worldly philosophy" (Leslie 18) stands as a foil to the Wanderer's "other-worldly" (Leslie 18)—and therefore, apparently according to Leslie, more meaningful—faith. I find it ironic, however, that in order to maintain the unity of the Wanderer as a poetic speaker, Leslie must further divide the Wanderer's speech boundaries, creating a voice-within-a-voice, a speaker-in-a-speaker, so that a large section of the text (including the

poem's famous *ubi sunt* motif) becomes merely the utterance of a ghostly straw man, an ultimately "futile" alternative philosophy to the Wanderer's Christian outlook. This move is perhaps inescapable when trying, as Leslie does, to account for "points of apparently abrupt transition of thought or mood" (Leslie 2) yet maintain "the structural and textual unity of the poem" (Leslie 2). As a result, the character of the Wanderer becomes the focal point for Leslie's interpretation regarding the poem's meaning. Even though he claims that "the identity of the speaker in *The Wanderer* is of little moment" (Leslie 1), Leslie most certainly assigns a definite identity to that speaker—a Christian one—and thus the question "Who is the Wanderer?" continues to be linked to the interpretive outcome, to the overall meaning of the poem.

In their edition of *The Wanderer*, T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss somewhat agree with Leslie that "the poem is a monologue, with the poet intervening only at lines 6-7, 88-91, and 111" (Dunning 94), and that the "principal factor of unity in *The Wanderer* [is the] progress of the *anhoga* from *modcearig* to *snottor on mode*" (Dunning 94), and they include in their Introductory Notes a whole section entitled "*The Wanderer* and Heroic Tradition" that further illustrates the extent to which identification of the poetic speaker has become essential to Anglo-Saxonists for interpretive resolution. Dunning and Bliss argue that "the other prime factor of unity in the poem, the *milieu*, the dominant image or *inventum* of the poet . . . is the life of the *gesið* in the *comitatus*" (Dunning 94). In doing so, they continue to reinforce an underlying paradigm that, as I mentioned earlier, influences so much of our interpretation of Anglo-Saxon literature and which remains by and large unchallenged. I am not suggesting here that the notion of the *comitatus* and of Anglo-Saxon warrior society is a false one; I merely wish to point out the extent to which

this notion permeates our understanding and interpretation of *The Wanderer* and thereby limits our ability to think and interpret this poem using other paradigms. Dunning and Bliss, for example, maintain that “every line of the poem combines with every other to evoke this setting in our minds [the comitatus, heroic society] and *the poet never moves outside it*” (Dunning 94, *emphasis mine*) and note that “in Old English poetry . . . there was only one poetic tradition, the heroic; so that if anyone wished to express ideas in poetic form, *he would have to express them in this tradition*” (Dunning 94-95, *emphasis mine*). These statements claim that a heroic context is the *only* context in which we can find meaning for *The Wanderer*, thereby placing any non-heroic context—such as the passions—in a difficult interpretive position.

In addition, Dunning and Bliss assume that the heroic context automatically implies a masculine voice: “if *anyone* wishes to express ideas in poetic form, *he* would have to . . .” (Dunning 95). The movement from “anyone” (which presumably implies both genders) to “he” (which assumes only one gender) illustrates the extent to which the notion of a masculine, heroic, Anglo-Saxon warrior society demarcates both the poetic interpretive contexts as well as our discussion of the historical methods of production and the poetic voice (ie. the poet, the author). Again, such a context may indeed be accurate, historical, and valid; it is nevertheless constraining. When Dunning and Bliss claim that “*The Wanderer* . . . reflects an acceptance of the Germanic aristocratic way of life by a Christian” (Dunning 96) or that the poem “denotes not a ‘secularization’ of Christian themes but the acceptance of Christian belief by Anglo-Saxon Society” (Dunning 97), they continue (like Leslie) to play out the age-old historiographical battle between Latin Christianity and Germanic paganism, but unlike most of the nineteenth-century Anglo-

Saxonists they side with the Christian “victors.” These assumptions, which both lead to specific interpretive conclusions as well as hinder our use of other interpretive frameworks, progress unchecked and unchallenged through Dunning and Bliss, Leslie, and much of what constitutes *The Wanderer* scholarship even today. In such works, the question “Who is the Wanderer?”—a question that remains in fact delightfully and frustratingly ambiguous, open, and uncontainable—suddenly becomes definite, certain, and answerable, so that even when the particular identity of the Wanderer is not specifically named, an identity in general is assigned and assumed. In continuing these practices we permit any answer to the question “Who is the Wanderer?” to become an answer to questions of the poem’s meaning.

I have chosen to phrase the dominant question regarding the poem’s meaning as “What is *The Wanderer*?” Traditional scholarship has tended to answer this question by attempting to determine the poem’s genre, thereby supposedly unlocking the poem’s “meaning,” and the genre that continues to dominate any scholarly discussion of the poem is undoubtedly that of the elegy. A history of the development of this genre as it pertains to *The Wanderer* appears in my first chapter. I now intend to trace the ways in which contemporary scholarship continues to ultimately reinforce the double-joining of the two interpretive questions with which I began this chapter. There is arguably no more valuable work in which to evaluate these questions than Anne Klinck’s *The Old English Elegies: a Critical Edition and Genre Study*, which remains the most comprehensive study of the elegies’ generic coherence as well as a good example of the typical approaches and concerns surrounding considerations of the genre of *The Wanderer* today.

Drawing primarily on genre theory in the works of Tzvetan Todorov and Joachim Heinze, Klinck argues that “elegies is a retrospective classification which relates to a universal literary mode” and that “if we are to apply ‘elegy’ to Old English in a meaningful way, we should be able to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon ‘elegists’ intended to produce poems of a particular sort, even if such poems are never explicitly classified by them” (Klinck 223). This she attempts to do in Part III of her book, “The Nature of Elegy in Old English,” by observing similarities and differences in theme, structure, vocabulary, oral Germanic sources, Christian homiletics and Boethius, Latin elegiac poetry, Old Norse and Celtic analogues. She admits that “if ‘elegy’ is understood in the narrow sense, either as ‘composition in elegiac metre’ or ‘lament for the dead,’ these Old English poems are not elegies But if, in its broadest sense, elegy is a literary form which conveys a meditation upon absence, loss, or transience, Old English elegy can be seen as a particular manifestation of that form” (Klinck 224). Ultimately, she concludes with her own definition of the genre: “a discourse arising from a powerful sense of absence, of separation from what is desired, expressed through characteristic words and themes, and shaping itself by echo and leitmotiv into a poem that moves from disquiet to some kind of acceptance” (Klinck 246).

But while Klinck’s study of the elegiac genre in Old English is thorough, accessible, and useful to a certain extent, her entire endeavor is not without its own particular limitations, many of which are the direct result of unchallenged theoretical and methodological assumptions that continue to find academic sanction among Anglo-Saxonists. For example, Mora notes that Klinck, like so many genre scholars, feels “compelled to begin in negative terms, explaining rather what the poems are not” (Mora

129). In the very first sentence on the very first page of Part I, “The Poems and the Manuscript,” Klinck writes, “The term ‘elegy’ . . . is somewhat arbitrary, because the poems considered here are not elegies in the classical sense of compositions of elegiac metre, *ἐλεγεία*, nor in the tradition of the English pastoral elegies modeled on the eclogue and the idyll, such as Milton’s *Lycidas*, Shelley’s *Adonais*, and Arnold’s *Thyrsis*” (Klinck 11). Her method of beginning makes clearly evident what she herself freely admits, that “the genre is a slippery one, and hard to pin down” (Klinck 11).

If, as Klinck admits, the elegiac classification is “retrospective” (Klinck 223) and “arbitrary” (Klinck 11) then we might expect her to outline the benefits and consequences of using such a literary classification. Why, for instance, impose such a label on a particular group of Old English literary poems, and to what ends? What are the advantages and more importantly the disadvantages of retrospective classification? How does one avoid forcing a poem like *The Wanderer*, which may or may not fit the elegiac definition, into a literary category which may or may not have any historical legitimacy? In short, how does one determine what is “in” and what is “out,” especially when scholars disagree about what qualifies as “elegiac”? Klinck does not answer these questions; instead she briefly notes, “Since the early nineteenth century, scholars have been applying the words ‘elegy’ and ‘elegiac’ to Old English poetry, and we continue to find them useful” before quickly moving on to the most widely accepted definition, posited by Stanley B. Greenfield in : “a relatively short reflective or dramatic poem embodying a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation, and expressing an attitude towards that experience”

(Klinck 11).⁸⁹ The quick movement from asserting the “usefulness” of the elegiac classification—one might ask, “Useful for what exactly?”—to providing a workable definition of the genre enables Klinck to avoid the hard questions pertaining to genre studies and to her own methodology.

Klinck does not notice, and a great many Anglo-Saxon scholars of the poem have apparently failed to realize, that underlying these questions and methodologies of elegiac genre—in essence, the question “What is *The Wanderer*?”—is a particular narrative of Anglo-Saxon culture that remains fundamentally preoccupied with the other question: “Who is the Wanderer?” For example, Klinck begins her introduction to *The Wanderer* by noting, “There have been numerous accounts of the poem’s structure, and the question of speech boundaries has occasioned considerable disagreement” (Klinck 30). Right away, she situates her commentary on the poem within the framework of the poetic voices, so that the speaker of those voices—Klinck admits that she “along with most modern critics . . . regard[s] the poem as a monologue” (Klinck 31)—becomes an essential component of her discussion about the poem’s meaning. Her identification of that speaker is identical to that of Leslie, Dunning, and Bliss: “A solitary who, in spite of his sufferings, often receives grace. Once a member of a warrior band, since the death of his lord and friends in battle he has long been an exile, a wanderer on the face of the earth. . . . He has sought another lord and another *comitatus*, unsuccessfully” (Klinck 31). Klinck’s understanding of the speaker, her assumptions about what type of speaker is being depicted in this poem, informs her definition of the genre of elegy and her argument regarding *The Wanderer* a member of that genre.

⁸⁹ Greenfield gives this definition in his article “The Old English Elegies” for *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*. See Greenfield in Works Cited for complete bibliographical information.

If, as Klinck claims, the elegy is “a discourse arising from a powerful sense of absence, of separation from what is desired, expressed through characteristic words and themes, and shaping itself by echo and leitmotiv into a poem that moves from disquiet to some kind of acceptance” (Klinck 246), then *The Wanderer* becomes a member of that genre only to the extent that the Wanderer partakes in this discourse and moves from disquiet to acceptance, so that the character must undergo personal suffering *and* accomplish resolution (specifically a “Christian” resolution). Such a journey becomes the means by which the poem is included in the generic classification, is classified as “elegy”; thus Klinck notes that “a progress towards consolation is fundamental to *The Wanderer* . . . [and] it corresponds to an eschatological movement from personal suffering, through meditation on transience, to a contemplation of the eternal” (Klinck 226). Klinck’s inclusion of *The Wanderer* in the elegiac genre, which rests on her interpretation of the poem and of the poetic speaker, illustrates the extent to which the two questions “Who is the Wanderer?” and “What is *The Wanderer*?” have become hermeneutically inseparable. Each question depends on the other for its answer, so that to answer one is to answer the other. Of course, neither question is necessarily a “bad” question, and neither is the joining of the two an essentially deplorable methodological or interpretive move, but the extent to which we cease to interrogate the mutual relationship between these two questions and the scholarly assumptions which underlie them proves problematic, primarily because it hinders us from approaching or even thinking about the poem outside the traditional interpretive schema.

How then, if at all, might the framework of the passions enable us to consider these two questions in a different manner? Is it indeed possible to keep these questions

open and unanswerable, yet offer a way of engaging with the poem itself? In an attempt to affirm this possibility, I will suggest three ways—three “remedies” if you will—in which using the framework of the passions to interpret *The Wanderer* might help to challenge and interrogate our traditional interpretive strategies. First, using the framework of the passions as a poetic context for interpretation shifts the interpretive focus away from the prevailing notion of the Wanderer as the central poetic character, or at the very least calls into question our assumptions regarding *who* that character is. At least since Benjamin Thorpe first published his description of *The Wanderer*, traditional Anglo-Saxon scholarship has clearly accepted and employed a “heroic” paradigm in order to identify the poetic speaker. As a result, the poem continues to be presented as the site of an ongoing battle between “pagan” (ie. “heroic” or “Germanic”) and “Christian” elements, with medievalists taking sides based on their respective “textual” positions. Even as contemporary scholars reject the possibility of ever separating those two components analytically—the dominant methodology of the nineteenth-century—they continue to reinforce this dichotomy by assigning to the Wanderer a poetic persona based at some level upon that dualistic understanding of Anglo-Saxon culture, so that the attempt to identify the Wanderer becomes an extension of the battle between “pagan” and “Christian” or “worldly” and “transcendental” values.

The framework of the passions encourages us to question this traditional scholarly position by forcing us, primarily as the result of our own unfamiliarity with Eastern forms of Christian spirituality in general and the deadly passions specifically, to shift our focus to the passions themselves, to *lype* and *akedia*. However momentarily, we must engage directly with the poem’s extreme forms of sadness—with dejection and despondency—in

the context of the deadly passions before we can engage with the poem's speaker; we must first consider what the passions are, and if they are present in the poem, before we begin to answer the question "Who is the Wanderer?" Such a simple but radical move may help us to rethink some of our assumptions regarding the speaker(s) and speech boundaries in the poem by asking us to consider whether or not any definitive identification is fundamentally essential to grappling with the poem itself, and by encouraging us to reconsider what some of those identifications—the Wanderer as an "exile," for example, or even "The Wanderer" as the poem's title—really mean and from where we are appropriating them.⁹⁰ Hopefully, by imposing the framework of the passions on *The Wanderer*, we allow ourselves to imagine whether there might be new ways of interpreting the poem that rely less on the identification of the poetic voice, or at least we remind ourselves of the limitations and uncertain foundations upon which our scholarly postulations and theories, regardless of their origins and their persuasiveness, are ultimately built.

Second, the framework of the passions allows us to challenge the prevailing understanding of Anglo-Saxon "Christianity." Anglo-Saxonists assume Western medieval Christianity to be *the* fundamental spiritual context for *The Wanderer*, thus whenever they construct the secular/religious binary, they retrospectively interpret the "religious" component using that framework. Anne Klinck, for example, claims that "the treatment of meditation as a discipline in the poem has affinities with a Christian tradition going back to St. Augustine" (Klinck 34) and notes that "the Wanderer uses in turn the

⁹⁰ For example, how might our interpretive paradigm shift if we were to title the poem, "Despair"? I am not necessarily advocating that we change the title of the poem, which would almost assuredly, aside from breaking with over 100 years of critical habit, cause referential chaos. I merely want to bring our attention to the interpretive limitations raised by failing to remember that the poem's title is an extrinsic addition, and not intrinsic to the poem itself.

triad of mental faculties described in Augustine's *De Trinitate*: *memoria* (the narration of personal suffering, *intelligentia* (the contemplation of mutability), *voluntas* (the search for stability in God)" (Klinck 34). She states, "It cannot be asserted that the poet used the *De Trinitate* specifically, but the ideas expressed there would have formed part of his intellectual background" (Klinck 34); however, to trace the meditative tradition only as far as Augustine (Evagrius, for example, was an early contemporary of Augustine and exerted far more influence upon monastic thought), and to assume that the Augustinian tradition informs the bulk of the poem's spiritual and intellectual context, is to ignore other alternative influential forms of spirituality that may have also been a historically legitimate part of the intellectual background of the poem.

The framework of the passions suggests, first of all, that early Eastern forms of Christian monasticism may provide some earlier and more useful contexts, or at least radically different contexts, for interrogating and interpreting this Old English poem. In my Introduction and first chapter, I mentioned some historical reasons for assuming that the framework of the deadly passions could indeed have been transmitted from Coptic Egypt into Anglo-Saxon England via Celtic Ireland. Using this framework as an interpretive context also raises serious questions regarding Bede's influential historical narrative of England, mentioned in my Introduction, as a land "Christianized" and "unified" primarily by the efforts of Roman missionaries. Using a radically different spiritual context to interpret the poem asks us to consider whether there may indeed have been earlier or at least concomitant forms of Christianity in the British Isles aside from the type brought by Augustine to Canterbury in the late sixth century, and whether these

alternative spiritual contexts may be important and influential enough in their own right to merit serious academic study among Anglo-Saxonists.

Third and finally, the framework of the passions allows us to raise awareness of the limitations and somewhat limiting tendencies in prevailing scholarly ways of approaching *The Wanderer*, most especially in considerations and questions of genre. The elegiac classification assigned to this poem by both early and recent scholars alike has become fundamental to interpretive approaches in the field of Anglo-Saxon Studies. Although some scholars have raised questions regarding the standards by which certain Old English poems have been categorized as elegies, they have not seriously challenged genre studies in general, nor have they considered the many interpretive problems that are raised by continuing to engage in studies of the poem's so-called "genre," not the least of which happens to be an inability to think beyond the poem's traditional interpretations or scholarly methodological approaches. When new scholarship for *The Wanderer* means merely assigning the poem to another genre—whether *consolatio* or "wisdom poetry" or homiletics—while continuing to refer to it as one of the Old English "elegies," then we are in desperate need of alternative ways of thinking critically about what the poem means and how we intend to engage with it.

The framework of the passions moves us in that direction by questioning the elegiac classification. If we accept the deadly passions as a legitimate context for exploring the poem, how can we continue to categorize *The Wanderer* as an elegy, a classification which does not even begin to encompass the modalities of Eastern thought inherent to the context of the passions? Is it still useful to consider the poem as belonging to any genre at all, especially when the primary texts regarding the deadly

passions—the writings of Evagrius and Cassian—do not readily fit themselves within any of our familiar generic categories? If so, do we need to envision new genres to account for texts such as *The Wanderer*? Perhaps such questions can lead us to consider the efficacy of genre as an interpretive strategy, or at least enable us to see clearly how entrenched we have become in traditional methodologies that merely present small but similar variations upon the same persistent theme. At the very least the framework of the passions allows us the freedom to play in new ways with a poem that remains, in spite of all that has been written about it, as compelling, as ambiguous, and as challenging as it has ever been. By doing so we may inadvertently learn something about the endlessly fascinating amalgam of people, contexts, and cultures that produced the literature of the Anglo-Saxons.

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