

PAET MON EAPE TOSLITED
PAETTE NAEFRE GESOMNAD WAES,
HIRE GEIDD GEADOR:
A STUDY OF
THE WIFE'S LAMENT
AND
THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

by Linda Alty

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INTRODUCTION

The view that the two Anglo-Saxon poems, The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message,¹ are companion-pieces is not an unusual one. They are often presented together in anthologies, and more critics than one have suggested that the pieces actually represent the two sides of a dialogue involving the same husband and wife. This view is undoubtedly generated by the poems' seeming similarities; they are of comparable length, they appear to describe similar situations, and they have many words in common, not to mention the enormous power of suggestion contained in the very titles they have been given. Nevertheless, I contend that the likelihood of any intentional connection is in fact remote; that the strongest indication, based on close examination, is that the poems are two very different works, presenting two very different sets of characters, situations and attitudes. It is only by dissociating them and studying them first without cross-references that one can hope to avoid critical blunders.

The view that the poems are companion-pieces is perhaps most emphatically expressed in a statement by

Kevin Crossley-Holland. He observes:

The two poems are studies in male and female behaviour in a particular situation, and perhaps the very reason that the imagination is so willing to fill in the missing links in the story is an indication that they were written by the same author and were intended to be read together.

The balance is in favour of their connection.²

Not everyone who espouses the companion-piece theory is so direct; in fact, the theory is also, in part, perpetuated by scholars whose major concerns are neither to be particularly direct, nor to examine the text very closely. The most subtle of these are those translators and anthologists, like Richard Hamer³ and Michael Alexander⁴ who merely place the poems together in their books with no comment whatever, leaving the reader to guess at the reason behind the coupling.⁵ The most common tendency, however, is for the translators or editors to place the poems together, accompanied by somewhat ambiguous comments concerning their relationship. R. K. Gordon, for instance, in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,⁶ sets the poems back to back, and after paraphrasing the

plot of The Wife's Lament in three sentences concludes, "It is possible that there is a connection between this poem and The Husband's Message." Although the usual practice is for scholars to give both sides of a question, the manner in which the information is given, in this case, often leaves the idea that a relationship does exist uppermost in the reader's mind. For example, Charles W. Kennedy, in An Anthology of Old English Poetry, comments, "The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message are in one sense companion poems, in another sense poems in contrast. The central theme of each poem is the separation of husband and wife."⁷ Unfortunately, Kennedy neglects to point out any contrasts, or perhaps he feels that his translations suffice to make the differences clear. Be that as it may, there is a strong tendency, when one reads a general treatment of a work, to turn one's own thoughts, likewise, only rather superficially to that work. Hence, it is very easy for readers to come away from general and ambiguous commentaries on these two poems with the prevailing notion of their tenuous relationship, rather than with any clear perception of their differences.

There are, of course, translators and anthologizers

who believe that the poems are not related, but in general, their commentaries to that effect are quite brief and leave the burden of examination and proof upon the reader. Kevin Crossley-Holland, having reversed, apparently, his earlier convictions of the poems' connection, remarks evasively in his book The Battle of Maldon and Other Old English Poems, ". . . the uncertainty of the man about his wife's response does not match the passionate fervour of the woman and the link remains only a sentimental possibility incapable of proof and capable of adding little to the poems even if it could be proved."⁸ More conclusive, but equally brief, is A. S. Cook and C. B. Tinker's statement in the preface to The Wife's Lament found in Select Translations from Old English Poetry, "The poem is, however, quite comprehensible in its present form, and the dramatic monologue is not uncommon in Old English literature (cf. Deor's Lament, p. 58; The Wanderer, p. 50; and the so-called Riddle I.)"⁹ G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie also contend that the poems are not related, briefly summing up theories in favour of and against their connection, then investigating the problems and apparent situations of the poems, with

a view to their differences.¹⁰ R. F. Leslie also, in Three Old English Elegies analyses reasons for and against the poems' connection, and compares and contrasts the poems; however, his conclusion is not very decisive. He says, "There is nothing in the plot of The Wife's Lament as interpreted above that is incompatible with the situation in The Husband's Message, but it has not been conclusively shown that they must be parts of the same story."¹¹ Finally, Norah Kershaw, too, gives a review of both sides of the question of relationship, adding what is probably the real view of most scholars, ". . . in my opinion it is wisest to suspend judgement on this question" ¹²

The foregoing critics have all been concerned with the poems as secular lyrics. There remains a small group which sees them as possible religious allegory and hence, connected in a different manner. M. J. Swanton, for example, feels that The Wife's Lament might represent the relationship between Christ and the Church, and that The Husband's Message might represent Christ's response to the state of the Church in the world. Swanton picks up Kock's observation concerning the runes at the end of The Husband's Message,¹³ but observes that Kock fails to draw the "necessary

conclusion" from Christ's adjuration that we not swear by heaven, earth, or man. "The implications would have been clear to an eighth-century audience; the message, like the pledge of faith, is that of God himself."¹⁴ W. F. Bolton supports Swanton's thesis, and, feeling that the two poems represent an "Englishing" of The Song of Songs, proceeds to draw parallels between words found jointly in The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message, and The Song of Songs, concluding that the Anglo-Saxon lyrics are actually the strophe and antistrophe of one poem.¹⁵ Although allegory is not the concern of this thesis, critical method, to some measure, is, and the same problem occurs here as does with the supposed connections between Germanic legend sequences and these poems.¹⁶ Logic, in either case, indicates that a relationship between The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message must be shown to exist in the situations, tones, characters, attitudes, and dominant motifs--as well as in the phraseologies--before one can posit a connection between them, and certainly before one can assume a relationship between them and anything else.

As can readily be seen, criticism of the poems

is confused and entangled, blinding readers to a truly separate consideration. In order to correct this false impression, it will first be necessary to sort out, as far as possible, the individual contents of the two poems, and the situations described in each. This will be done by focusing on characters and situations in Chapters II and III. Next, since the overall themes of separation and reunion seem to complement one another, an examination will be made in Chapter IV of the dominant motifs which make up those themes. Finally, since the poems have many words in common, Chapter V will constitute an investigation of the pairs of shared words and their respective usages and functions in each poem.

CHAPTER II
 CHARACTERS AND SITUATIONS
 IN THE WIFE'S LAMENT

In order to compare or contrast any two works, it is first necessary that the characters and situations in each be sorted out as clearly as possible. Unfortunately, that is not an easy task with The Wife's Lament, the characters and situations of which have long been the subject of controversy. Critics remain undecided as to the nature and cause of the separation, the character of the lord, the character of the lady, and even how many characters there actually are in the poem.¹⁷ In this chapter, an examination of language, motif, and tone will demonstrate that the "wife" is a woman¹⁸ who has been separated from a man, the "husband," whom she loves and whose return she expects. The separation is the result of the husband's involvement in a feud with a "geong mon" and his kinsmen.¹⁹

That the husband is a sympathetic figure in the poem is shown by the words the wife uses to describe him, which clearly indicate her attitude of affection. Most significantly, she calls him "felaleofan," (much beloved) in line 26a. At the very end of the poem,

she says, "Wa bið þam þe sceal/ of langope leofes abidan," ll. 52b-53b (Woe be it for those who must with the longing of a loved one--or of a lover--wait), indicating by the twofold meaning of "leofes," that is, "lover" or "loved one," that she not only loves her husband, but also that the feeling is reciprocated. In line 18a she refers to her husband as "ful gemaecne monnan," the man "fully suited" to her. The noun "gemaecca" refers to one member of a pair, and can apply to married couples.²⁰ In lines 6a and 15a, she refers to her husband as "hlaford," (lord) a word which can have the sense of husband,²¹ although its usual sense is that of a superior or leader. However, in line 47b she calls him "freond," (friend), and in lines 49a-50b she calls him "wine," (friendly lord), terms which indicate a closer personal relationship than "hlaford" alone.

Another indication of the wife's love for her husband is the fact that their separation causes her sorrow and anxiety. In lines 11a-14b she explicitly says that the separation caused both of them to live loathsomely:

Ongunnon þaet þaes monnes magas hycgan
 þurh dyrne gepoht, þaet hy todaelden unc,

þaet wit gewidost in woruldrice
 lifdon laðlicost, ond mec longade,
 (Began that man's kinsmen to think
 through secret thought that they would
 separate us
 so that we two, widest apart in the kingdom
 of the world,
 lived most loathsomely, and I was weary
 with longing.)

The hatefulness of the separation is reinforced by the wife's statement in line 14b that she is weary from longing. In lines 29a-33a the wife again mentions her longing:

Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad,
 sindon dena dimme, duna uphea,
 bitre burgtunas, brerum beweaxne,
 wic wylna leas. Ful oft mec her wraþe begeat
 fromsíp frean.
 (Old is this earth-hall, I am entirely
 oppressed with longing,
 the valleys are dim, the mountains high,
 bitter strongholds, overgrown with briars,
 a joyless dwelling. Full often here has cruelly
 afflicted me
 the departure of my lord.)

This time, her statement of longing occurs in the middle of a description of her dwelling place. After stating that she is often "wrape begeat," (cruelly afflicted) by the departure of her lord "her," (here), she goes on to say that she is entirely oppressed with longing. "Eal oflongad" and "wrape begeat" thus appear to be closely connected sentiments stemming from a common cause. The cause is made clearer in the following lines, 33b-36b, where, immediately after mentioning the departure of her lord, the wife says:

Frynd sind on eorþan,
 leofe lifgende, leger weardiað,
 þonne ic on uhtan ana gonge
 under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu.

(Loving friends there are
 living on earth, they keep their bed,
 while I at dawn go alone
 under the oak tree throughout the earth-cave.)²²

The general consensus among critics is that the wife's separation from her husband makes her miserable. In another passage which also mentions her sorrows at dawn, the wife shows anxiety as to her husband's whereabouts:

AErest min hlaford gewat heonan of leodum

ofer ypa gelac; haefde ic uhtceare
 hwaer min leodfruma londes waere.

(ll. 6a-8b.)

(First my lord went hence from the people
 over the waves' surge; I had care at dawn
 as to where my prince might be on land.)

In lines 39b-41b, the wife again speaks of her longing:

forþon ic aefre ne maeg
 þaere modceare minre gerestan,
 ne ealles þaes longapes þe mec on þissum life
 begeat.

(because I may not ever
 the care of mind of mine put to rest
 nor all the weariness of longing which afflicts
 me in this life.)

In this passage the husband is not mentioned at all; however, the wife says she is "begeat," (afflicted) by her longing, the same term she used in line 32b to describe her reaction to the departure of her lord. Finally, at the end of the poem in lines 52b-53b, she sums up her plight in the gnomic statement, "Wa bið þam þe sceal/ of langope leofes abidan," (Woe be it for those who must with the longing of a loved one-- or of a lover--wait).

The third indication that the husband is a sympathetic figure is that the wife envisions his sufferings as being similar to her own. As pointed out above, the wife states that he as well as she "lifdon laðlicost," (lived most loathsomely), l. 14a, because of their separation. They also experience similar emotional suffering: in line 40a the wife says that she can never put her "modceare," (sorrow of mind) to rest, and in lines 50b-51a, she says that her husband "dreogeð," (endures) "micle modceare." This emotional similarity is also shown in lines 17b-19b where the two are both described as sad in mind:

Forþon is min hyge geomor,
 ða ic me ful gemaecne monnan funde,
 heardsaeligne, hygegeomorne,
 (Therefore is my mind sad,
 when I found the man fully suited to me
 experiencing misfortune, sad in mind.)

Another point of similarity is the living conditions of husband and wife. In line 50a, the wife calls the husband's abode a "dreorsele," (hall of grief), a word which could well be applied to her own "eorðsele," (earth-hall) and its surroundings which she describes

in lines 29a-32a as "eald," (old), "dimme," (dim), "bitre," (bitter), and "wynna leas," (joyless), and where she is "eal oflongad," (entirely oppressed with longing). There may well be some connection between the fact that the wife's dwelling in solitude is a "wic wynna leas," (a joyless dwelling), l. 32a, and the fact that the husband in his hall of grief "gemon to oft/ wynlicran wic," (remembers too often/ a more joyful dwelling), ll. 51b-52a.

In contrast to the affectionate attitude the wife displays towards her husband in the above instances, she displays a hostile attitude, possibly even hatred, at three other points towards, respectively, "þaes monnes magas," l. 11 (the man's kinsmen), a "geong mon," l. 42a (young man), and a "mon," l. 27a (man). It has been suggested by various critics²³ that a dichotomy between the husband and another, unidentified "mon" would make the poem unnecessarily confusing, both for modern readers and for its original audience, since there is nothing in the poem to indicate a split, and since in one instance (l. 18a) the "mon" referred to is definitely the husband. These critics have overlooked a prominent shift in tone from affection to antipathy which occurs in the three passages in question,

3. Le choix d'un sujet.

Quelquefois on rencontre un élève qui sait exactement ce qu'il veut étudier dans sa recherche, mais le cas est plutôt rare. Pourtant les sujets de thèse ne manquent pas, tant s'en faut, on n'a que l'embaras du choix. L'élève ne soupçonne guère toutes les occasions de recherche qui abondent dans le domaine qui l'intéresse tout simplement parce qu'il ne connaît pas assez ce domaine. On en trouve même qui prétendent écrire une thèse pour se renseigner sur un sujet! Quand on veut apprendre quelque chose, on se rend en classe ou à la bibliothèque, on n'écrit pas une thèse. "Je veux écrire sur la personnalité, nous dit-on souvent, ce sujet-là m'intéresse vivement, je n'ai jamais eu l'occasion de l'étudier à mon goût." Fort bien, lisez le bouquin de A.A. Roback, The Psychology of Character, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1928, XXIV-605 pages, ainsi que quelques-unes de ses 3341 références bibliographiques, vous serez alors peut-être en état de commencer une petite recherche sur la personnalité.

Tous ceux qui se cherchent des sujets de thèse feraient bien de suivre les cinq conseils de McCall[§] dont nous vous traduisons la pensée pour y ajouter quelques remarques.

i.- S'instruire dans sa spécialité. Le savant n'est pas en peine de problèmes. Le novice ne les voit pas parce qu'il ne connaît

[§] William A. McCall, How to Experiment in Education, New York, Macmillan, 1923, p. 7.

My lord told me to hold hard here,²⁴
 I possessed few loved ones in this land-stead,
[few] faithful friends. Therefore is my
 mind sad,
 when I found the man fully suited to me,
 experiencing misfortune, sad in mind,
 concealing his feelings, thinking of murder.
 Blithe of bearing full often we boasted
 that us would not part except death alone
 anything else)

The "monnes magas" (man's kinsmen) are introduced in line 11, and immediately a clear "us/them" relationship is set up, which can be readily seen in the construction of line 12b, "paet hy todaelden unc," (that they would separate us). That the kinsmen's plans are directed against the husband as well as the wife is clear because he also suffers from the separation, as shown in lines 13a-14a, "wit . . . lifdon laðlicost," (we two . . . lived most loathsomely). The emotional similarity of the pair has been mentioned above, with specific reference to "hyge geomor," l. 17b (sad mind), and "hygegeomorne," l. 19b (sad in mind). In consideration of this, the wife's statements that she has few "leofra," l. 16a (loved ones), or "holdra freonda,"

l. 17a (faithful friends), and that the husband is "heardsaeligne," l. 19a (experiencing misfortune) appear to be references to their relationship to the kinsmen. Moreover, in this light the husband's "mod miþendne, morþor hycgendne," (concealing his mind, thinking of murder) of line 20 would be more sensibly taken as a response in kind to the kinsmen's thinking "þurh dyrne gepoht þæt hy todaelden unc," ll. 11b-12b (through secret thought that they would separate us), rather than as his vengeful thoughts towards the wife, as has been suggested.²⁵ Finally, there seems to be an obvious contrast between the kinsmen's secret thought "þæt hy todaelden unc," l. 12b, and the couple's boast "þæt unc ne gedælde nemne deað ana," l. 22 (that us anything would not part except death alone).

Another shift in tone occurs in lines 42a-52a. This time there is an actual shift in grammatical mood from optative to indicative:²⁶

A scyle geong mon wesan geomormod,
 heard heortan gepoht, swylce habban sceal
 bliþe gebaero, eac þon breostceare,
 sinsorgna gedreag, sy aet him sylfum gelong
 eal his worulde wyn, sy ful wide fah

called "freond," and "wine," which are terms of friendship or alliance. The passage appears to be a picture of him as he is "heardsaeligne," l. 19a (experiencing misfortune) and living "laðlicost," l. 14a (most loathsomely). He is portrayed in an out-of-doors situation similar to the wife's own dwelling place (cf. ll. 27a-33a) in a far folkland. He is "werigmod," l. 49a (weary in mind), and he has much "modceare," l. 51a (care of mind), feelings quite similar to the "hygegeomor," (sorrow of mind) he is said to feel in line 19b. The lines immediately preceding this passage concerning the husband (ll. 42a-47a) seem to deal with much the same situation; they mention "geomor-," l. 42b (sorrow), "breostceare," l. 44b (breast-care), "sinsorgna gedreag," l. 45a (a mass of continual sorrow), and banishment to "feorres folclondes," l. 47a (far folklands). The difference between the two sections, however, is that while the wife says her husband is experiencing hard times and misery, in lines 42a-47a she is wishing misery and hard times upon this young man. Logic would indicate that the young man is not the husband. A clue to who he is, moreover, is perhaps provided in line 43a, in which he is said to have "heard heortan gepoht," a characteristic reminiscent

that there are three characters in the poem: the wife, her husband, and another man, who together with his kinsmen plotted and effected a separation between the first two.

It is moreover probable that the separation is the result of a blood-feud. The "us/them" relationship of the husband and wife against the kinsmen is strong evidence for this and has been mentioned above. Two words which also suggest a feud situation are "morþor," l. 20b (murder), and "faeðu," l. 26b (feud). In Anglo-Saxon times, the crime of "morþ" was unatonable and carried with it drastic consequences.²⁸ In The Wife's Lament, while the husband is not said to have actually committed "morþor," he is nonetheless considering it in lines 19a-20b, where he is pictured as:

heardsaeligne, hygegeomorne,
 mod mipendne, morþor hycgendne.
 (experiencing misfortune, sad in mind,
 concealing his feelings, thinking of murder.)

Because of the dire consequences of murder, a person who is "morþor hycgendne," must be in a desperate state of mind. Since only six lines beyond this section, in line 26, the wife says she must "mines

felaleofan faehðu dreogan," (my much beloved's feud endure)²⁹ it would seem logical to conclude that the husband's desperate state of mind is the result of his involvement in a feud.

The parties with whom the husband is feuding are most probably the "geong mon" and his kinsmen, since they are the only other characters in the poem, and since the wife displays such a hostile attitude towards them. As for the state of the feud in the present tense of the poem, the husband appears to be in the position of an outlaw, perhaps because of murder, and the "geong mon" appears to be in a position of power. That the kinsmen have evidently effected a separation of the husband and wife, and that the "mon" can order the wife to live in the "wuda bearwe," (wood grove," in line 27b , is an indication of the strength of their position. Likewise, the wife's angry speech (ll. 42a-47b) in which she wishes the "geong mon" a great deal of misfortune is a likely indication that the converse is true, and that he does not suffer any misfortune. Her desire in lines 46b-47b that he be "ful wide fah/ feorres folclondes, paet min freond siteð," (full widely proscribed or banished, or exiled⁷ into far folklands, where my friend sits,) apart from

being another indication that the problem is a feud,³⁰ shows that the husband already is in the far folklands, and by extension, is probably also proscribed, banished, or exiled. The wife's mention of her lord's departure, "fromsið frean," l. 33a, and her statement that he "gewat heonan of leodum," l. 6 (went hence from the people), also supports the idea that he is an exile, as does his own, wretched condition in lines 48a-52a.

The wife's position in this setting remains to be determined. If her husband were involved in a feud, according to Anglo-Saxon law, the feud could be prosecuted against his estate, but not against the wife unless she made "his misdeed her own by harbouring him: a breach of this decree is to be a **cause** of outlawry."³¹ There is no mention of the wife actually "harbouring" her husband, but interestingly, directly after the wife speaks of him "morþor hycgendne," l. 20b (thinking of murder), she says in lines 21a-23a:

Bliðe gebaero ful oft wit beotedan
 þæt unc ne gedaelde nemne deað ana
 owiht elles;

(Blithe of bearing full often we boasted
 that us would not separate except death alone
 anything else;)

an obvious pledge of support, if not exactly an offer of shelter.³² According to Anglo-Saxon law, a woman could not be outlawed.³³ However, a woman who had involved herself in her husband's feud might easily find herself, for all intents and purposes, in a situation of exile; especially if, as seems the case here, her husband's feud were prosecuted against his estate in his absence. In fact, the wife calls herself an exile or a wanderer, "wraecca," l. 10a , once, and refers to her wanderings or exile, "wraecsipa," twice,³⁴ ll. 5b and 38b. The words "minre sylfre sið," l. 2a , can mean "my own journey" as well as "my own lot," and it is quite possible that the double entendre is intentional. In addition to her exile, the wife mentions her "weapearfe," l. 10b (great need), calls herself "wineleas," l. 10a (friendless), and says she has "leofra lyt . . . holdra freonda," ll. 16a-17a (few loved ones . . . faithful friends) in the place where she is. All of these terms, together with the description of her dwelling place, indicate that the wife is in a situation very like exile, even if she has not "officially" been outlawed.

The Wife's Lament, then, deals with two lovers in conditions of exile who have been separated, probably

because of the husband's feud with a "geong mon."
Another relationship which seems to have been dis-
rupted by a feud is the focus of The Husband's
Message, and the topic of the following chapter.

CHAPTER III
 CHARACTERS AND SITUATIONS
 IN THE HUSBAND'S MESSAGE

Though The Husband's Message deals with a man and a woman who have been separated by a feud, the quality of their relationship seems to differ from the relationship portrayed in The Wife's Lament. A careful study of the poem indicates that the characters are persons of rank, that the man's attitude towards the lady is one of deference and uncertainty, and that he is probably not her husband.

The social position of the lady and the respect she commands are clear by the titles with which the messenger³⁵ addresses her. In line 14, he refers to her as "sinchroden," (treasure adorned one), a word no doubt closely associated with the word "goldhroden," (adorned with gold) and its connotations of feminine royalty.³⁶ In line 46 the messenger implies that the lady herself is a treasure, when he says that no "eorlgestreona," (noble treasure) is lacking to his lord, save her. Also, in line 47, he addresses her directly as "peodnes dohtor," (prince's daughter), strong evidence that, if not actual royalty, the lady

is at least of high social rank.³⁷

As for the lord, although he has been "faehþo adraf," l. 19b (driven by a feud) from the "sigeþeode," l. 20a (victorious people), the messenger says in lines 43b-44a that he has "wean oferwunnen," (overcome his troubles). Unfortunately, the manuscript is imperfect in several places; however, it does impart some important information concerning the man's social position. First of all, although the messenger refers to his lord several times as simply "se mon," (the man), not indicating any rank, he also calls him "mondryhten," (leige lord) in line 7, "þeoden," (prince) in line 29, "freatn," (lord) in line 10, and "wine," (friendly lord) in line 39. All these titles are indicative of respect, but the first two, "mondryhten" and "þeoden," are titles applied to a man of exceptional rank and power.³⁸ In addition, the messenger informs the lady of his lord's prosperity, saying in lines 35b-38a, and 44b-46b:

	he genoh hafað
faedan gold <u>7</u> s.	<u>7</u>
..... <u>7</u> d elþeode	epel healde,
faegre foldan	

(he has enough

of burnished gold [.....
]7 foreign people he holds domain
 in a fair land)

 nis him wilna gad,
 ne meara ne maðma ne meododreama,
 aenges ofer eorþan eorlgestreona,
 (nor is there to him a
 lack of desires
 neither of horses nor of treasures nor or joys
 of the mead-hall,
 of any noble treasure over the earth,).

Clearly, the man has wealth as well as rank, so at least in respect to those considerations, the "sinchrodne þeodnes dohtor" and the "þeoden" with his "faedan gold" seem to be equals.

Whatever their social positions, however, the deference and uncertainty in the lord's address indicate that the lady has the upper hand in their relationship. The most noticeable show of uncertainty occurs in lines 8b-11a, where the messenger says that he has been sent to discover how the lady feels about the love of his lord:

 eom nu her cumen
 on ceolpele, ond nu cunnan scealt

hu þu ymb modlufan mines frean
on hyge hycge.

(I am now come here
in a ship and now must know
how you about the heart's love of my lord
think in your mind.)

In the next few lines, llb-16b, the messenger asserts that his lord has been faithful and bids that the lady also remember her old vows:

Ic gehatan dear
þæt þu þær tirfaeste treowe findest.
Hwaet, þec þonne biddan het se þisne beam
agrof
þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde
on gewitlocan wordbeotunga,
þe git on aerdagum oft gespraecon,

(I dare promise
that there wonderful fidelity you will find.
Lo, the one has bid who carved this beam
that you, treasure-adorned one yourself remember
in your mind the word-promises,
which you two in former days often spoke,).

Altogether, this is not a salutation ringing with confidence; rather, it is one expressing a mixture

of caution and hope. That the message begins with a question concerning the lady's feelings and a wish that she remember old promises is evidence that the lord believes she may have changed her mind about him. At the very least, they are proof that she is quite capable of changing her mind. The "wordbeotunga" which she swore with the lord in former days are evidently very important to him, and at the end of the poem he recalls them thrice in the process of swearing a new oath to the effect that he still wishes to carry out the old one. As the messenger says in lines 44b and 47b-53b: "nis him wilna gad," (nor is there to him a lack of desires),

gif he þin beneah

ofer eald gebot incer twega.

Genyre³⁹ ic aetsomne **·H·R·** geador
·W·P· ond **·M·** aþe benemnan,

þæt he þa waere ond þa winetreowe

be him lifgendum laestan wolde,

þe git on aerdagum oft gespræconn.

(if he possess you

concerning the old promise of you two.

I constrain together **·H·R·** together
·W·P· and **·M·** by oath to declare

that that trust and that pledge of fidelity
 while he lives he wishes to carry out,
 which you two in former days often spoke.)
 It is significant to note that, since the lord says
 that he wishes to carry out the "winetreowe," he
 evidently has not yet done so.

The central portion of the message, lines 20b-29b,
 is full of uncertainty. After the briefest mention
 of his lord's departure because of a feud, lines
 19b-20a, the messenger presents the petition:

heht nu sylfa þe
 lustum laeran, þaet þu lagu drefde,
 sibban þu gehyrde on hlipas oran
 galan geomorne geac on bearwe.
 Ne laet þu þec sibban sipas getwaefan,
 lade gelettan lifgendne monn.

Ongin mere secan, maewes eþel,
 on site saenacan, þaet þu suð heonan
 ofer merelade monnan findest,
 þaer se peoden is þin on wenum.

(he bid me now you yourself
 joyfully to persuade, that you stir up the sea
 when you have heard on the hillside's edge
 sadly sing the cuckoo in the grove.)

Nor allow you then from the journey to
 divert you
 the course to hinder [any] living man.

Begin to seek the sea the mew's domain,
 board a ship until you south from here
 over the ocean's path find the man
 where the prince is in expectation of you.)

Although the messenger says in line 29 that his lord expects the lady, he also seems to feel that it is necessary to "laeran," (persuade) her in line 21 to come in the first place; and secondly, to warn her not to let any "lifgendne monn," (living man) hinder or divert her course (ll. 24a-25b). It is unlikely that such caution is mere formality; no doubt the lord's proposal would have been framed quite differently if he were completely confident of its acceptance.

A possible reason behind the lord's deference can be found by looking closely at his somewhat puzzling behaviour. Though he has been "faehþo adraf," (driven by a feud, cf. ll. 19b-20a, and 39b-43a), he has accumulated new wealth and power, as can be seen in lines 35a-38a, as mentioned above. Lines 30a-37b and 44b-45b taken in conjunction

Now, it is not easy to understand why, if the man is so eager to fulfill his old vows, he waited until he had accumulated such vast holdings to send for his lady; especially if the only things in the way of her coming to him are the possibility that she has either forgotten her "winetreowe," or that some "lifgendne monn" might divert her from her journey. Nor is it easy to comprehend why a wife with so little to hold her back could not have either departed with her husband in the first place, or have gone to him as soon as he could provide her with a place to live, let alone set himself up in a mead-hall. If the poem is indeed a husband's message, then the man's combined eagerness and hesitation present a puzzle for which there is no explanation in the text. If, however, one reads the poem not as a husband's message at all, but rather as an offer of marriage from a man who has made his fortune in spite of previous hardships and who wishes to wed a "þeodnes dohtor" according to their "eald gebeot," the mysteries vanish and in their place appears a very familiar behaviour pattern. F. A. Blackburn feels that the poem deals with a "wooer" of the King Horn type, rather than with a husband at all, and because

of this, he feels that "A Love Letter" would be a more appropriate title than The Husband's Message.⁴⁰ Because of the peculiar mixture of deference, caution, and hope displayed by the lord in this poem, one can say that he is much more likely to be the lady's suitor than her husband, an hypothesis which is reinforced by a study of themes and motifs--the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV
DOMINANT MOTIFS

On the surface, the themes of The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message seem entirely compatible-- one deals with separation, the other with reunion. The directions of the motifs, however, which make up these two themes, are so divergent as to argue otherwise. The primary motif in The Wife's Lament is the pain caused by exile and feud; the secondary motif is love-longing. In The Husband's Message, by far the overriding concern is the motif of prosperity-- wealth, land, and retainers; subsidiary to this motif but inseparably bound to it is the motif of the "eald gebeot," (old promise). Last of all, the idea of love is a very minor concern in The Husband's Message, and it is so qualified as to be almost indistinguishable. Hence, as the first poem is concerned almost exclusively with spiritual anguish, the second, which is all but preoccupied with physical comforts, can hardly be deemed an appropriate response.

In The Wife's Lament, the motif of pain caused by exile and feud is divisible into units of "cause"

and "effect;" however, every word connoting feud or exile is surrounded by words connoting pain and hardship. In three instances the wife alludes to herself as an exile; in each instance, words indicative of pain and hardship either directly or indirectly modify the exile-word. For example, in line 5b, the wife says, "A ic wite wonn minra wraecsipa," (ever I struggle with the torment of my exile). In the first five lines of the poem, the words "geidd," l. 1a (song), "sið," l. 2a (journey or lot), "hwaet ic yrmpa gebad," l. 3a (what I endured of hardship), and "wraecsipa," l. 5b, are all linked by variation, and all refer to the woman's state of exile. Hence, the idea of hardship, "yrmpa," is linked with that of exile, and also, the phrase "bi me ful geomorre," (to me full sorrowful) in line 1b modifies "wraecsipa" indirectly. With the second occurrence of an exile-word, "wraecca," in line 10, is the simultaneous occurrence of the words "wineleas," l. 10a (friendless) and "for minre weapearfe," l. 10b (because of my great need). The third mention of exile, in line 38b, occurs in the midst of three words connoting pain:

þær ic wepan maeg minre wraecsipas,

earfoba fela; forþon ic aefre ne maeg
 þære modceare minre gerestan,

(ll. 38a-40b)

(there I may weep over my exile
 over the many hardships because I may
 not ever
 this grief of mine put to rest,).

Words evocative of the feud situation also occur three times, each time with accompanying words connoting misery. In line 20b, the wife says her husband is thinking of "morþor," (murder). The connection of this word with feuds has already been discussed in Chapter II. He is at the same time "heardsaeligne," and "hygegeomorne," l. 19 (experiencing misfortune and sad in mind), and she, having found him thus, is "geomor," l. 17b (sad). At the end of the poem, the wife wishes the young man to be "ful wide fah/ feorres folclondes," ll. 46b-47a (full widely proscribed/ in far folklands), together with her wish that he have "breostceare," l. 44b (care in his breast), and "sinsorgna gedreag," l. 45a (a mass of continual sorrow). By extension, the woman's husband is also "ful wide fah," and he is utterly miserable; he is "storme behrimed," l. 48b (be-rimed by storms),

"werigmod," l. 49a (weary in spirit), "on dreorsele," l. 50a (in a hall of grief), and he "Dreoged . . . micle modceare," ll. 50b-51a (endures . . . much care of mind). Finally, the wife says in lines 25b-26b, "Sceal ic feor ge neah/ mines felaleofan faehðu dreogan," (I must far or near/ my much beloved's feud endure), providing a parallel, through the repetition of the words "feor" in line 25b and "feorres" in line 47a, and the words "dreogan" in line 25b and "Dreoged" in line 50b, between her lord's suffering on account of the feud and her own.

In contrast, though a feud is also specifically mentioned in The Husband's Message in line 19b, "faehþo," there is no sadness or pain connected with its memory. Quite the contrary, it is sandwiched between the memory of a pleasant past, "þenden git moston on meoduburgum/ eard weardigan, an lond bugan,/ freondscype fremman," ll. 17a-19a (when you two might in mead-halled cities/ keep your estate, live in the land,/ advance your friendship) and the messenger's announcement that he is to "lustum laeran," l. 21a (joyfully urge) the woman to join her lord over the sea. In lines 39b-43a the feud is again recalled:

peah þe her min wine [.....
7

nyde gebaeded, nacan ut aprong,
ond on ypa geong [....] sceolde
faran on flotweg, forðsipes georn,
mengen merestreamas.

(although from here my lord

[.....])

compelled by need pushed out a boat,
and on the waves' expanse [....] had to
travel on the sea, eager for the going forth,
stir up the ocean streams).

Although this section is a slight expansion of the lord's hardships, the reference is enclosed by two extended references to his present wealth and prosperity (ll. 35b-39a, and 43b-46a; see Chapter III above). Lines 43b-44a quite specifically state that the lord's hardship is behind him: "Nu se mon hafad/
wean oferwunnon," (Now the man has/ overcome his troubles). Clearly, the difference in attitude towards feuds in the two poems is vast. On the one hand, the suggestion of a feud evokes only words of suffering; and on the other, through contrast, it heightens the memory and anticipation of pleasure, or the appreciation of hard-won prosperity.

The second motif in The Wife's Lament, love-longing,

has already been discussed to a certain extent in Chapter II, specifically, the wife's relationship to her husband, and her reaction to their separation. In addition to the affection she displays towards her husband, the wife uses the term "longað" (longing) four times at fairly regular intervals to describe her emotional reaction to their separation. In line 14b, she says that she and her husband lived hatefully (apart) and "mec longade," (I longed); and in line 29b, she says from her earth-cave, "eal ic eom oflongad," (I am entirely oppressed with longing); and in lines 40a-41a, she says she can never put her weariness of spirit nor all her longing to rest, "paere modceare minre gerestan,/ne ealles paes longapes." In just these twenty-seven middle lines of the poem, the wife has used first a verb, then an adjective, and then a noun with the same root, "long." She also employs the past, the present, and the future in the three references to say, in effect, "I longed, I am longing, and I shall long." The gnomic utterance at the end of the poem encompasses all three references and incorporates them into a universal statement of longing. It also permanently links them with the concept of love: "Wa bið pam þe sceal/ of langope

leofes abidan," (Woe be it for those who must/
with the longing of a loved one--or of a lover--
wait), ll. 52b-53b.

Though the motif of love-longing can be seen as a distinct pattern, three of the four references to longing occur at the end of a description of other hardships. Briefly, the reference in line 14 comes after the husband has gone hence, the wife has become a friendless exile, and the kinsmen have plotted and evidently effected a separation of the two. The reference in line 41 comes at the end of the wife's description of the hateful "eorðscraefe," (earth-cave), after she has drawn the contrast between herself and the happy lovers, and is the conclusion to her observation that all she can do is sit and weep. Likewise, the gnomic statement comes at the end of a graphic description of the husband's exile. Thus, though the pain of love-longing is distinguishable from the pain of exile, the two motifs are very closely interwoven in what is essentially a picture of intense spiritual anguish.

As for the concept of love in The Husband's Message, there are really only two references to such an idea, and they are so qualified as to render any

overtones of love in the modern, romantic sense doubtful. The idea which the text naturally seems to support is that the "love" is rather an eagerness on the part of the lord to conclude a mutually advantageous economic contract with the lady. The first mention of love, and the only time the exact word is used in the poem, occurs in lines 10a-11a, when the messenger asks the lady how she feels about his lord's "modlufan," (heart's love). He quickly assures her that the lord possesses "tirfaeste treow," l. 12 (wonderful fidelity), as if the two ideas were synonymous. Indeed, they would appear to be, at least in the context of this poem, because the very next thing the messenger mentions is the "wordbeotunga," (promises), "þe git on aerdagum oft gespraecon," ll. 15b-16b (which you two in former days often spoke), followed closely by a description of past prosperity when the pair lived in "meoduburgum," l. 17b (mead-halled cities) and might "freondscype fremman," l. 19a (advance their friendship). Although "freondscype" can be glossed "conjugal love," its use here in connection with the word "fremman" (advance) would seem to indicate that its usual meaning of "friendship" is more appropriate in this instance,

with the suggestion of a relationship in progress. "Freondscype" is the second allusion to the concept of love, and significantly, even as the arrangement of words in these nine lines visually illustrates, the ideas of prosperity and the old promise exist together as the centre in the concept of love.

The most prominent concern in The Husband's Message, however, seems to be prosperity. Three hints at this concern are given in the first half of the poem, but it is in the second half that the motif gains dominance. The first suggestion of the motif occurs in line 8a, "heah hofu," (high buildings). Unfortunately, the manuscript is damaged in the section immediately preceding this reference, so it is impossible to say for certain its exact import. However, "heah hofu" is certainly suggestive of magnificence, recalling Heorot in Beowulf, which is "heah ond horngeap," l. 82 (high and wide gabled)⁴¹ or The Ruin, which is "heah horngestreon," l. 22a (high with a wealth of gables).⁴² The second hint at the prosperity motif is in line 14a, where the messenger refers to the lady as "sinchroden," (treasure adorned one). The messenger offers a glimpse at the meaning behind this epithet when he bids the lady remember

the promises spoken of old "þenden git moston on meoduburgum/ eard weardigan, an lond bugan,/ freondscype fremman," ll. 17a-19a (when you two might in mead-halled cities/ keep your estate, live in the land,/ advance your friendship). The references to "meoduburgum," "eard." and "lond" seem to recall the "heah hofu" of line 8, and also seem to be fitting dwellings for one who is "sinchroden." These hints at opulence prepare the way for two longer, more detailed descriptions of it, beginning at line 30. Again, the manuscript is somewhat damaged; however, even without attempting to piece an exact meaning out of the words and phrases that remain intact, one can easily see the concern with worldly trappings showing through the gaps. Beginning with the reference to "worulde willa," (worldly desires) in line 30, the messenger goes on to mention "secgum ond gesipum," l. 34a (warriors and companions), "haeleþa," l. 39a (warriors), "naeglede beagas," l. 35a (studded bracelets), the fact that the lord "genoh hafað/ faedan gold⁷s," ll. 35b-36a (has enough/ of burnished gold), as well as the fact that he "elpeode epel healde,/ faegre foldan," ll. 37a-38a (in a foreign people holds domain/ ⁱⁿ a fair land). In summing up the situation, the messenger concludes

that "se mon hafað/ wean oferwunnon," ll. 43b-44a (the man has/ overcome his troubles). Using variation and enumeration, the messenger elaborates; his lord has no "wilna gad," l. 44b (lack of desires), "ne meara ne maðma ne meododreama," l. 45 (neither of horses nor of treasures nor of joys of the mead-hall) if he can possess the prince's daughter (l. 47). Thus, the prince's daughter is herself the last "eorlgestreona" (noble treasure), l. 46b, to be added to the lord's almost complete collection of "worulde willa," l. 30 (worldly desires).

In sharp contrast, there is not one single mention of worldly prosperity in The Wife's Lament. There are suggestions of the lack of it, as, for example, the wife's statement in line 9b that she went "folgað secan," (seeking service) because of her great need. The dreariness of her earth-cave, too, seems entirely unrelieved by any earthly comforts. Nowhere, however, does she lament a lack of treasure. What she laments is a lack of spiritual "possessions:" friends, her husband, the solace of his love. She could be sitting on a dragon's hoard of gold, for all that, and the poem would not be one whit different because, unlike the lord of The Husband's Message, worldly prosperity

is not the wife's concern.

Subsidiary to the prosperity motif in The Husband's Message is that of the "eald gebeot," (the old promise) and it occurs in three places. First, in lines 14b-16b, the messenger bids that the lady "syلف gemunde/ . . . wordbeotunga,/_ þe git on aerdagum oft gespraecon ," (yourself remember/ . . . the promises/ which you two in former days often spoke). The lord's "tirfaeste treowe," l. 12b (wonderful fidelity) is doubtless an indirect reference to this promise. Second, near the end of the poem, the messenger says that his lord wishes to possess the lady "ofer eald gebeot incer twega," l. 48 (according to the old promise of you two). Finally, at the very end of the poem, the messenger places runes together:

aþe benemnan,
 þaet he þa waere ond þa winetreowe
 be him lifgendum laestan wolde,
 þe git on aerdagum oft gespraeconn.

ll. 50b-53b

(by oath to declare
 that he that trust and that pledge of fidelity
 while he lives wishes to carry out

which you two in former days often spoke). None of these references to the "eald gebeot," however, occurs independently of some allusion to the motif of prosperity. Most prominently, the lord's wish to possess the lady "ofer eald gebeot incer twega," in line 48, seems almost literally a wish to add her to his treasure hoard, as mentioned in Chapter III above. The request that the lady remember the "wordbeotunga," l. 15b (promises) of former days is immediately followed, as if to prompt her memory, by a brief description of that time of former prosperity when "git" (you two) lived "on meoduburgum/ eard weardigan, an lond bugan," ll. 17a-18b (in mead-halled cities/ kept your estate, and lived in the land). Finally, even the concluding oath of the poem re-evokes this image of mead-halls and prosperity by repeating the same phrase, "þe git on aerdagum oft gespræconn," l. 53, which occurs in line 16.

In conclusion, then, this overriding concern with prosperity in The Husband's Message makes it appear extremely unlikely that the lord in that poem can be addressing himself to the problems of the lady in The Wife's Lament. In order to assume that the

characters of both poems are the same, one is obliged to assume that there has been an enormous misunderstanding somewhere, to explain why they are at such cross-purposes. That the characters are indeed at cross-purposes, as shown by this study of motifs, becomes even more clear with an examination of the poems' shared words, the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

SHARED WORDS

The Husband's Message and The Wife's Lament have seventeen words and phrases in common, a fact which naturally seems to suggest that they were written as companion pieces. Of these seventeen pairs; however, nine provide some evidence that the poems were never intentionally connected.⁴³ There are two types of pairs within the group of nine: six pairs of words which, though they have the same meaning, both in Anglo-Saxon and Modern English, occur in different contexts in each poem; and secondly, three pairs which, although the same in Anglo-Saxon, have different shades of meaning, and therefore, slightly different translations in Modern English. Although in itself, this evidence is not necessarily conclusive, when linked with the study of motifs in Chapter IV, it shows in greater detail the same lack of connection between the characters and situations of the two poems, and thus, supports the theory that they are not intentionally related.

In the first category, words having differing contexts, in The Wife's Lament, the word "geomor" or its compounds form one of the key patterns in the

poem,⁴⁴ occurring four times (ll. 1b, 17b, 19b, and 42b), twice referring to the wife, once to the husband, and once to the "geong mon." Throughout, it refers to misery, specifically, misery caused by feud and separation. Quite the contrary, the word "geomor" in The Husband's Message refers to the song of the cuckoo, "galan geomorne," l. 23a (sadly sing), and has joyful associations because it is this song which is the signal for reunion. A second point of difference occurs with the words "hlipe" and "stanhlipe," (cliff, and stone-cliff). In The Wife's Lament, the word "stanhlipe," l. 48a, is used as part of a description of the lord's misery in exile. In The Husband's Message, the "hlipe" is the spot whence the cuckoo is to be heard, hence, its connotations are joyful. Also, logic would indicate that the husband in The Wife's Lament could not possibly be sitting under this particular "hlipe," or the couple would not be separated. A third difference revolves around the idea of worldly joys or desires; "worulde wyn," l. 46b in The Wife's Lament, and "worulde willa," l. 30 in The Husband's Message. Although not exactly the same, the two phrases have very similar meanings. Their contexts, on the other hand, are different. In The Husband's Message, the phrase

"worulde willa" is part of a very serious compliment to the lady, and an expression of the lord's desire that the two be reunited. In The Wife's Lament, however, the phrase "worulde wyn" is an integral part of an expression of the wife's desire that the "geong mon" be totally cut off from all earthly joys. Fourth, the word "faehðu" translates "feud" in both poems, but it is presented slightly differently in each. In The Husband's Message, it is used in a straightforward manner as an account of the past troubles the lord has overcome. In The Wife's Lament, it is used as part of a contrast employing "freondscype," "faehðu," and "felaleofan," which are terms descriptive of the wife's plight, not the husband's. Fifth, the word "freondscype" occurs in both poems, but with somewhat different meanings. In The Wife's Lament, the reference occurs just after the pledge that nothing but death would separate the pair. That is now, says the wife in lines 24b-26b, "swa hit no waere/ freondscype uncer. Sceal ic feor ge neah/ mines felaleofan faehðu dreogan," (as if it were not/ our friendship. I must far or near/ my much beloved's feud endure). The use of contrast in these lines has

already been discussed. In this context, the wife is clearly referring to the close relationship of conjugal love, a fact supported by the other applications of the word "freond" in the poem to her husband in line 47b, and to lovers in bed in line 33b. In The Husband's Message, on the other hand, the word "freondscype" refers to a much cooler type of relationship, as pointed out above. Last, there is the "monnan-findan" word pair. In The Wife's Lament, the woman found the man, "monnan funde," l. 18b, experiencing misfortune, sad in mind, concealing his feelings, and thinking of murder. In other words, the reference is to the condition in which she found him, not to his person. In The Husband's Message, the woman is urged to travel south until she find the man, "monnan findest," l. 28b. Here the word "find" quite literally refers to the man's physical being; the reunion of the couple is the whole point behind the journey.

The next group of words consists of the three pairs which have differing meanings in Anglo-Saxon and different translations in Modern English. The most important is the "hycgan" pair. In The Wife's Lament, the kinsmen "hycgan," l. 11b, that they will

separate the husband and wife. Normally, the word "hycgan" means "to think," but in this context, it clearly has the sense of "to plot," or "to intend."⁴⁵ In The Husband's Message, on the other hand, the messenger wants to know how the lady "on hyge hycge," l. 11a, about his lord's love. Obviously, "hycge" here cannot have the sense of "to plot." The conventional sense of "to think" is indicated, or, the line might even be loosely translated as "how you feel in your mind."⁴⁶ Another example of this difference of meaning occurs in the "sið" pair. In The Wife's Lament, the woman speaks of her "sylfre sið," l. 2a, her own "lot;"⁴⁷ whereas the lady in The Husband's Message is urged to make an actual journey: "Ne laet þu þec sippan sipes getwaefan/lade gelettan," ll. 24a-25a (Nor allow you then [anyone] from the journey to divert you/ the course to hinder). Finally, in the "sippan" group, a consistent difference is again evident. The one occurrence of the word "sippan" in The Wife's Lament is in line 3b, and it clearly means "since;" "sippan ic up weox," (since I grew up). In The Husband's Message, however, the word occurs three times, and always with reference to the future, so

that it must be translated "when," or "then:"
 "sibban þu gehyrde . . . geac on bearwe," l. 22a-23b
 (when you have heard . . . the cuckoo in the grove);
 "Ne lset þu þec sibban sipes getwaefan," l. 24
 (Nor allow you then [anyone] from the journey to
 divert you); and "aetsomne sibban motan," l. 33
 (then together might).

That the same word has different meanings in two poems does not necessarily prove an absence of relationship; however, the differences of meaning shown above do not display the kind of development characteristic of deliberate word-play. Taken together, the differences of translation and context in these nine pairs of words provide additional evidence that there is no intentional relationship between The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message.

CONCLUSION

It becomes evident, after careful examination, that The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message are not companion pieces. After one has examined the poems as individual works to sort out their respective characters and situations, a comparison of the two, with respect to language and motifs, reveals a kind of lack of development which is strongly indicative of their lack of connection-- or, to phrase it differently, of their individuality.

It is their individuality which should be stressed. For too long they have been studied, taught, criticized, and anthologized as foils for one another, or as related parts in some lost legend sequence. Their true natures have been obscured by a haze of comparisons. Hopefully, this essay will be a step towards dissipating that haze so that these poems can begin to be enjoyed and appreciated for the right reasons.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹ Texts of both poems from The Exeter Book, George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 210-11, and 225-27. The translations are mine.

² "Two Old English Elegies," The Listener, 70 (1963), 741-2.

³ A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 71-81.

⁴ The Earliest English Poems (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1967), pp. 81-85.

⁵ It is interesting to note that in most anthologies--Burton Raffel, Poems from the Old English (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964) being a notable exception--wherever the two poems are placed together in an anthology, The Wife's Lament always comes first. Of course, this is the order in which they occur in the manuscript, but in anthologies of mixed works, there is no real reason to follow the manuscript order. If, however, The Husband's Message were to be placed first in order, whatever logical, chronological progression there is to suggest a connection would be disrupted.

- ⁶ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967),
p. 79.
- ⁷ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 3.
- ⁸ (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 88.
- ⁹ (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishers,
1926), p. 64.
- ¹⁰ The Exeter Book, pp. lvii-lx.
- ¹¹ (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961),
p. 18.
- ¹² Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems (London: Cambridge
University Press, 1922), p. 42 (xerox ed., Ann Arbor,
Michigan: University Microfilms, 1971).
- ¹³ Ernst Kock, "Interpretations and Emendations
of Early English Texts," Anglia, 33 (1921), 122-23.
For other discussions of the runes at the end of
The Husband's Message, see Ralph W. V. Elliott,
"The Runes in The Husband's Message," JEGP, 54 (1955),
1-8; R. E. Kaske, "The Reading Genyre in The Husband's
Message: l. 49," M AE, 33 (1964), 204-206, and also
his "A Poem of the Cross in The Exeter Book: 'Riddle
60' and 'The Husband's Message,'" Traditio, 23 (1967),
41-71; and Henry Bradley, rev. of Die Altenglische
Odoaker-Dichtung, by Rudolph Imelmann (Berlin: Julius
Springer, 1907) in Modern Language Review, 2 (1906-7),
367-8.

¹⁴ "The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration," Anglia, 82 (1964), 289. See also R. E. Kaske, "A Poem of the Cross in The Exeter Book," for an allegorical interpretation of The Husband's Message.

¹⁵ "The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration Revisited," Archiv, 205 (1968), 337-51.

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the poems' possible connection with Germanic legend sequences, see Norah Kershaw, Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems, pp. 28-31; William Witherle Lawrence, "The Banished Wife's Lament," Modern Philology, 5 (1907-8), 397; and Robert P. Fitzgerald, "The Wife's Lament and 'The Search for the Lost Husband,'" JEGP, 62 (1963), 769. For possible connection with Irish sources, see Gareth W. Dunleavy, "Possible Irish Analogues for The Wife's Lament," Philological Quarterly, 35 (1955), 208-13.

CHAPTER II

¹⁷ Arguments concerning the characters and situations of The Wife's Lament usually revolve around four main points: whether there are two exiles or one; whether

the husband is deceitful; whether the wife loves him; and whether or not there is a third man involved. For articles concerned primarily with characters and situations, see Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," PMLA, 68 (1953), 907-12; Robert D. Stevick, "Formal Aspects of The Wife's Lament," JEGP, 59 (1960), 21-25; J. A. Ward, "The Wife's Lament: An Interpretation," JEGP, 59 (1960), 26-33; Kemp Malone, "Two English Frauenlieder," Comparative Literature, 14 (1962), 106-17; Thomas M. Davis, "Another View of The Wife's Lament," Papers on English Language and Literature, 1 (1965), 291-305; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Situation of the Narrator's Lord in The Wife's Lament," NM, 71 (1970), 604-10; Douglas D. Short, "The Old English Wife's Lament: An Interpretation," NM, 71 (1970), 585-603; and for a fairly comprehensive review of criticism see Lee Ann Johnson, "The Narrative Structure of The Wife's Lament," English Studies, 52 (1971), 497-501.

¹⁸ For the purposes of this thesis, I accept the traditional view that the narrator of the poem is a woman. For the entire debate (in English) concerning the narrator's sex, see Rudolph Bambas, "Another View of the Old English Wife's Lament,"

JEGP, 62 (1963), 303-309; Martin Stevens, "The Narrator of The Wife's Lament," NM, 69 (1968), 72-90; Jane L. Curry, "Approaches to a Translation of the Anglo-Saxon Wife's Lament," M AE, 35 (1966), 187-98; and Angela M. Lucas, "The Narrator of The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," NM, 70 (1969), 282-97. In addition to the above, two critics whose interpretations involve a male narrator for The Wife's Lament are Matti Rissanen, "The Theme of Exile in The Wife's Lament," NM, 70 (1969), 90-104; and Raymond P. Tripp, Jr., "The Narrator as Revenant: A Reconsideration of Three Old English Elegies," Papers on English Language and Literature, 8 (1972), 339-361.

¹⁹ See also L. A. Johnson, "The Narrative Structure of The Wife's Lament," whose view and argument is similar to mine, but whose article was not published until after the research for and draft of this chapter had been completed.

²⁰ Of the term "gemaecne," A. N. Doane writes in "Heathen Form and Christian Function in 'The Wife's Lament,'" Mediaeval Studies, 28 (1966), 84: "This is the only occurrence of the word in an adjectival form, but as a noun 'gemaecca' it means one or a pair.

It is applied to turtle doves, the soul-body relationship and in some cases refers to married couples. The word in the WL, however, seems to mean 'well-matched,' 'equal,' referring to the state of mind prevailing in both the speaker and her 'hlaford.'" Of the word "gemaec," Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, eds., in An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth D.D., F.R.S. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) give the definition "equal, like, well-matched, suited;" and translate the line in question: "I found the man fully equal to me."

²¹ For the word "hlaford" as "husband," see A. N. Doane, "Heathen Form," p. 82; and Jane L. Curry, "Approaches to a Translation," p. 190.

²² Robert D. Stevick, "Formal Aspects," sees these lines as a statement of "ungratified sexual passion," p. 22; A. N. Doane, "Heathen Form," on the other hand, feels that "translations . . . that deliberately slant 'longian' and 'longop' towards a colouring of sexual passion are no doubt misleading and mislead."

²³ According to W. W. Lawrence, "The Banished

Wife's Lament," p. 389, "There appears to be no reason for introducing a third person into the story." Later, with reference to Schücking's argument, Lawrence says:

" . . . Schücking's interpretation involves much shifting of subject. paes monnes (l. 11.) is not the same person as min leodfruma (l. 8.), although there is no intimation of any other man's coming into the narrative except what one may imagine in folgað secan The ful gemaecne monnan is not the mon of l. 11, the new lord to whom our attention has supposedly been diverted, but lord number one is introduced without any indication that a change has been made. It is scarcely conceivable that anyone reading or hearing this for the first time would interpret the situation as Schücking imagines it, unless the outlines of the story were familiar. There are shifts of subject in early poetry, but nothing quite so wild as this." (pp. 396-97). Stanley B. Greenfield, in "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," p. 82, n. 3, lists in a footnote the critics who hold the

idea that "the only important people in the poem are the lord and his wife."

²⁴ "Herheard niman" is a term which has given everyone difficulty. Thomas M. Davis, in "Another View," p. 291, explains the problem in a footnote (n. 1): ". . . the only problem of interpretation which is a direct result of the text as it stands in the manuscript involves her heard (l. 15). The MS line ends with her, heard beginning the next line; it is impossible to tell whether the scribe had one or two words before him." Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, p. 210, l. 15, make no decision and simply run the word together as "herheard." As W. B. Greenfield says in "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," p. 908, "Most editors emend 'her heard' in one way or another, though no emendation is required." Greenfield himself adopts Norah Kershaw's rendering of "heard" as "in his cruelty," although he admits that this is somewhat awkward syntactically. I agree that no emendation is necessary, however, I feel that "hold hard" is a superior translation to "in his cruelty," as it requires no forcing syntactically, and as both the words "niman" and "heard" commonly had those meanings. Bosworth and Toller give "take, keep, hold" as the

second translation for "niman," and "hard" as the first translation for "heard." Moreover, "hold hard" is an idiom still in use today.

²⁵ See S. B. Greenfield, "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," p. 910: " . . . he has been mod mipendne 'concealing his mind' [i.e., having decided to have his wife imprisoned, he does not meet her face to face so that she may defend herself against the thoughts of his mind⁷; and he has been morbor hycgende (sic) 'plotting a crime' [i.e., his wife's imprisonment⁷." (The square brackets are Greenfield's.)

²⁶ See J. A. Ward, "The Wife's Lament: An Interpretation," p. 32, "Not only is the young man cursed and the friend treated with affection, but the former is described in the optative mood and the latter in the indicative."

²⁷ J. A. Ward, "The Wife's Lament: An Interpretation," pp. 32-33, sees lines 42a-47a as a curse. R. K. Gordon, Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p. 79, in the preface to his translation of the poem states that the section is a curse, and translates it as such. W. S. Mackie, ed., The Exeter Book, Part II (London: for E.E.T.S. at Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 155, translates "scyle" (l. 42a) as "may" and treats the

section as a wish or a curse. S. B. Greenfield, in "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," pp. 907-8, sees the lines in question as a wish. A. N. Doane, in "Heathen Form," pp. 80-81, has written at some length on this section, which he says has "all the earmarks of a formal curse." (p. 80) He feels it is a "deliberate recollection of magic form for a literary purpose." (p. 81) It mentions no names, a peculiarity which Grimm identifies as "the most striking feature of a curse." (p. 81, n. 13) It has ritualistic affinities with the charms; like them it "establishes a concrete fact of misery which can be transferred" (p. 81) Finally, the shift of grammatical mood is "just what we should expect in a curse. The speaker is drawing miseries upon someone's head, specifically, her own miseries." (pp. 80-81)

²⁸ See Sir Frederick Pollock and Frederick William Maitland, The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second ed., 1968), vol. I, p. 53.

²⁹ Because of the love-hate antithesis in line 26, many critics have been led to believe that the wife suffers the hatred of her husband (cf. J. A. Ward, "The Wife's Lament: An Interpretation," pp. 30-31).

I should like to posit that the important contrast in this case is between "freondscype," l. 25a, and "faehðu," l. 26b; and that "felaleofan," l. 26a, is a subsidiary contrast to "faehðu." As Ward comments (p. 30), "so much points towards 'the emnity directed towards my dear one'" "Felaleofan" is, of course, in contrast with "faehðu," in that much love is juxtaposed to much hatred, but the contrast which clarifies the situation is that between "freondscipe" and "faehðu" not merely because those words represent precisely opposite conditions, but especially because here the "freondscype" which has been disrupted by "faehðu" is ironically between two lovers who still love each other.

³⁰ Thomas M. Davis, in "Another View," pp. 301-2, comments: "the poet . . . indicates with some precision that the husband's crime is murder, committed in the deadly vendetta waged in Anglo-Saxon tribes. Consider, for example, the cumulative effect of faehðu, fah, and folclondes, of 'that emnity which the relations of the deceased waged against the kindred of the murderer,' of the 'outlawed one,' and of the 'legal situation of an outlaw in a foreign land.'"

³¹ Pollock and Maitland, History of English Law,

vol. II, pp. 450-1.

³² The tone of the word "beotian" has been commented on before, to the effect that it is not the sort of word one would use to indicate a lover's vow. A. N. Doane, in "Heathen Form," p. 84, for instance, says, "it is an heroic word tinged with belligerance, not a lovers' promise, and has no tender connotations." Rudolph Bambas, in "Another View," p. 305, shares this view and remarks, "Lines 21-23a . . . suit the fierce loyalty that existed between a chief and his follower. The sentiment is like that attributed to Offa in The Battle of Maldon (ll. 289-94), where beotode conveys the sense of a vaunting challenge to the forces of the world to test an unbreakable compact between a chief and his man. . . . for a wife in the Teutonic culture of the eighth century to boast of her intended fidelity would be gratuitous." It would not be the least bit "gratuitous," however, for a wife to make a "beot" of fidelity in the case of a feud; in this case, the tone of "belligerence" suits the context admirably.

³³ See Pollock and Maitland, History of English Law, vol. II, p. 482.

³⁴ For a discussion of the wife as an exile, see

Matti Rissanen, "The Theme of Exile in The Wife's Lament, NM, 70 (1969), 90-104.

CHAPTER III

³⁵ For the purposes of this thesis, I accept the view that the narrator of The Husband's Message is a human messenger. The possibility that there are actually two voices in the poem, those of a human messenger and a rune stave, is an interesting theory discussed by Earl R. Anderson, in "Voices in The Husband's Message," NM, 74 (1973), 233-46.

³⁶ The word "sinchroden" occurs two other times in Anglo-Saxon literature, both times in the phrase "salu sinchroden," (halls richly adorned). The word "sinchroden," however, is very close in meaning, and even has the same meter as "goldhroden," (adorned with gold), an important consideration in view of the formulaic nature of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The second word occurs at least eight times in Anglo-Saxon literature, and in all eight cases it occurs in the phrase "cwen goldhroden," (the queen adorned with gold). Though the connotations of both words are of the pomp and circumstance of courtly life--treasure, gold, halls,

and queens--in The Husband's Message the word "sinchroden" refers specifically to a lady instead of to a mead hall. Hence, it is possible that there is more than just a casual connection in this instance between "sinchroden" and "goldhroden" with its connotations of feminine nobility.

³⁷ In Beowulf, Wealhþeow is referred to as "þeodnes dohtor;" Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, Fr. Klaeber, ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1922), p. 81, l. 2174.

³⁸ For "mandryhten," Bosworth and Toller give, "A lord of men, leige lord." The term is used of, among others, Beowulf, Nebuchadnessar, Abraham, and Guthlac. For "þeoden," Bosworth and Toller give, first, "The chief of a þeod /nation, people7, a prince, king." In this context it is applied variously to Beowulf, Hrothgar, Eadmund, Holofernes, and Constantine. Bosworth and Toller give as a second translation for "þeoden," "a great man, a lord, a chief." In this context, the word is applied to Beowulf not yet a king, Byrhtnoth, Noah, and Guthlac.

³⁹ For this translation, see R. E. Kaske, "The Reading Genyre in The Husband's Message," pp. 205-6.

⁴⁰ F. A. Blackburn, "The Husband's Message and

the Accompanying Riddles in The Exeter Book," JEGP,
3 (1900), 1- 13.

CHAPTER IV

⁴¹ Fr. Klaeber, Beowulf, p. 4.

⁴² Krapp and Dobbie, The Exeter Book, p. 228.

CHAPTER V

⁴³ Comparisons of the remaining eight pairs of words are inconclusive, for various reasons. There are two pairs of half-lines which appear to be similar, due largely to alliterative or formulaic considerations. These are: 1. 7a (WL) "ofer ypa gelac," and 1. 41a (HM) "on ypa geong;" and 1. 27b (WL) "on wuda bearwe," and 1. 23b (HM) "geac on bearwe." (To suggest that the two "bearwe"s might be the same involves a like interpretation of "hlipe" and "stanhlipe," discussed above.) The word "frean" in each poem (1. 33a WL, "fromsið frean;" and 1. 10b HM, "mines frean") is a term for "lord," and in each poem is so general that nothing can be deduced from its use to prove that either the wife's lord is the same as the messenger's

or that the reverse is true. The term "weardian" (WL, l. 34b, "leger weardiað;" and HM, l. 18a, "eard weardigan") is also very general. While in each poem it is used of a couple, nothing else indicates that we are dealing with the same couple in both cases. The use of "gemunian" (WL, ll. 51b-52a, "he gemon to oft/ wynlicran wic;" and HM, l. 14, "þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde") is similarly vague; the lord in The Wife's Lament remembers a happier home, and the lady in The Husband's Message is to remember promises, but there seems to be no connection in these acts either to compare or to contrast. Finally, the term "lifgend-" (WL, l. 34a, "leofe lifgende ;" and HM, l. 25b, "lifgendne monn," and l. 52a, "be him lifgendum"), for lack of evidence to the contrary, must be counted simply as a not-terribly-meaningful descriptive term, which happens to be used in both poems.

⁴⁴ See Robert D. Stevick, "Formal Patterns," pp. 22-23.

⁴⁵ Bosworth and Toller give as the second translation of "hycgan," "to direct the mind (to an object), to be intent upon, to intend, purpose, determine, endeavour, strive;" and translate ll. 11a-12b,

"Ongunnon þæt þæs monnes magas hycgan/ þurh dyrne
geþoht, þæt hy todaelden unc," as "this did the
man's kinsmen through dark design endeavour, to
part us two."

⁴⁶ As the first translation of "hycgan,"
Bosworth and Toller give "to employ the mind, take
thought, be mindful, think, consider, meditate,"
and translate the lines 10a-11a, "hu þu ymb modlufan
mines frean/ on hyge hycge," as "How thou mayest think
in thy mind of the love of my lord."

⁴⁷ Though it could be argued that "sið" in
The Wife's Lament might mean "journey," it must then
mean a "wraecsið," a "journey of exile," which is
still quite different from the journey towards
reunion which is urged in The Husband's Message.

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