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THE INTERLACE STRUCTURE OF THE  
ADVENT LYRICS

by

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University of Ottawa as partial fulfillment of  
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## CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Sister Bertha M. Stucklberger was born in Etmissl, Austria, December 31, 1923. She obtained her degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of Ottawa, in September 1959.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
I. - THEMATIC INTERLACE . . . . .	9
1) The Themes of Praise and Expectant Longing for a Saviour . . . . .	10
2) Theme of Man's Misery . . . . .	26
3) Virgin Theme . . . . .	39
II. - STYLISTIC INTERLACE . . . . .	45
III. - TONAL INTERLACE . . . . .	53
IV. - TIME INTERLACE . . . . .	64
V. - CONCLUSION . . . . .	68
APPENDICES . . . . .	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	76
ABSTRACT OF The Interlace Structure of the <u>Advent Lyrics</u> . . . . .	81

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The following figures are samples of artistic interlace of seventh and eighth century Anglo-Saxon England. The illustrations have been photocopied from Codex Lindisfarnensis (Lindisfarne Gospels), edited by T.D. Kendrick, T.J. Brown and others, Vols. I and II (Lausanna, 1956-1960).

- Fig. 1 Interlace from folio 110v of the St. Chad Gospels. Vol. II, Plate VII.
- Fig. 2 Interlace on the Windsor dagger pommel Vol. II, Plate III.
- Fig. 3 Interlace on the great gold buckle from Sutton Hoo. Vol. II, Plate IV.
- Fig. 4 Interlace from folio 94v of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Vol. I, Plate VIII.
- Fig. 5 Carpet page from folio 125v. Vol. II.
- Figs. 6 & 7 Interlace of the Lindisfarne Gospels, enlarged details, from folios 94v and 26v, Vol. II.
- Figs. 8 & 9 Interlace of zoomorphic animal designs on jewelry. Vol. II, p. 112.

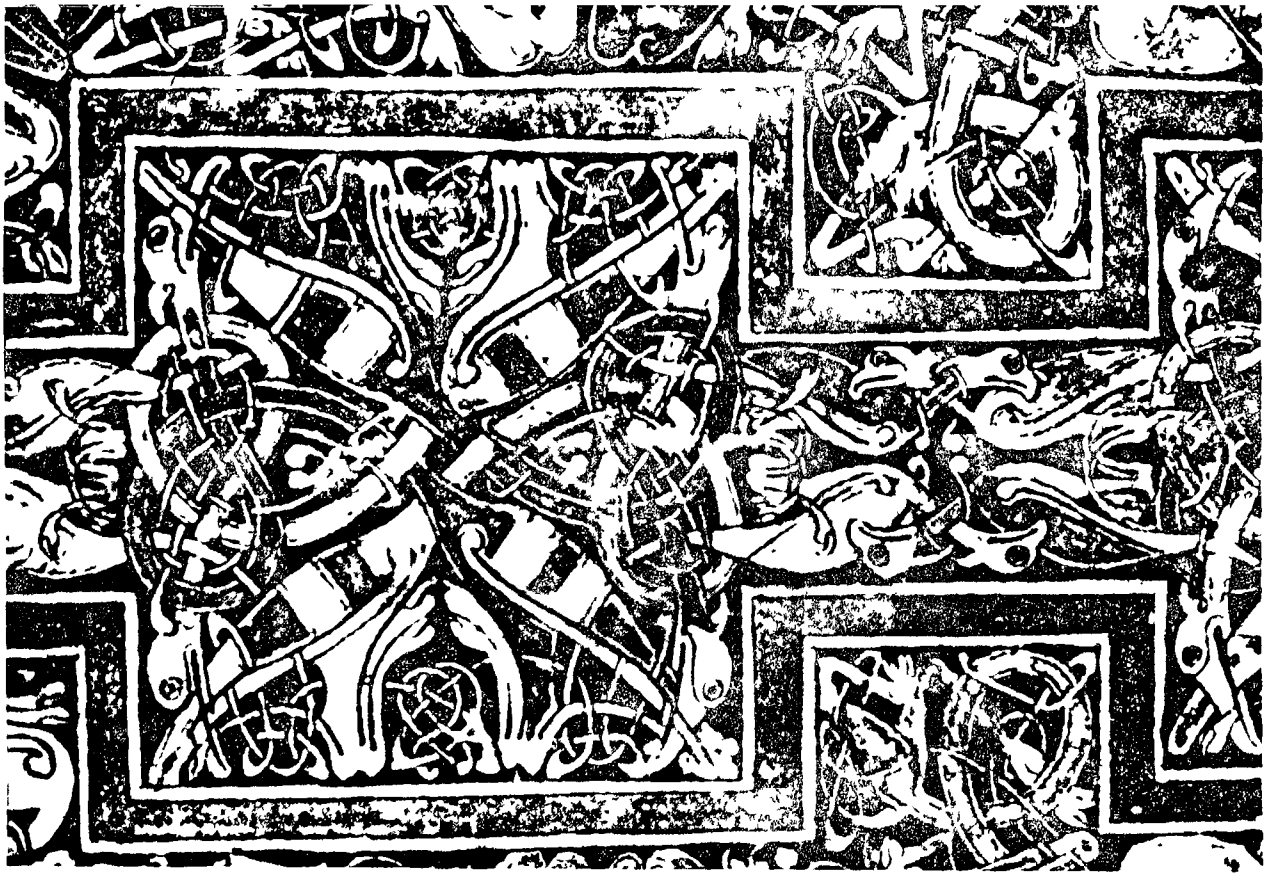


Fig. 1 Plate VII. A detail from folio 110<sup>v</sup> of the St. Chad Gospels. Courtesy of the Coutault Institute of Art.

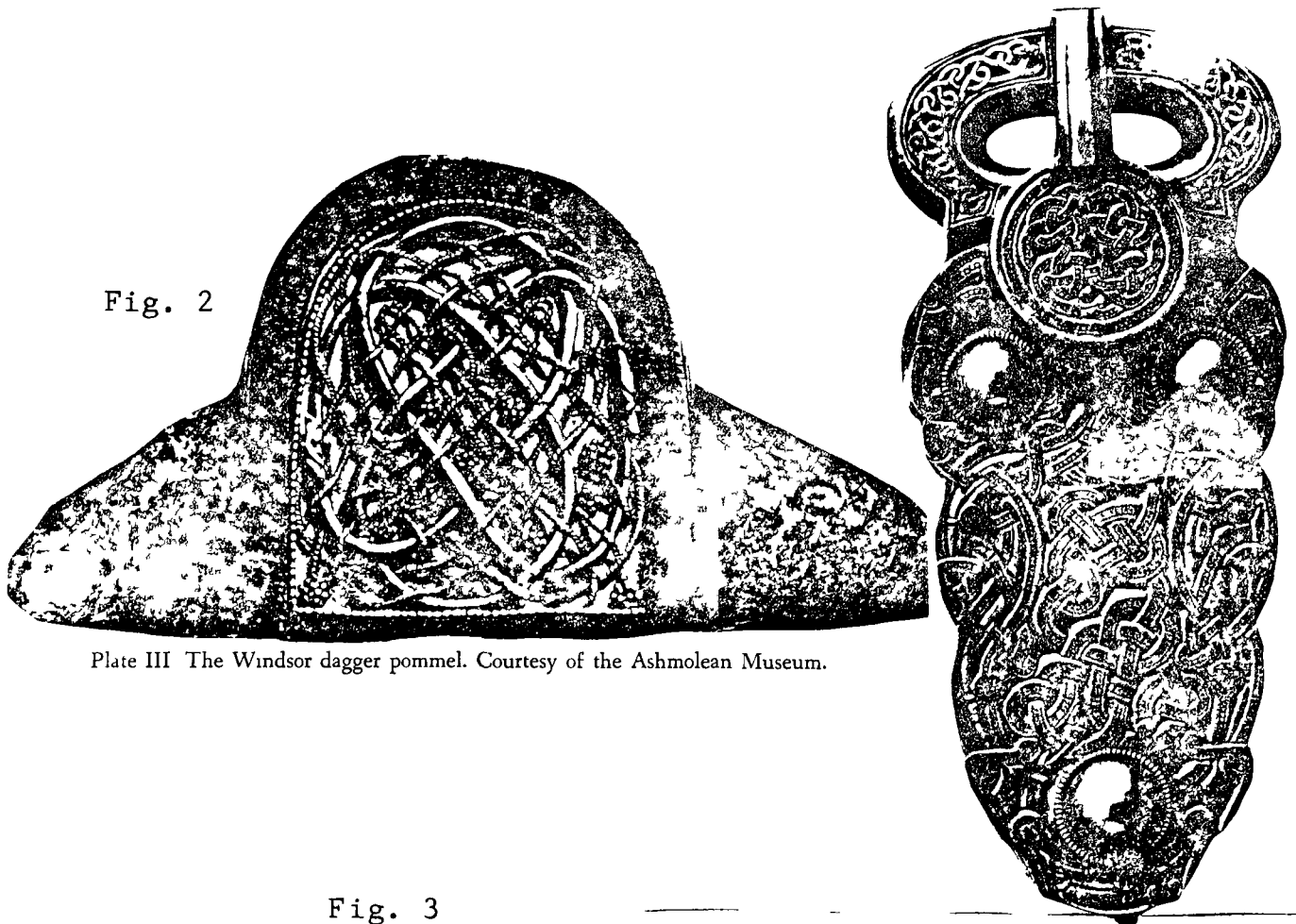


Fig. 2

Plate III The Windsor dagger pommel. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum.

Fig. 3

Plate IV. The great gold buckle from Sutton Hoo. Courtesy of the British Museum

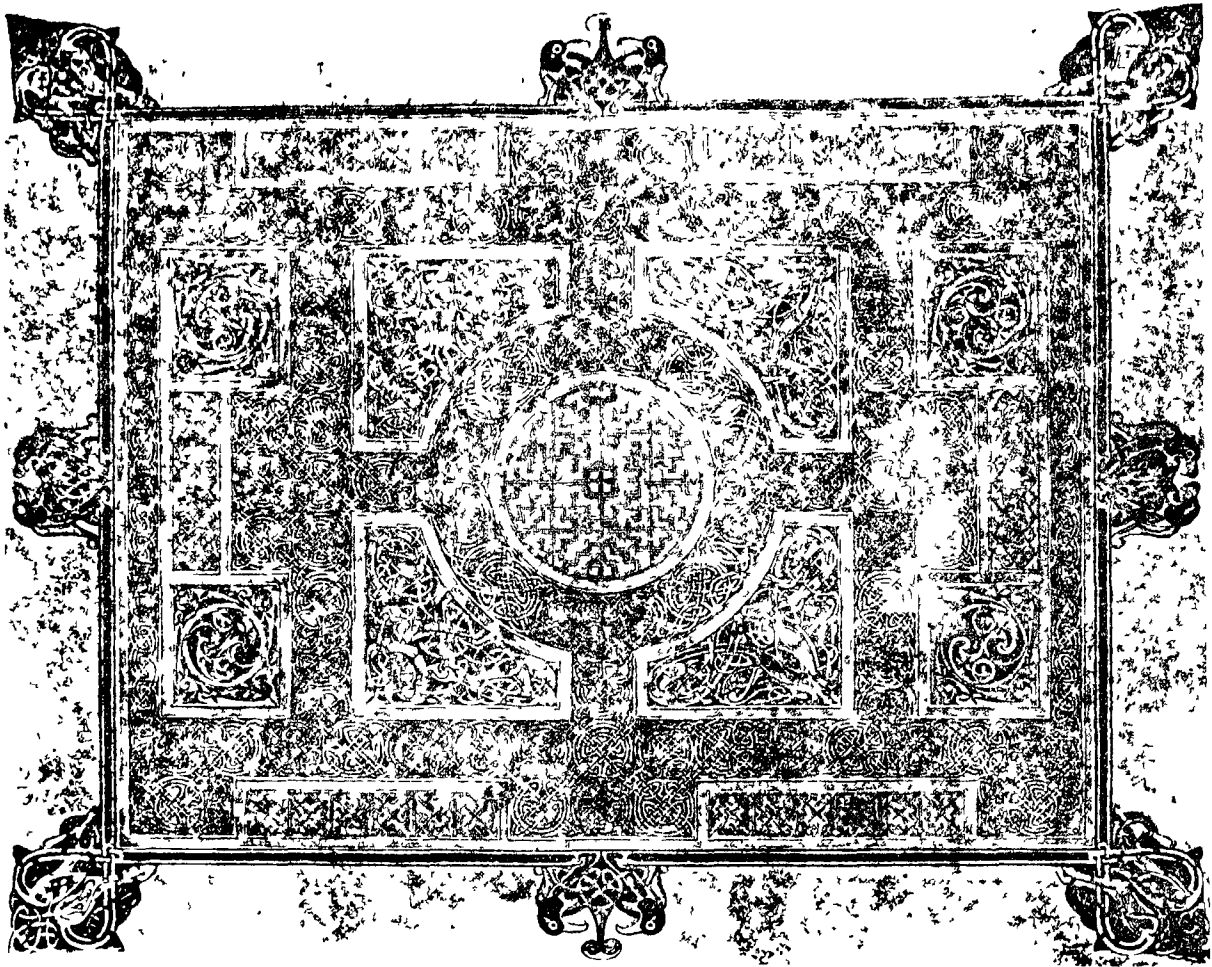


Fig. 4 Plate VIII. Folio 94<sup>v</sup> of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Courtesy of the British Museum.

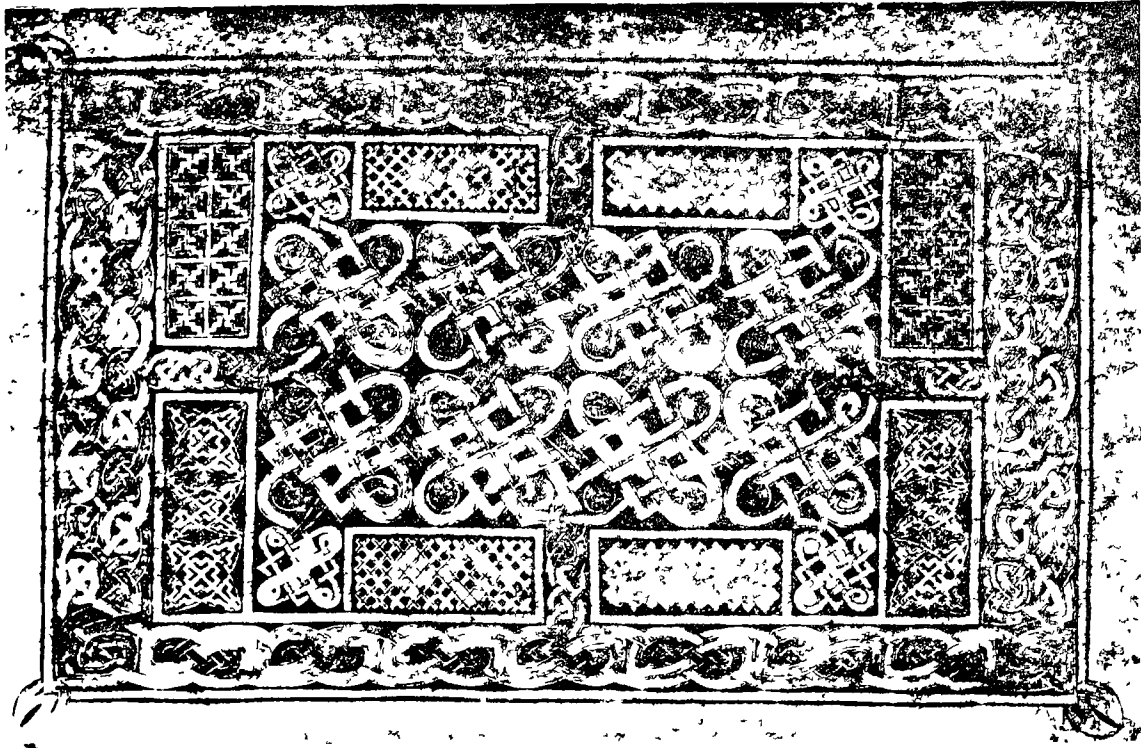


Fig. 5 Carpet page, folio 125v.

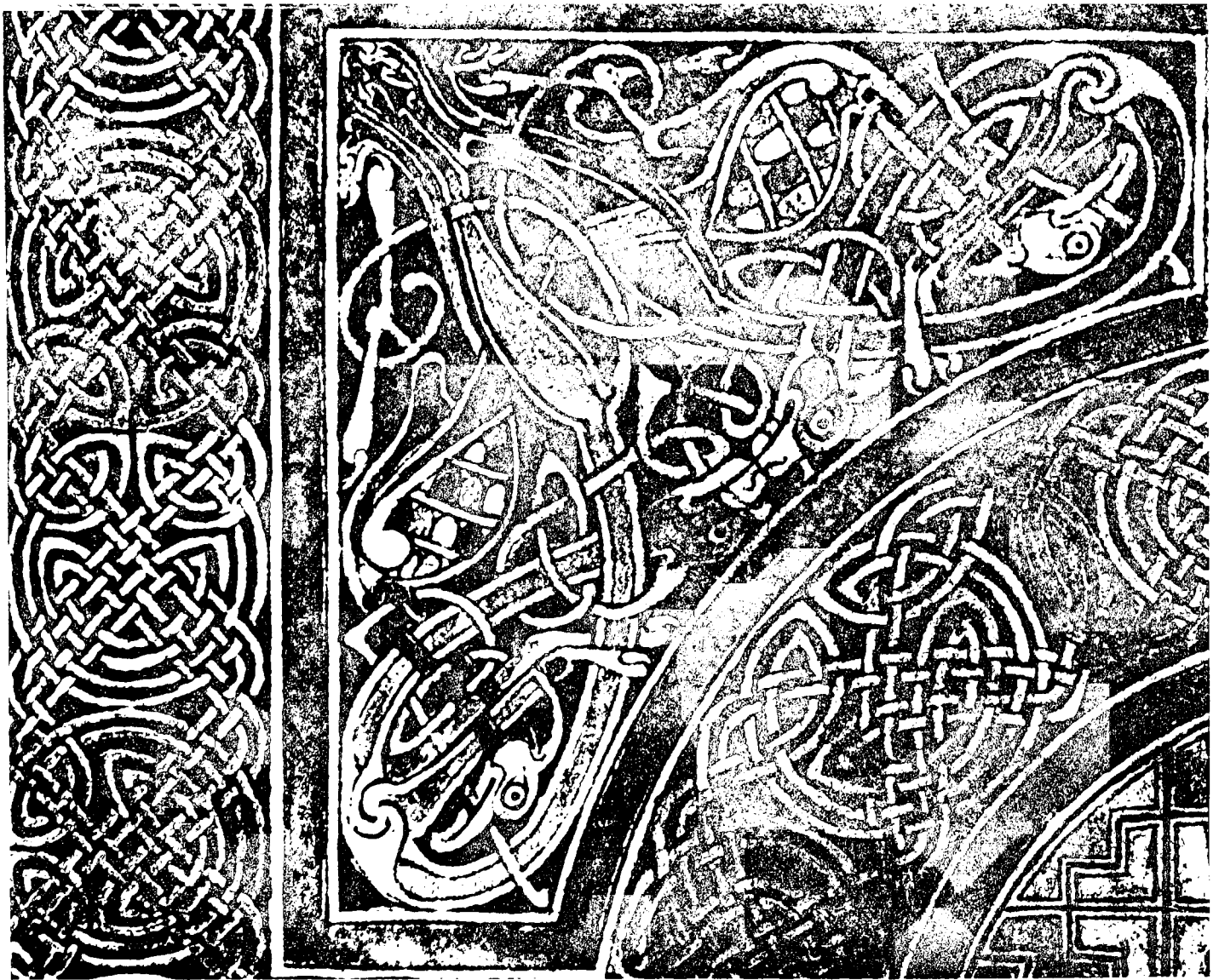
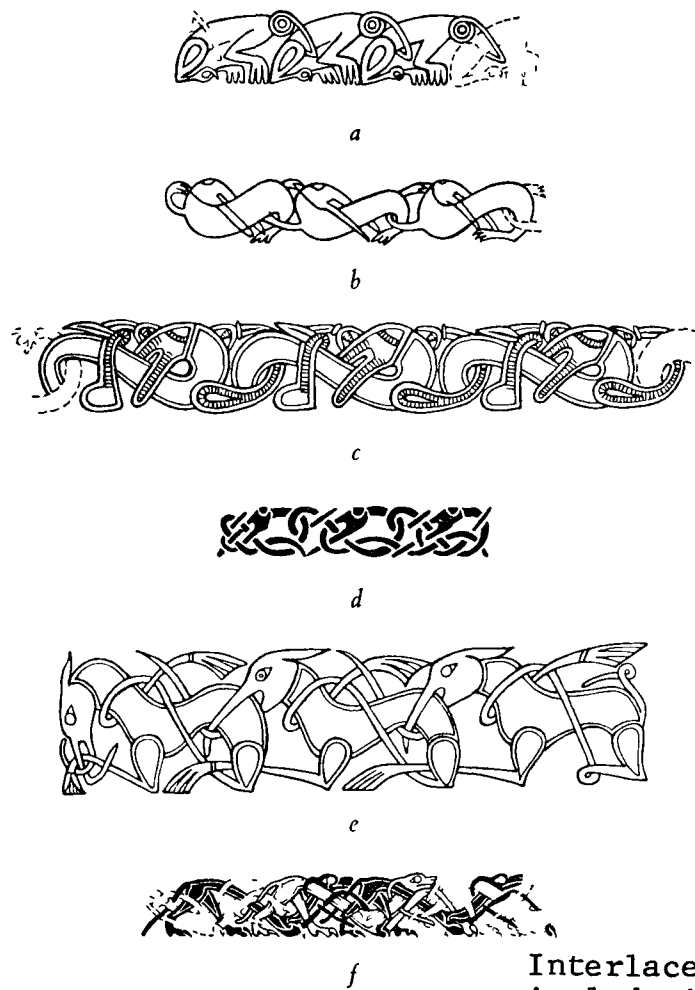


Fig. 6 Lindisfarne Gospels. Enlarged detail from f. 94v.



Fig. 7 Interlace on Lindisfarne Gospels, folio 26v.



Interlace of zoomorphic animal designs on jewelry

Fig. 8 Processions of interlocked animals in metalwork and manuscripts, A D circa 600–700 *a*, silver disc from Caenby, Lincolnshire (repoussé or stamped work), *b*, from the back of a circular brooch, Faversham, Kent (scratched), *c*, from a gilt-bronze disc, Allington Hill, Cambridgeshire (cast), *d*, from a hinged shoulder-clasp, Sutton Hoo, Suffolk (Pl 17 (b)) (gold and garnets), *e*, Book of Durrow f. 192 v, *f*, Lindisfarne Gospels f 27). (Scales, 1/1)

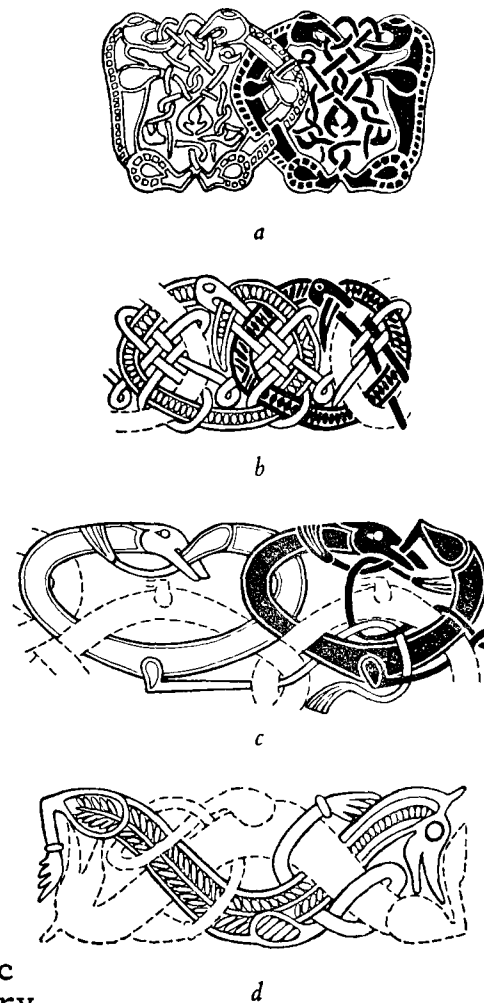


Fig. 9 *c*, 'Ring-chain' composition from the Book of Durrow (f 192 v) with analogous designs in earlier Anglo-Saxon metalwork (*a*, *b*), and *d*, design of two interlocked animals composed in a rectangular panel (cf. similar zoomorphic designs of interlocked animals in the Lindisfarne Gospels).

## INTRODUCTION

The application of the concept of "Interlace Structure" to the Advent Lyrics of The Exeter Book reveals the extraordinary beauty of their construction, as well as the technical competence of the author.

The word "interlace" has been fully explained by John Leyerle and is best understood when seen in the art of late seventh and early eighth century England where it became an artistic achievement of high order and complexity. Examples of such art are primarily admired in the designs of the Lindisfarne Gospels, on Anglo-Saxon weapons and jewelry in which the work was done with such perfection that "it was thought to have been the work of angels since no mortal could execute such complex designs so faultlessly."<sup>1</sup> A second illustration of interlace may be found in tapestry weaving in which the "positional patterning of the threads establishes the shape and design of the fabric."<sup>2</sup>

This artistic principle of design has its parallel in Anglo-Saxon poetry where an interlace of themes, words, tone and time compose the various threads that form what Leyerle calls "a verbal carpet page" or woven text. The

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<sup>1</sup>"The Interlace Structure of Beowulf," U.T.Q. 37 (1967), 3. See illustrations of interlace in Figs. 1-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5.

Advent Lyrics present such a page to the reader.<sup>1</sup>

Up to the present, the work done on Interlace Structure as such is comparatively small. A direct treatment of this concept is limited in particular to that of John Leyerle and A.P. Campbell in their studies of Beowulf, and in general to A.C. Bartlett, who has examined the interlace design principles in the body of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Leyerle develops most fully the significance of the term "Interlace Structure". He separates it into the two aspects of "Stylistic Interlace" and "Structural Interlace". Of the former he says: "it involves multiple statement of a subject in several different words or phrases, each of which typically describes a different aspect of the subject. When variation on two or more subjects is combined, the result is stylistic interlace, the interweaving of two or more strands of variation."<sup>2</sup> And of the latter: "At a structural level, literary interlace has a counterpart in tapestries where positional patterning of

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<sup>1</sup>The Anglo-Saxon poet Cynewulf, when describing his poetry says: "I wove words." It is interesting to note that the idea of weaving is contained in the etymology of our English word "text". The Latin words texere serta mean to interweave threads in textile, words that gave us our English words "text" and "textile." See Leyerle, "Interlace Structure," 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4.

threads establishes the shape and design of the fabric, whether the medium is thread in textile or words in a text.<sup>1</sup> In the present thesis structural interlace will mainly be referred to as thematic interlace because it concerns the interweaving of major and minor themes and the contribution of each to the main theme. Leyerle also makes a specific reference to another aspect, that of "time interlace" and for a definition he quotes Horace as follows:

whoever undertakes to make a good poem having clear order should love artificial order and scorn natural order. Every order is either natural or artificial; artificial order is when one does not begin from the beginning of an exploit but from the middle, as does Virgil in the Aeneid when he anticipates some things which should have been told later and puts off until later some things which should have been told in the present.<sup>2</sup>

Time interlace, however, is not fully developed by Leyerle, who refers to it only as a general characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

A.P. Campbell, in his "The Time Element of Interlace Structure in Beowulf" illustrates how the Beowulf poem is "skillfully woven within two periods of time,"<sup>3</sup> how the beginning and ending of the poem is framed in the pagan past while the body of the poem is situated in the Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Leyerle, "Interlace Structure," 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>3</sup>NM, 12 (1969), 426.

present although strewn with sudden departures into its pagan past.

A.C. Bartlett has made a more thorough study of rhetorical patterns in Anglo-Saxon poetry. She uses terms directly akin to interlace structure such as: "poetic tapestry," "fabric," "envelope patterns", in which the end of a passage returns to, in some way repeats the beginning, and is referred to as "the return to the keynote."<sup>1</sup> She also speaks of "incremental patterns"<sup>2</sup>-- a heaping up of terms for the same subject which in this thesis is referred to as "variation." She explains structural patterns in which there is "an overlapping of two or even three themes"<sup>3</sup> and finally she refers to "ornamental digressions" in Anglo-Saxon poetry, as "a weaving in and out /which/ could have gone on, like an arabesque motif in a curtain or a carpet."<sup>4</sup>

Among the critics who have devoted their major studies to the Advent Lyrics, and who to a certain degree develop the aspect of their interlace structure, may be mentioned Albert S. Cook, Jackson J. Campbell, S.B. Greenfield, and J.E. Cross.

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<sup>1</sup>The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry, (New York, 1966), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

Cook attaches much importance to the Advent poet's natural ability for 'wordcraft' which enables him to deftly weave one theme into another and make each theme "subservient to the scheme of the whole, with an eye that is caught by the gleam of gold in ornaments."<sup>1</sup> He also comments on the tonal quality of the lyrics and is undecided as to whether that of joy or sorrow dominates.

Jackson J. Campbell has presented a detailed study of the Advent Lyrics. He sees in them no narrative thread or observable pattern of thematic structure but rather recurring ideas that appear from time to time and which he summarizes as being:

- 1) The coexistence of the Father and Son.
- 2) The purity of the Virgin and the miracle of her Virgin birth.
- 3) Man's inability to understand God's mysteries and his misery and need for grace.
- 4) The necessity of rendering abundant praise to God.

These themes he says, "provide connecting links from poem to poem and serve to unify the whole group."<sup>2</sup> He says that

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<sup>1</sup>The Christ of Cynewulf, (Boston, 1900), p. lxxxvi. Cook also gives a detailed account of the liturgical and scriptural sources of the lyrics with full references. He dates them between 750 and 825. The theory of Cynewulf as author of the Advent Lyrics has been favored by Cook and other critics such as Samuel Moore. However recent criticism has established that the lyrics are an independent poem whose author is unknown. See Kenneth Sisam, Studies in the History of Old English Literature, (Oxford, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>The Advent Lyrics of the Exeter Book, (Princeton, 1959), p. 10.

the ideas of the lyrics are "woven throughout the poems in an all-pervasive manner /with/ a consciousness of the whole liturgy...almost the whole Christian religion."<sup>1</sup> When speaking of its tone Campbell notes that "the poem starts on a note of exclamation /and/ maintains a heightened tone of praise."<sup>2</sup> In the present thesis the above ideas are repeatedly referred to and illustrated in the development of the various chapters.

S.B. Greenfield traces the theme of spiritual exile as it runs through the twelve lyrics reflecting man's misery, the goodness and glory of Christ and the Virgin, and the tone of joy and sorrow. His emphasis is on man's fivefold condition of exile due to his fall into sin where he is presented as "a prisoner longing for a glimpse of the sun."<sup>3</sup>

J.E. Cross has dealt with the theme of coeternal existence as contained in Lyric V. He has pointed out the theological background out of which this theme was created and has illustrated the Advent poet's references to this

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<sup>1</sup>Campbell, The Advent Lyrics, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Campbell, "Structural Patterns in the Old English Advent Lyrics," ELH, 23 (1956), 242.

<sup>3</sup>Greenfield, "The Theme of Spiritual Exile in Christ I," PQ, 32 (1953), 323.

dogma by examples from the poem.<sup>1</sup>

The Interlace Structure of the Advent Lyrics as it is discussed in the present thesis, is viewed from four different aspects of interlace. First, "thematic" or "structural" interlace discusses the major and minor themes of:

- i. praise and expectant longing for a Saviour.
- ii. man's misery.
- iii. the Virgin theme.

These themes or thematic threads are turned on and off, forming breaks as they intersect each other and so interrupt the narrative flow of the story. Sometimes too, they merge into one another in such a manner that each minor theme makes a necessary contribution to the main theme emphasizing it, and bringing it to its highest climactic development. Second, "stylistic" or "variational" interlace illustrates the strands of variation or verse repeats in their emphatic function and decorative significance. These variational strands are woven together into a stylistic braid.<sup>2</sup> Through them the poet "repeats what he has already said in a new expression,"<sup>3</sup> and is concerned quite as much "with his word

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<sup>1</sup>"The 'Coeternal Beam' in the Old English Advent Poem (Christ I), ll. 104-129," Neophilologus, 48 (1964), 72-81.

<sup>2</sup>See Leyerle, "Interlace Structure," 5.

<sup>3</sup>Claes Schaar, Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group, (Lund, 1949), p. 184.

arrangement as with his ideas."<sup>1</sup> The position of the words or phrases is important to the poet for the rhetorical effect of ornamentation. Third, "tonal" interlace describes and exemplifies the contrasting elements in tone. One may speak of a joyful or sorrowful tone, a tone of color as light or dark, and also of an earthly or heroic tone as contrasted with a spiritual tone in which the concrete serves to define the abstract. These opposite tones exist side by side, define each other, and merge into one another. Fourth, "time" interlace analyses the manner in which the time strands of past, present, future, and even timelessness are woven together with no regard for chronological order.<sup>2</sup> Time seems to disappear within the timeless for the latter strand of timelessness dominates by far those of past, present, and future. With reference to these structural principles, we hope to provide an analysis of the poems which will allow the reader to appreciate the poem's complexity, its beauty of structure and technical excellence.

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<sup>1</sup>Bartlett, The Larger Rhetorical Patterns, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>A modern example of time interlace can be found in the stream-of-consciousness novels where the time element is completely askew and unity is brought about by clearly defined themes or motifs running through the novel.

## CHAPTER I

### THEMATIC INTERLACE

One of the reasons why the Anglo-Saxon poet in general and the Advent poet in particular were able to give themselves up to the luxury of interlace structure in which the time element is so distorted that no narrative thread remains, is that the audience was expected to possess "a common tradition of doctrine and symbol.../and/ to make considerable effort to understand the underlying meaning of a poem".<sup>1</sup> In fact the audience was supposed to know the story beforehand so that poetry could be enjoyed solely for its sentiment and ornament.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the poet was exempted from explicit comment. He was free to move backward and forward in time, digress suddenly into another theme, insert metaphorical or allusive material, without obscuring the significance of his interlace pattern.

The Advent poet has done exactly that. He has woven together in a mosaic style and with jerky transitions, memories from the Old and New Testament, fragments of the Creed, echoes of the preface of the Mass and Patristic

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<sup>1</sup>B.F. Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry, (New York, 1959), pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup>See Bartlett, The Larger Rhetorical Patterns, p. 110.

homilies.<sup>1</sup> He has made out of the Advent Lyrics a verbal carpet page where major and minor thematic threads cross, recross and merge with one another in a manner that makes each theme a necessary unifying element and integral part of the whole.

In this chapter these thematic threads will be treated separately both in their individual aspect and in their relation to the other themes and particularly to the two main themes, which have to do with the expectant longing for a Saviour and man's duty to praise Him.

The Themes of Praise and Expectant  
Longing for a Saviour

"Evildoers," says B.F. Huppe, "are actually driven by a loss of their desire for eternity." However, if the sinner "has heard the voice of God...and has begun to raise his voice in penitential song, he is restored to God. He speaks in accord with God."<sup>2</sup> This spirit is given prominence by the Advent poet when he makes the themes of praise and longing the keynote of his lyrics. With deep insight into man's fundamental duty he has perceived that "it is right and good for man to praise his Creator because of the high

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<sup>1</sup>Campbell, The Advent Lyrics, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry, pp. 92-93.

destiny that the Creator has prepared for him and reserved for him through the Redemption in spite of man's having turned from God."<sup>1</sup>

Upon analysis of the twelve lyrics, it is seen that the themes of praise and longing are implicitly woven almost into every line. The three objects of praise are Christ, the Virgin, and the Blessed Trinity, while that of longing is Christ, the promised Redeemer who is to restore man to his former place of honor, which he had lost through sin. In giving expression to these two themes the poet calls upon all the resources of language in order to describe the goodness, grace, and glory of his subjects, while inserting into each a maximum feeling of awe and reverence.

The themes are emphasized throughout the lyrics, first by repetition. When celebrating the praise of Christ the poet recapitulates two categories of motifs: His eternal Godhead and majesty 50 times and that of his triumphant dealings with humanity as Saviour 50 times, in a total of 100 variations. In these titles, even though there are intricate verbal relationships, there occur only 12 exact repetitions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix I, pp. 69-71.

In the first category of attributes, dealing with Christ's eternal Godhead and majesty, the poet is concerned primarily with praising Christ as coeternally existing with the Father. He is so struck by this aspect of Christ's majesty that it overshadows all others in its repetition under various forms. The poet first alludes to Christ's coeternal existence in line 12 when he refers to Him as "craeftga" (craftsman) and "cyning sylfa"<sup>1</sup>(the king Himself), which suggests the Son-Father identity. Craftsman embodies the idea of creation, which is generally attributed to God the Father.<sup>2</sup> The same motif is picked up again in the epithets of "liffrea" 27a (Lord of life) and "lifes fruman" 44a (Creator of life), which reannounces the idea of Christ as the Creator.

The motif of coeternal existence dominates the entire space of Lyric V. In this lyric Christ is praised in this aspect under the form of the sun metaphor:

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<sup>1</sup>George Philip Krapp and Elliott Dobbie, eds., The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, The Exeter Book, Vol. III (New York, 1936). All further quotations of poetry, unless otherwise stated, will be taken from this text.

<sup>2</sup>See Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 127. He quotes Ambrose as saying: "When scripture says: In the beginning God made heaven and earth, we recognize the Father in the name "God," and the Son in the name "beginning" who, not through the Father but through His own self was created first and most powerful of spiritual creation."

Eala earendel, engla beorhtast,  
ofer middangeard monnum sended,  
on soþfaesta sunnan leoma,  
torht ofer tunglas, þu tida gehwane  
of sylfum þe symle inlihtes! ll. 104-108.

(O rising light, the brightest of angels, sent to men upon earth, and true splendor of the sun, glorious beyond the stars, Thou from Thyself, forever dost illumine all time!)

The words "earendel" and "soþfaesta sunnan leoma" are used to indicate the coeternal aspect of His nature.<sup>1</sup> In the lines immediately following, this same motif weaves into the themes of man's longing and misery:

swa þec nu for þearfum þin agen geweorc  
bideþ þurh byldo, þaet þu þa beorhtan us  
sunnan onsende, ond þe sylf cyme  
þaet þu inlechte þa þe longe aer,  
þrosme beþeahte ond in þeostrum her,  
saeton sinneahtes; ll. 112-117a.

(So now in need Thine own work prayeth Thee in confidence, that Thou send us the bright sun, and Thou Thyself come, that Thou enlighten those who long since were wrapt in darkness, and here in gloom sat, in perpetual night).

In the above "sunnan onsende, ond þe sylf cyme" man requests that Christ send Himself and come Himself which "is an effective way of reiterating the inseparability of Father and Son."<sup>2</sup> A more direct reference to this motif together

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<sup>1</sup>See Cross, "The 'Coeternal Beam'", 75. He quotes the following Patristic statement: "For who can imagine that the radiance of light ever was not, so that he should dare to say that the Son was not always, or that the Son was not before His generation? or who is capable of separating the radiance from the sun...?"

<sup>2</sup>Cross, "The 'Coeternal Beam'", 78.

with thematic interlace is found in lines 122-127a:

efenece mid god, ond nu eft gewearp  
 flaesc firena leas, þæt seo faemne gebær  
 geomrum to geoce. God waes mid us  
 gesewen butan synnum; somod eardedon  
 mihtig meotudes bearn ond se monnes sunu  
 gepwaere on þeode.

(Coeternal with God, and now later become flesh free of sin, that the maiden bore as a help for the miserable. God was among us seen without sin, together they dwelt the mighty son of God and the son of man, harmonious among men).

Man in his misery rejoices in the salvation brought to him through the conception of the Virgin. He praises the Son, who in the beginning was coeternal with the Father and he confesses belief in Christ's retention of the Godhead in his human form in lines 125-126 when he says, "together they dwelt the mighty Son of God and the Son of man." Finally line 129, the last line of Lyric V, "he hine sylfne us sendan wolde" (He was pleased to send us Himself), repeats once more the Son-Father identity.

Lyric VI picks up the coeternal thread intermittently in Christ's titles of: "gaesta god" 130a (God of souls), "eces alwaldan" 140a (eternal Ruler), "bearn godes" 147b (Child of God), and especially in the last line: "þu in heannissum / wunast wideferh mid waldend faeder," 162b-163 (Thou in exaltation dwellest forever with God the Father).

In Lyric VII, the Virgin, as she explains to Joseph the mystery of her divine motherhood, speaks of her Son as: "beorhtne sunu" 205a (bright sun), "bearn eacen godes" 205b (the great Child of God), "maerum meotudes" 210a (glorious Son of God), titles which contain allusions to Christ's coeternal existence.

Lyric VIII like Lyric V, is particularly dedicated to the motif of coeternal existence. It appears here at three intervals:

Crist aelmihtig,  
 hu þu aer waere eallum geworden  
 worulde þrymmum mid þinne wuldorfaeder  
 cild acenned þurh his craeft ond meht!  
ll. 215b-218.

(Christ Almighty, how wast Thou, with Thy glorious Father, existent before all the world's estates, a Child begotten by His skill and might).

The poet, with wonder and admiration, marvels at Christ's coexistence with the Father while at the same time He deigned to become a Child among men by His skill and might. In lines 222b-223: "hu þe rodera weard / aet frymþe genom him to freobearne." (how the Ruler of heaven took thee in the beginning for His noble Son), the words "aet frymþe" (in the beginning), according to St. Basil, occurred outside of time in eternity.<sup>1</sup> The same motif appears for the third time in lines 236-238:

Sylfa sette þaet þu sunu waere  
 efeneardigende mid þinne engan frean  
 aerþon oht þisses aefre gewurde.

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<sup>1</sup> See Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 112.

(He Himself ordained that Thou the Son shouldst be coexisting with Thy only Lord before any of this had ever come to pass).

when once more the poet returns to praising Christ in His eternity with the Father before all creation. The lines are followed by a more pressing invitation to Christ that He come and show His mercy to mankind.

Lyric X gives a final direct reference to the coeternal motif in lines 349-350 and 355-356:

þu mid faeder þinne gefyrn waere  
 efenwesende in þam aepelan ham.  
 . . . . .  
 þa þu aereſt waere mid þone ecan frean  
 ſylf ſettende þas ſidan geſceaft,

(Thou with Thy Father of old wast coeternal in that noble home...when Thou Thyself first wast with the eternal Lord Thyself creating this wide creation).

The lines are again interrupted by an urgent petition for the Saviour to come and then the motif is picked up again in line 366b where Christ is invoked as "ece dryhten" (eternal Lord), an epithet which "emphasizes the creation of time by the timeless."<sup>1</sup>

The poet in developing this aspect of praise with such followed up detail seems to aim at bringing to its highest pitch the keynote of the main theme. For man, by contemplating the mystery of Christ's coeternal existence and imploring Him under this title, is capable of rendering

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<sup>1</sup>Huppe, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 116.

to God the highest form of praise since he touches upon the very essence of Christ's nature and perceives a hidden truth not given to everyone to understand.

Still in the category of Christ's eternal Godhead, is the poet's concern with praising Christ's majesty, that is His glorious kingship and nobility as Lord over the spiritual realm in heaven. He is "cyninga cyning" 136a (King of kings), "rodera weard" 222b (Ruler of heaven); He is "engla þeoden" 332b (Prince of angels). Also, the poet praises Christ's supreme nobility as "sunu soþan faeder" 110a (Son of the true Father), "meotudes bearn" 126a (Son of God), and "aepelne ordfruman" 402a (the noble creative source).

In the second category of attributes the poet extols Christ's triumphant dealings with humanity as Saviour, because He "dissolved the enmity between God and man in His own Flesh."<sup>1</sup> In line 2a, Christ is the "weallstan" (cornerstone), a metaphor which explains that He would "gesomnige...weallas" 5, or bring together the two walls (men and angels) where men were to replenish the part of the angels who had fallen. In lines 127b-129, Christ is the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert B. Burlin, The Old English Advent: A Topological Commentary, (New Haven, 1968), p. 60.

triumphant lord whom men must forever thank because He came to save them:

We þæs þonc magon  
secgan sigedryhtne symle bi gewyrhtum,  
þæs þe he hine sylfne us sendan wolde.

(We therefore must say thanks to the triumphant Lord forever because indeed He was pleased to send us Himself).

In lines 160b-162a, the poet prays that man, whom Christ created with His hands, worship the glorious King of men:

þæt þec weorþien,  
weoroda wuldorcyning, þa þu geworhtes aer  
hondum þinum.

(that those Thee worship, glorious King of men whom Thou didst formerly create with Thy hands).

In Lyric VII the Virgin, in her explanation to Joseph of her miraculous conception, swears to its authenticity by using Christ's title of "Saviour of souls":

ond þus reordade:  
"Soþ ic secge þurh sunu meotudes,  
gaesta geocend, þæt ic gen ne conn  
þurh gemaecscipe monnes ower ll. 196b-199.

(And thus she spoke: "By the Son of God, the Saviour of souls, I speak the truth that I have no knowledge of cohabitation of any man, at any time).

In His attribute of "Saviour Christ" the poet invokes the healing power of Christ, which is contained in the connotation of the Old English word "haelende" also meaning to heal.

þu þisne middangeard milde geblissa  
þurh þinne hercyme, haelende Crist,  
ll. 249-250.

(Gently bless this earth, through Thy coming,  
Saviour Christ).

In the title "Saviour God" the poet calls on Christ's divinity co-dwelling in His humanity through which man may know Him and trust in Him: "nu us haelend god / waerfaest onwrah þæt we hine witan moton" 383b-384 (Now the trustworthy Saviour God has revealed to us that we may know Him). In lines 408-409a, Christ is "the protector of warriors" and the "protector of every creature": "forþon þu gefyldest foldan ond rodoras, / wigendra hleo, wuldres þines, / helm alwihta." (For Thou hast filled the earth and heavens, Protector of warriors, with Thy glory, Protector of every creature). Here Christ is invoked under the most glorious title given in the heroic "commitatus" relationship, which expresses mutual loyalty and service.

Finally the poet praises Christ under the titles of "Saviour of mankind" and "Lord of men":

Ond swa forþgongende folca nergend  
his forgifnesse gumum to helpe  
daelep dogra gehwam, dryhten weoroda.

ll. 426-428.

(And so continually, the Saviour of mankind  
dealeth out each day His forgiveness unto men  
to help them, the Lord of men).

titles which call forth man's unlimited trust in the forgiveness of Christ.

Upon further analysis of the two main categories of praise discussed above there can be noticed also an

exact numerical balance<sup>1</sup> between Christ's titles concerning His coeternal majesty and those given Him concerning His dealings with mankind, where He lowers Himself to man's needs. Furthermore the two categories form two contrasting strands that are interlaced into a braid in which the first strand represents the theme of praise that extols Christ's divinity and the second the theme of longing that extols Christ's humanity.

In the case of the theme of longing, the titles are most often associated with man's expectant longing such as:

Cum, nu, sigores weard,  
meotod moncynnes, ond þine miltse her  
arfaest ywe! ll. 243b-245a.

(Come, now, Lord of triumph, Creator of mankind,  
and in Thy graciousness, show Thy mercy here).

or again in lines 358b-359: "We þe, haelend Crist, / þurh eapmedu ealle biddaþ," (We beseech Thee Saviour Christ in all humility). In lines 332-336 both the divine and human aspects of Christ are invoked in the titles of "Prince of angels" and "Lord of life" when man begs the Virgin to reveal to him the grace that she received through God's messenger:

Swa þe aefter him engla þeoden  
eft unmaele aelces þinges  
liopucaegan bileac, lifes brytta.  
Iowa us nu þa are þe se engel þe,  
godes spelboda, Gabriel brohte.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix I, pp. 69-71.



þaet þu us ahredde ond us haelogiefe / soþfaest sylle,"  
373b-375a (We need Thy mercy, that Thou deliver us and give  
us the true gift of Thy salvation).

In the foregoing the thematic threads of praise and longing have been discussed as separate themes. However, it should be noted that in the poem there is a tendency to express praise and longing in a single interwoven pattern as the poet combines both themes into one image or phrasing. Thus when the poet describes Christ through His attributes, he portrays Him as the Champion of both God (in the thread of coeternal majesty) and man (in the thread of His relationship with man). He is the Champion of God for without Him nothing was created. He is the Champion of man for He is the Hero swaying man's destiny from catastrophe to glory and in praising Him, man fulfills his being and is cured from sin for:

Se waes ae bringend,  
lara laedend, þam longe his  
hyhtan hidercyme, swa him gehaten waes,  
þaette sunu meotudes sylfa wolde  
gefaelsian foldan maegþe,  
swylce grundas eac gaestes maegne  
siþe gesecan. Nu hie softe þaes  
bidon in bendum hwonne bearn godes  
cwome to cearigum ll. 140b-148.

(He was the bringer of law, the giver of wisdom to those who for long had hoped for His Advent, as was promised them that the Son of the Creator Himself would purify the races of the earth and also in time seek the abyss by the might of His spirit. Now they patiently awaited in bonds until the Child of God should come to the afflicted).

In a variety of repetitious phrasings man calls on Christ his Champion within an inseparable fusion of the two main themes:

Is seo bot gelong  
 eall aet þe anum, ece dryhten.  
 Hreowcearignum help, þæt þin hidercyme  
 afrefre feasceafte). ll. 365b-368a.

(The cure is dependent on Thee alone, eternal Lord. Help the wretched, so that Thine advent here may comfort the miserable).

Finally when man contemplates the Virgin and her Child, his desires are realized, and he can rejoice in the victory of his Lord:

Sipþan we motan  
 anmodlice ealle hyhtan,  
 nu we on þæt bearn foran breostan stariap  
 ll. 339b-341.

(Hereafter we may unanimously all hope, now that we behold that Child upon thy breast).

In lines 429-435, the poet promises man his final victory if he truly praises Christ his Saviour:

Forþon we hine domhwate daedum ond wordum  
 hergen holdlice. þæt is healic raed  
 monna gehwylcum þe gemynd hafap,  
 þæt he symle oftost ond inlocast  
 ond geornlicost god weorþige.  
 He him þaere lisse lean forgildeþ

(Wherefore it is a sublime action for anyone who has intelligence, that he most often and most inwardly, and most yearningly praise God. He will reward him for love, yea, the hallowed Saviour Himself).

In the above quotations the interweaving of themes is cleverly handled. While the poet is occupied with the theme of praising God by expounding His multiple attributes,

he brings to light a hidden knowledge of God as well as a hidden knowledge of man himself, and this arouses in the latter new reasons for praising God. In fact the poet had already implied at the very beginning of the lyric, that man's chief work on earth was to praise God. In lines 20-21 he says: "eadga upwegas, oþrum forwyrneþ / wlitigan wilsipes, gif his weorc ne deag." (bless us with victory with glorious success, denied to another if his work is worthless). There is established here a contrast between the blessedness of those who praise God and the damnation of those who refuse to glorify His name.

However, the lyric most exclusively dedicated to a simultaneous praise and longing, is Lyric XI. This lyric is a spontaneous outburst of delirious praise interwoven with longing in honor of the triune God and Christ the Saviour. Here the poet sings, with an almost uncontrolled emotion, the praise of the most High but with due remembrance of his own humble condition as a needy creature:

Eala seo wlitige, weorþmynda full,  
 heah ond halig, heofoncund þrynes,  
 brade geblissad geond brytenwongas  
 þa mid ryhte sculon reordberende,  
 earme eorþware ealle mægene  
 hergan healice, nu us haelend god  
 waerfaest onwrah þaet we hine witan moton.  
 ll. 378-384.

(O the beautiful, the full of praise, the high and holy, the heavenly Trinity, widely blessed throughout the surface of the earth, whom rightfully all poor miserable earthdwellers must with all power praise

exaltedly. Now the trustworthy Saviour God has revealed to us that we may know Him).

Besides the attributes mentioned in the above quotation this sole lyric contains 16 other attributes in praise of Christ, each of which picks up one of the thematic threads of praise or longing.

Finally the poem ends as it began, on a note of praise and triumph. At the beginning Christ was King and Head of the glorious temple who was to rebuild the "house that was in ruins." At the end His mission is accomplished; man will dwell blessed ever after in the land of the living:

se gehalgoda haelend sylfa,  
 efne in þam eple þær he ær ne cwom,  
 in lifgendra londes wynne,  
 þær he gesaelig sippan eardap,  
 ealne widan feorh wunap butan ende. ll. 435-439.

(the holy Saviour Himself, even in the land where He formerly never came, in the joy of the land of the living, He blessed ever afterwards shall dwell forever, dwell without end).

together with the holy Saviour who has rewarded him for his praise and hope. The interlace design has returned to its beginning.

The Theme of Man's Misery

The theme of man's misery, one of the larger threads of the tapestry, includes all word imagery referring to man's fall, exile, rejection of Christ and consequent subjection to the powers of evil.<sup>1</sup> It runs through all the lyrics and stands out as the chief element of contrast with the other themes. The poet introduces it in the first two lines of the Advent Lyrics, where in the form of a building metaphor, it is immediately contrasted and interwoven with the two main themes.

þu eart se weallstan þe þa wyrhtan iu  
 wiþwurpon to weorce. Wel þe geriseþ  
 þæt þu heafod sie healle maerre,  
 ond gesomnige side weallas  
 faeste gefoge, flint unbraecne, ll. 2-6.

(Thou art the cornerstone that the builders long ago rejected from the work. Well it befits Thee that Thou be the head of the glorious temple and bring together the wide walls, the flint unbreakable, with firm union).

The fact that man has "rejected" Christ constitutes in the eyes of the poet, the worst aspect of his misery.

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<sup>1</sup>See Catherine Ann Regan, Wisdom and Sin: Patristic Psychology in Old English Poetry, (Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 120. With reference to the above, Regan remarks: "The manifestation of evil in the sinful conduct of man so engaged the poetic imagination of the Old English poets that this theme emerges as one of the major themes of their poetry."

For in the words "weallstan...wiþwurpon" there is simultaneously contained a triple rejection. Historically the cornerstone image alludes to three different events: the Incarnation of Christ, the Redemption, and the institution of the Church, three instances in which man rejected Christ through pride.<sup>1</sup> But this brief annunciation of the theme of man's misery is suddenly interrupted in line 3. Here the poet starts again on the theme of praise, where he elaborates especially on Christ's power and glory. Christ is the head of the temple, righteous and triumphant. He is the Lord of glory, Craftsman and King. In line 13, the subject reverts back to man's misery but this time man takes on the humble attitude of petition and avowal of his misery. He implores the King Himself to rebuild that which is corrupt and in ruins:

Nu is þam weorce þearf  
 þaet se craeftga cume ond se cyning sylfa,  
 ond þonne gebete, nu gebrosnad is,  
 hus under hrofe. ll. 11b-14a.

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<sup>1</sup>See E. Panofsky, "The Friedsam Annunciation and the Problem of the Ghent Altar Piece," The Art Bulletin, XVII (1935), pp. 449 ff. He describes a French tapestry where the setting of a stone was meant to allude to the Incarnation. Christ's rejection at the Incarnation is told in Jn.1.10-11. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." His rejection at the Crucifixion is told in Thorpe's The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Vol. II (London 1844-46), pp. 580-582. The cornerstone image refers again to Christ and His Church. Here it has the double signification of union between Jews and Gentiles and also the rejection of the Church by the Jews. See Burlin, The Old English Advent, pp. 58-59.

(Now there is need in the work that Craftsman  
come and the King Himself, and then rebuild that  
which now corrupt is, the house under the roof).

In the lines immediately following, man continues to avow  
himself "abject", "wretched" and "miserable", dominated by  
terror from the evil one. The lyric ends on a note of hope  
in Christ's goodness: "nu sceal liffrea / þone wergan heap  
wrapum ahreddan, / earme from egsan, swa he oft dyde."

15b-17 (Now shall the Lord of life deliver the abject crowd  
from wrath, the miserable from terror, as he often did).

The past tense of this last phrase indicates that the poet  
has already jumped into a future period of time.<sup>1</sup>

Lyric II begins with the key metaphor, suggested by  
the Church Antiphon, O Clavis David. However, the poet  
reshapes it to suit his own creation:

se þe locan healdeþ, lif ontyneþ,  
eadgan upwegas, oþrum forwyrneþ  
wlitigan wilsipes, gif his weorc ne deag.  
ll. 19-21.

(He who the keys holdeth, life openeth, bless us  
with a path to heaven, with glorious success, denied  
to another if his work is not well done).

He inserts the moral that those whose works are not well  
done can expect to be locked out of eternal life. E. Burgert  
sees in the passage a metaphor "which glorifies the Key  
that closed eternal life to mankind after the transgression  
in Paradise and again opened it in the Incarnation and the

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<sup>1</sup>See Time Interlace, pp. 64-66 below.

Redemption."<sup>1</sup> In either case the metaphor contains an allusion to man's spiritual death from which he needs to be brought back to life through the goodness of Christ. All the lines expressing this theme are built on the basic idea that Christ has the power and will to save man on condition that man desires Him and faces the facts of his own helpless condition. In the lines immediately following is given an interesting example of how the theme of man's misery interweaves fragmentarily with the two main themes of longing and praise:

cearfulra ping, be we in carcerne  
sittap sorgende, sunnan wenap,  
hwonne us liffrea leoht ontyne,  
weorþe ussum mode to mundboran,  
ond þaet tydre gewitt tire bewinde,  
gedo usic þaes wyrþe, þe he to wuldre forlet,  
þa we heanlice hweorfan sceoldan  
to þis enge lond, eþle bescyrede.  
 Forþon secgan maeg, se þe soþ spriceþ,  
þaet he ahredde, þa forhwyrfed waes,  
frumcyn fira.<sup>2</sup> ll. 25-35a.

(a sad thing, we in prison sit sorrowing, for the sun  
 yearning until to us the Lord of life, light reveal  
 become for our soul the protector and the weak mind  
 with glory encompass, make us of this worthy, whom  
 He to glory hath admitted when we miserably to depart

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<sup>1</sup>E. Burgert, The Dependence of Part I of Cynewulf's Christ upon the Antiphony, (Washington, D.C., 1921), pp. 23-25. See also Greenfield "Of Locks and Keys--Line 19a of the Old English Christ," MLN, 67 (1952), 240.

<sup>2</sup>In the above underlining, single lines indicate the misery theme; double lines the theme of longing for the Saviour and the spaced lines that of praise.

were obliged unto this narrow land, of home deprived.  
Wherefore he may say who truth speaketh that He saved  
when it corrupted was, the race of men).

The example illustrates the interlacing of the three themes in picturesque imagery: Man, a sad thing, weak in mind, sits in prison sorrowing, for he has been obliged to depart miserably from his home into a narrow land, after the race of men had become corrupted through original sin. (25-26a). But then he remembers the Promise and begins hopefully to yearn for the Sun, the Lord of life, the Protector of the soul, the Saviour, that He may reveal His light, encompass him with brightness, admit him to glory and save him.

In line 35b occurs a sudden break as the theme of man's misery merges into a new theme, the Virgin theme. The poet addresses her: "faemne geong,/maeg manes leas," 35b-36a (young virgin, maid free from sin), and goes on to elaborate until the end of the lyric, about the mystery of the incarnation in a tone of wonder: "Naenig efenlic þam, aer ne sippan, / in worlde gewearþ wifes gearnung;" 39-40 (Never anything like that, before or after in the world has happened, that a woman of such merit has been found). We are not permitted to forget that the poet is putting into contrast man's misery with the Virgin's purity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For the Virgin theme, see p. 39 below.  
The tone of this passage is discussed in Chapter III, p. 53 below.

In Lyric III, after a lapse of fifteen lines where the poet has celebrated the Virgin in a series of epithets, the theme of man's misery reappears in the last five lines:

Nu is þæt bearn cymen,  
 awaecned to wyrpe weorcum Ebrea,  
 bringeþ blisse þe, benda onlyseþ  
 niþum genedde. Nearoþearfe conn,  
 hu se earma sceal are gebidan. ll. 66b-70.

(Now is that Child come, born for the alleviation of the afflictions of the Hebrews, He bringeth bliss, looseneth thy bonds imposed by iniquity. He knoweth their dire need, how the wretched must await mercy).

Christ has now come in answer to man's yearning described in Lyric II, but man's wretched condition is again emphasized and repeated in almost synonymous terms. Here again man is an afflicted being suffering from being enslaved by the bonds of sin. However his suffering is alleviated because Christ knows man's wretchedness.

The first fifteen lines of Lyric IV revert to the Virgin theme when suddenly in line 85a the poet interrupts his praise of her only to recite a proverb on man's misery: "Swa eal manna bearn / sorgum sawaþ, swa eft ripaþ / cennaþ to cwealme." (As all men sow in sorrow so afterwards they reap, they bring forth in death). In the succeeding lines the subject on the Virgin is continued to line 95, where for the second time in this lyric the misery theme appears.

in Dauides dyrre maegan  
 þæt is Euan scyld eal forpynded,  
 waergþa aworpen, ll. 96-98a.

(In the beloved descendant of David the guilt of  
 Eve is all nullified, the curse cast off).

This time it is in the form of a flashback to Eve's trans-  
 gression in Paradise and the origin of man's misery when  
 God had pronounced His curse upon the human race.

In Lyric V, the element of contrast between the  
 "light" of Christ's glory and the "darkness" of man's misery  
 is extremely strong. After Christ has been referred to as  
 the "Eala earendel," (brightness of the Everlasting light);  
 "soþfaesta sunnan leoma," (true splendour of the Sun);  
 "symle inlihtes" 104-108 (Who forever illuminest), man is  
 described as:

þrosme beþeahte ond in þeostrum her,  
 saeton sinneahtes; synnum bifealdne  
 deorc deaþes sceadu dreogan sceoldan. ll. 116-118.

(covered with darkness and in darkness here, sat  
 in perpetual night, wrapped in sin had to suffer  
 the dark shadow of death).

He urgently appeals to Christ that He enlighten the darkness  
 of his night in sin. In the three lines that follow the  
 poet moves into the theme of Christ's coeternal existence  
 with the Father, saying that the "efenece mid god, ond nu  
 eft gewearþ / flaesc firena leas," 122-123a (Coeternal One  
 with God later became flesh free of sin). And he continues

by "faemne gebaer/geomrum to geoce," 123b-124a (The maiden bore Him as a help for the miserable), whereby he merges three themes into one.

In Lyric VI, as the themes of praise and longing for the Redeemer become more accentuated, man's petitions and confessions concerning his exile also become more pressing and picturesque. Man pleads:

þaet sunu meotudes sylfa wolde  
 gefaelsian foldan maegþe,  
 swylce grundas eac gaestes maegne  
 siþe gesecan. Nu hie softe þaes  
 bidon in bendum hwonne bearn godes  
 cwome to cearigum. ll. 143-147a.

(that the Son of the Creator Himself would purify the races of the earth and also in time seek the abyss by the might of His spirit. Now they patiently awaited in bonds until the Child of God should come to the afflicted).

Stanley Greenfield places the above petitions "in the mouths of the just souls in limbo,"<sup>1</sup> where according to the seventh article of the Creed, Christ descended after the Crucifixion in order to announce to those who had hoped in Him, the glad tidings of their deliverance.

More dramatic still is the imagery of man's distress in lines 150b-154:

Bring us haelolif,  
 werigum witeþeowum, wope forcymenum,  
 bitrum brynetearum. Is seo bot gelong  
 eal aet þe anum..oferþearfum.  
 Haefas hygegeomre hider ...es;

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<sup>1</sup>"The Theme of Spiritual Exile in Christ I,"p. 324.

(Bring salvation to us to the tormented slaves,  
 overcome with weeping with bitter burning tears.  
 The remedy is completely dependent on Thee alone.  
 Visit here the sad captives in extreme distress).

The description still refers to the souls in limbo, but the poet by making use of a tragic physical representation, clarifies the meaning of an abstract concept of faith.

In Lyric VII, the theme of man's misery appears from a slightly different perspective. J.J. Campbell calls this lyric "The Temptation of Joseph"<sup>1</sup> because Joseph is tempted to cover up what he believes to be the Virgin's crime. His mind is obscured in face of the mystery he has to contend with. Facts are there in proof against Mary's innocence. He can no longer resist the tauntings of his friends for they have spoken to him injurious speech, insults, and many bitter words. He becomes mentally unsettled, emotionally hurt and yet he cannot resign himself to believing that his "pure maiden" is guilty. Joseph then, in contrast to Mary, experiences the consequences of guilt even though he has not committed actual sin:

Ic lungre eam  
 deope gedrefed, dome bereafod,  
 Forþon ic worn for þe worde hæbbe  
 sidra sorga ond sarcwida,  
 hearmes gehyred, ond me hosp sprecap,  
 tornworda fela. Ic tearas sceal  
 geotan geomormod. God eaþe maeg  
 gehaelan hygesorge heortan minre,  
 afrefran feasceaftne. ll. 167b-175a.

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<sup>1</sup>"Structural Patterns," 249.

(I suddenly am deeply troubled, bereft of honor, for because of thee I have heard in words much great grief, injurious speech, insult, and they speak scorn against me, many bitter words. Sorrowful in mind I must shed tears. God easily may heal the mental distress of my heart, comfort the miserable).

Like the rest of his co-exiles, Joseph is given to feel the distress of his state and must find comfort in God's saving power. Mary on the other hand does not feel in the least troubled or hurt at Joseph's accusing her of adultery. She is completely immersed in joy and gratitude for the great things that are being accomplished in both of them as she explains to Joseph the mystery, the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the Saviour; she advises Joseph to say eternal thanks for being henceforth the great Child's father by earthly opinion.<sup>1</sup>

In Lyric VIII, the theme of man's misery reappears intermittently, mainly in three places, and each time joins with and becomes one with that of man's longing and praise for the Saviour. The first image recalls and paraphrases the Key metaphor of Lyric II, line 19,

haelende Crist,  
 ond þa gyldnan geatu, þe in geardagum  
 ful longe aer bilocen stoda,  
 heofona heahfrea, hat ontyna, ll. 250b-253.

(Saviour Christ, high Lord of heaven, bid unlock the golden gates, that in days of old full long ago stood locked).

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<sup>1</sup>The abrupt change of tone in this passage is further discussed under Tonal Interlace, p. 56 below.

which starts by praising Christ, then longs for His coming and finally alludes to man's original fall in the Garden of Paradise. The second image refers to a prophecy of the Old Testament and Christ's recalling of it on the eve of His

Passion:

Hafaþ se awyrgda wulf tostenced,  
 deor daedscuan, dryhten, þin eowde,  
 wide towrecene. þæt þu, waldend, aer  
 blode gebohtes, þæt se bealofulla  
 hynep heardlice, ond him on hæft nimeþ  
 ofer usse neoda lust. ll. 256-261.

(The accursed wolf, the beast of shadow hath scattered,  
 Lord, Thy flock, ruined it widely. That which Thou,  
 Lord, formerly with blood boughtest, the enemy oppres-  
 seth severely and taketh us prisoner against our desires).

The lines place a strong accent on man being more a victim than an active sinner. And for this reason he can claim Christ's help with greater justification. In the third image of lines 266-274, the poet sums up the whole story of man's pitiful state:

ond þin hondgeweorc, haeleþa scyppend,  
 mote arisan ond on ryht cuman  
 to þam upcundan aepelan rice,  
 þonan us aer þurh synlust se swearta gaest  
 forteah ond fortylde, þæt we, tires wone,  
 a butan ende sculon ermpu dreogan,  
 butan þu usic þon ofostlicor, ece dryhten,  
 aet þam leodsceaþan, lifgende god,  
 helm alwihta, hreddan wille.

(and that Thy handiwork, Creator of men may rise and come aright unto the exalted splendid kingdom whence us first through love of sin the black spirit seduced and misled, that we, of glory wanting must endure misery without end unless Thou wilt often save us from the enemy, living God, Protector of every creature).

Man is weary in exile, oppressed by the deceiver; he first fell through love of sin seduced by the black spirit and was condemned to suffer eternal misery unless the eternal Lord deliver him from the enemy.

The theme of man's misery is only slightly and implicitly alluded to in Lyric IX, when in lines 310b-314, the poet re-introduces the key image:

Wende swiþe  
 þæt aenig elda aefre ne mehte  
 swa faestlice forescyttelsas  
 on ecnesse o inhebban,  
 oþþe þæs ceasterhlides clustor onlucan

(He thought deeply how any mortal ever might in eternity raise up such strong bolts or open the lock of that city gate).

The prophet wonders how any mortal man could open the lock of the city gate, which had been so firmly closed by man's transgression.

In Lyric X, however, the poet returns to his lengthy enumerations of man's miseries. Here again man is a captive, a slave, harassed by his own wishes, 360-362. He knows that evil spirits have dammed him, that the hateful devil has oppressed him and fastened him with dire ropes, 363-365a. But he knows too that the cure is dependent on Christ, who will help the wretched, the miserable, even though they have engaged in a feud against God through sin, 365b-369. Then in lines 370-373:

Ara nu onbehtum ond usse yrmþa geþenc,  
 hu we tealtrigaþ tydran mode,  
 hwearfiap heanlice.

(Spare now Thy servants and consider our miseries,  
 how we totter, weak in spirit, and roam about abjectly).

man details anew the tragic consequences of his fall. The more often he enumerates them, the more confident he becomes of being heard.

Lyric XI gives a single reference to this theme in the words "earme eorþware" 382 (poor earthdwellers). The poet is in a hurry to get away from it and to tie it triumphantly to the theme of praise.

Finally in Lyric XII, the theme of misery is resolved, as Greenfield says, when "the poet urges all men to pray for forgiveness of their sins: and man shall be rewarded"<sup>1</sup>

efne in þam eþle þær he aer ne cwom,  
 in lifgendra londes wynne,  
 ll. 436-437.

(even in the land where he formerly never came  
 in the joy of the land of the living).

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<sup>1</sup>"The Theme of Spiritual Exile," 328.

The Virgin Theme

The Virgin theme appears in ten out of the twelve lyrics; all except lyrics I and XI make express or allusive mention of the Virgin, honoring her in three distinguishing aspects: her purity, her power and glory, and her role in the plan of the Redemption. The poet treats this theme from the double point of view of emotion and contrast. What H.C. Wyld claims as characteristic of all Anglo-Saxon poetry is particularly applicable here, namely, that it exhibits "arresting qualities of elevation of thought and a sustained intensity of emotion, together with great delicacy and tenderness of feeling."<sup>1</sup>

It is with a strong feeling of admiration that the poet delights in the Virgin's purity and becomes repetitious in his admiration: "Waes seo faemne geong, / maegþ manes leas," 35b-36a (Young was the Virgin a maid free from sin); "Naefre wommes tacn / in þam eardgearde eawed weorþeþ," 54b-55 (Never a sign of sin shall be seen in that dwelling); "Eala wifa wynn geond wuldres þrym, / faemne freolicast ofer ealne foldan sceat," 71-72 (O joy of women in heavenly glory,

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<sup>1</sup>"Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," Reprinted by Jess B. Bessinger and Stanley J. Kahrl in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry. (New York, 1968), p. 184.

fairest maid on the whole face of the earth); "Fricgaþ  
 þurh fyrwet hu ic faemnan had, / mund minne, geheold, ond  
 eac modor gewearþ / maere meotudes suna?" 92-94a (Ask ye in  
 curiosity how I have kept my maidenhood, my virginity, and  
 yet become mother of the glorious Son of God?); "ond efne  
 swa þec gemette, meahtum gehrodene, / claene ond gecorene,"  
 330-331 (and Christ almighty found thee even so endowed  
 with virtues, pure and elect). Phrases such as these are  
 strewn throughout the lyrics, making the interlace thread  
 of her purity appear and reappear.<sup>1</sup>

The aspect of the Virgin's power is most forcefully  
 expressed in Lyric IX where she is celebrated as Lady of  
 heaven, of earth, and of hell because she consecrated her  
 virginity to the Lord:<sup>2</sup>

þaet þu sie hlaefdige halgum meahtum  
 wuldorweorudes, ond worldcundra  
 hada under heofunum, ond helwara.  
 Forþon þu þaet ana ealra monna  
 geþohtest þrymlice, þristhycgende,  
 þaet þu þinne maegþhad meotude brohtes,  
 sealdes butan synnum. ll. 284-290a.

(Thou art lady with holy might of the heavenly host,  
 and of earthly ranks, and of the inhabitants of hell.  
 For thou alone of all mankind didst nobly resolve,  
 strong in mind, that thou thy maidenhood to God bring,  
 give it without sin).

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix II, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Other references to her power are found in verses:  
 88a and 330b.

The poet exults in the Virgin's glory in Lyric III where he identifies her first to the heavenly, then to the earthly Jerusalem. She is "Cristes burglond," 51b (the city of Christ), "engla eþelstol," 52a (the home of angels), and in her "saule soþfaestra simle gerestaþ, /wuldrum hremge" 53-54a (the righteous dwell eternally in exultant glory). In lines 59-63a she is the earthly Jerusalem where the wide creation looks upon her with awe as it watches in surprise how the creator of the universe deigns to seek her as His dwelling place:<sup>1</sup>

Sioh nu sylfa þe geond þas sidan gesceaft,  
 swylce rodores hrof rume geondwlitan  
 ymb healfa gehwone, hu þec heofones cyning  
 siþe gesceceþ ond sylf cymeþ  
 nimeþ eard in þe

(See now thyself how the wide creation and heaven's roof surveyeth thee all about on every side, and how the King of heaven seeketh thee in His course, and cometh Himself, and taketh His dwelling in thee).

The Virgin's role in the plan of the Redemption is referred to explicitly in nine different places.<sup>2</sup> The most picturesque is found in Lyric IX. Here the poet interprets the Virgin's divine motherhood in terms of Ezechiel's prophetic vision (xliv, 1-2),<sup>3</sup> where Mary is "compared to

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<sup>1</sup>See C.W. Kennedy, Early Christian Poetry, (London: 1952), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix II, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Kennedy, Early Christian Poetry, p. 78.

a door which sets forth symbolically the birth of Christ."<sup>1</sup>  
 She is the entrance through which Christ comes into this world. Only He can pass through it for He has the key to open or lock:

Nu þæt is gefylled þæt se froda þa  
 mid eagum þær on wlatade.  
 þu eart þæt wealldor, þurh þe waldend frea  
 aene on þas eorþan ut siþade,  
 . . . . .  
 Swa þe aefter him engla þeoden . . . . .  
 eft unmaele aelces þinges  
 liopucaegan bileac, lifes brytta. 11. 326-334.

(Now that is fulfilled what the prophet then looked upon with his eyes. Thou art that wall-door, through thee the Ruler Lord once travelled unto this earth. Thus the Prince of angels, the Lord of life, closed thee all unblemished, after Him again, as with a wondrous key).

This door-metaphor is also closely interlaced with the theme of man's misery for it would have no point unless man were shut out of Paradise without possibility to enter again. It is interlaced too with the theme of longing by the fact that the Virgin presented as a door through which Christ will pass serves as a stimulant for man's longing. He can trust in her because by her purity she participates in the divine power of Christ, and by her human nature she is attainable to man. She becomes the meeting place of the divine and the human and establishes a kinship which ends

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<sup>1</sup>Schaar, Critical Studies, p. 138.

the existing enmity between God and man.

The poet, besides using symbol and metaphor in the development of this theme, also uses the principle of contrast or the placing side by side of opposites. Man's dilemma because of his fall in sin demands someone free from sin to intercede. Hence, the poet continually sets up the Virgin's purity in a criss-cross pattern of phrasing, which contrasts with man's sin. He repeatedly refers to her as "maeg manes leas" (maiden free from sin)<sup>1</sup> so that even with the focus on her purity we are reminded of man's misery. In lines 72-77 for example:

faemne freolicast ofer ealne foldan sceat  
 paes þe aefre sunbuend secgan hyrdon,  
 arece us þæt geryne þæt þe of roderum cwom,  
 hu þu eacnunge aefre onfenge  
 bearnes þurh gebyrde, ond þone gebedscipe  
 aefter monwisan mod ne cupes.

(maiden the fairest over all the surface of the earth, that ever men heard tell of, explain to us the mystery that came to thee from heaven, how thou didst conceive and yet intercourse after human fashion knewest not).

she is asked to reveal the secret of how she could give birth to a child and yet remain spotless. By this question man implicitly acknowledges that his faculties have become so obscured through sin that he can never hope to understand the mystery of her virginity.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix II, p. 72.

Contrast and interlace appear again in lines

94b-99:

Forþan þæt monnum nis  
 cuþ geryne, ac Crist onwrah  
 in Dauides dyrre maegan  
 þæt is Euan scyld eal forpynded,  
 waergþa aworpen, ond gewuldrad is  
 se heanra had. Hyht is onfangen

(Truly that to men is not a known mystery, but Christ revealed in the beloved descendant of David that the guilt of Eve is all nullified, the curse cast off, and glorified is the humble sex. Hope is received).

Mary is described as the one in whom the guilt of Eve is erased, in whom womanhood is honored. In her there is purity and innocence as contrasted with the rest of men in whom there is guilt and sin. However, by continually alluding to man's guilt the poet forecasts his redemption. Because of the Virgin, man is now allowed to hope. The themes of praise, longing, purity and misery all meet in her.

## CHAPTER II

### VARIATION AS STYLISTIC INTERLACE

Of the Advent poet it has been said that he was "so thrilled by the sweet chanting of the Greater Antiphons of Advent, and so imbued with their spirit through reflection upon their rich devotional and doctrinal contents that he gladly yielded to the impulse to reproduce them in English under the form of variation."<sup>1</sup> According to Klaeber, variation is "the very soul of the Old English poetical style."<sup>2</sup> It consists of a multifold repetition of the same idea in a new expression or embellishment. John Leyerle equates variation with what he calls "stylistic interlace" when it is combined on two or more subjects and becomes an "interweaving of two or more strands of variation."<sup>3</sup>

By means of this poetic technique of variation the poet is able to turn his subject or theme on and off again "until he has produced a description that is pure decoration for its own sake."<sup>4</sup> The variant passages are so interwoven as to form a distinct pattern in the poetic text. They are woven together into a "stylistic braid", a feature

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<sup>1</sup>Cook, The Christ, p. xlii.

<sup>2</sup>F. Klaeber, Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, 3rd edition (Boston, 1950), p. lxxv.

<sup>3</sup>Leyerle, "Interlace Structure", 4.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Diamond, "Theme as Ornament in Anglo-Saxon Poetry", PMLA, LXXVI (1961), 467.

of style which "is the literary counterpart for interlace designs in art that are decorative rather than structural"<sup>1</sup> and form in effect a verbal carpet page. Peter D. Scott in "Alcuin as a Poet," tells us that "Bede's poetry is full of interwoven classical tags, for this weaving was the principle of poetic making which was taught at the time."<sup>2</sup>

In the making of the Advent Lyrics the poet made abundant use of variation both in its simple form and in its combined form termed stylistic interlace. In the following lines is illustrated an example of simple variation on the subject of Christ:

Halig eart þu, halig heahengla brego,  
sop sigores frea, symle þu bist halig,  
dryhtna dryhten! A þin dom wunap  
 eorþlic mid aeldum in aelce tid  
 wide geweorpad. þu eart weoroda god,  
 forþon þu gefyldest foldan ond rodoras,  
wigendra hleo, wuldres þines,  
helm alwihta. ll. 403-410.

(Holy art Thou, holy, Lord of archangels,  
true Lord of triumph, ever art Thou holy,  
King of kings, ever Thy glory liveth,  
 on earth among men to all eternity,  
 honoured far and wide. Thou art God of hosts,  
 for Thou hast filled the earth and heavens,  
Refuge of warriors, with Thy glory  
Protector of every creature).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leyerle, "Interlace Structure," 5. See also artistic interlace designs of Figures 1-9, p. v ff.

<sup>2</sup>U.T.Q., 33 (1964), 236.

<sup>3</sup>Underlining has been added to mark the position of each variant. Also, in order to stay closer to the original pattern of phrasing, a literal translation was preferred.

Here in the space of 8 lines are found six variations on Christ where each epithet reveals a different aspect of the figurative picture of God. The poet's praise of Christ rises to its highest emotional climax. It is widely represented throughout the twelve lyrics and evokes all the conceivable attributes that concern man's relation with God. At the same time these variations on Christ contribute directly to the structural theme of praise, which is one of the largest thematic threads in this poetic tapestry. It must, however, be remembered that the technique of variation can become very monotonous in the hands of a poor poet, wherefore Cook observes that "Wisdom and understanding are necessary for him who would charm with words."<sup>1</sup> The Advent poet did indeed charm with words. Inherent in his recurring patterns is a conscious sense of balance which, through a contrasting imagery of tragedy and consolation, "allows the poem's form to reflect its meaning."<sup>2</sup> It is as if the poet combined into his several series of variation, moments of great lyrical intensity.

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<sup>1</sup>Cook, The Christ, p. lxxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph W.V. Elliott, "Form and Image in the Old English Lyrics," EIC, XI (1961), 1.

The following example illustrates an interweaving of two strands of variation. Strictly speaking, stylistic interlace begins with at least two strands. They are woven together into what Leyerle has called "a stylistic braid."

þu eart þæt wealldor, þurh þe waldend frea  
 aene on þas eorþan ut siþade,  
 ondefne swa þec gemette, meahtum gehrodene,  
claene ond gecorene, Crist aelmihtig.  
 Swa þe aefter him engla þeoden  
eft unmaele aelces þinges  
 liopucaegan bileac, lifes brytta.<sup>1</sup> ll. 328-334.

(Thou art the wall-door; through thee the Lord Ruler  
 once into this earth out travelled  
 and even thus found thee in might adorned,  
pure and select, He Christ Almighty;  
thus the Prince of angels, the Lord of life,  
 closed thee, all unblemished,  
 after Him again, as with a wondrous key).

The subjects of the two strands are Christ and the Virgin. The strand dealing with Christ is made up of words dealing with His might and dominion. He is the Lord (328b), the Ruler (328b), Christ almighty (331b), the Prince of angels (332b) and the Lord of life (334b). The heavy stress which the poet places on Christ's divinity and power in this first strand establishes a shade of contrast with the second strand where the titles given to the Virgin denote a purified human being with allusion to man's sinfulness from which she was preserved. She is the wall-door (328a)

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<sup>1</sup>Single underlining indicates variation on Christ, double underlining on that of the Virgin.

through which salvation, in the person of Christ, came to sinners; she is the might adorned (331b), the pure and select (331a) and the unblemished (333a).<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes the antithetical aspect of the interlaced variants carries a heightened effect of contrast, as for example in lines 11-17, where the interlace shows three interwoven threads:

Nu is þam weorce þearf  
 þæt se craeftga cume ond se cyning sylfa,  
 ond þonne gebete, nu gebrosnad is,  
hus under hrofe. He þæt hra gescop,  
leomo laemena; nu sceal liffrea  
 þone wergan heap wrapum ahreddan,  
earme from eg-san, swa he oft dyde.

(Now is there in the work need  
 that the Craftsman come and the King Himself,  
 and should then rebuild that which now is in ruins  
the house beneath the roof. He that body created  
the limbs of clay; Now shall the Lord of life  
the hapless host from wrath deliver  
the miserable from terror, as he often did).

The passage contains a double antithesis. First, there is the image of a spiritual struggle between good and evil powers; Christ and Satan are contending for the possession of man. Thus the first strand shows, the work (11b), that which is now in ruins (13b), the house under the roof (14a), the body (14b), the limbs of clay (15a), the hapless

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<sup>1</sup>Additional two-strand variations are found in the following groups of lines: 219-223; 385-390; 395-402.

host (16a), the miserable (17a), which in the second strand need to be -- rebuilt (13a), delivered (16b) from wrath and terror by the third strand -- the Craftsman (12a) the King Himself (12b), the Lord of life (15b).<sup>1</sup> Second, there is an implicit contrast in reference to man. On the one hand, man is the house that is in ruins and the hall whose walls have a tendency to fall apart; on the other, he is a masterpiece of God's work, whose creation is admirable and glorious, as implied by the words "He þæt hra gescop" 14b (He that body created). The passage forms a distinct pattern of loss and consolation, giving it that elegiac tone so characteristic of all heroic poetry.

One of the most interesting examples of stylistic interlace is the four strand braid found in lines 261b-274:

Forþon we, nergend, þe  
 biddaþ geornlice breostgehygdum  
 þæt þu hraedlice helpe gefremme  
wergum wreccan, þæt se wites bona.  
 in helle grund hean gedreose;  
ond þin hondgeweorc, haeleþa scyppend,  
 mote arisan ond on ryht cuman  
 to þam upcundan aepelan rice,  
 þonan us aer þurh synlust se swearta gaest.  
 forteah ond fortylde, þæt wē, firēs wonē,  
 a butan ende sculon ermpu dreogan  
 butan þu usic þon ofostlicor, ece dryhten,  
 aet þam leodsceaþan, lifgende god,  
hēlm alwhta, hrēddan wille.

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<sup>1</sup>Additional three-strand variations are found in the following groups of lines: 104-117; 130-144; 147-161; 187-195; 282-290; 294-299; 351-357.

Wherefore we, Saviour, Thee  
 pray earnestly with our heart's deepest thoughts  
 that Thou speedily help grant  
to the weary in exile, that the destroyer of the mind  
 into the inferior abyss of hell fall,  
and that Thy handiwork, creator of men,  
 may come aright  
 unto the exalted splendid kingdom  
 whence us first, through love of sin, the black spirit  
 seduced and misled, that we, of glory wanting  
 without end must misery suffer  
 unless Thou us often, eternal Lord  
from the enemy, living God  
protector of every creature, will save.

The passage is composed of contrasting shades of imagery in  
 a kind of gradation from black to white, forming the verbal  
 braid of:<sup>1</sup>

strand 1	269b	the black spirit	
	264b	the mind's destroyer	
	273a	the enemy	(who seduced and misled)
strand 2	264a	the weary in exile	
	266a	the handiwork of God	(and)
strand 3	263b	was granted help	
	274b	and saved	(by)
strand 4	261b	the Saviour	
	266b	the Creator of men	
	272b	the eternal Lord	
	273b	the living God	
	274a	the protector of every creature	

A second glance at this verbal interlace, however,  
 reveals that there is lacking a certain regularity of form

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<sup>1</sup>Additional four-strand variations can be found in  
 the following groups of lines: 87-98; 187-195; 201-207;  
 214-218; 219-223; 256-261; 301-314. There is also a six  
 strand variation in lines 54-69 and a seven-strand variation  
 in lines 164-177.

in the position of the variants which one would be led to expect in a type of poetry of such conscientious decorum. In the two-strand braid for example there is an apparent indication that variations on Christ take the b-verse while those on the Virgin remain in the a-verse. This theory, however, is not completely consistent with other groups of variation, although there is a strong tendency for epithets on Christ to take the b-verse. This irregularity has been attributed to a certain lack of method which characterizes Anglo-Saxon art in general.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, one can truly say that it is with a creative genius that the Advent poet has constructed his verbal carpet page when with undisguised simplicity of diction he dramatically communicates his own emotions, which simultaneously lend to his work a rising and falling tone, the subject of our next chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>See John Godfrey, The Church in Anglo-Saxon England, (London, 1962), p. 266.

## CHAPTER III

### TONAL INTERLACE

Tone may be defined as the emotional attitude which the author has toward his subject or the mood which he creates resulting from the manner in which he combines such things as diction, repetition, imagery and symbolism.<sup>1</sup> The Advent Lyrics are written in a deeply moving tone creating a due sense of reverence in the relationship between God and man. The sentences have "an undeniable majesty and sweep, bearing the listener with the speaker...from a mood of despair to one of hope."<sup>2</sup> Jackson Campbell observes of the Advent poet that "his is most often a singing mode, and he often presents a state of exalted emotion."<sup>3</sup>

One of the dominant characteristics inherent in the organization of the material in each lyric and which governs its tone is the principle of contrast, the placing side by side of opposites such as joy and sorrow, light and darkness, the heroic and the spiritual. These opposites in turn appear and disappear in irregular fashion forming a poetic tapestry in keeping with the artistic achievement of the

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<sup>1</sup>See William Flint Thrall, and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, (New York: 1960), p. 487. Also, Judson Jerome, Poetry: Premeditated Art (New York, 1968), p. 540.

<sup>2</sup>Stanley B. Greenfield, "Syntactical Analysis and Old English Poetry," NM, 64 (1963), 375.

<sup>3</sup>"Structural Patterns," 247.

time. Through these contrasts the poet glorifies the Saviour in one breath and in the next laments the wretchedness of man. We rise as if intoxicated by Christ's triumphant glory, then fall weighed down by our despair and misery.<sup>1</sup>

Both in the tonal interlace of joy and sorrow and that of light and darkness the poet has us feel such an all pervading tone of balance that critics cannot decide which of these aspects dominates. A.S. Cook remarks: "It is disputed whether the tone of Advent is on the whole one of joy or sorrow, whether penitence or joyful anticipation give it its prevailing character."<sup>2</sup> The Advent poet has caught this alternating mood whereby man's joy in the promise of a Redeemer is constantly counterbalanced, defined, and interwoven with sorrow resulting from his fall. The tonal strand of sorrow actually defines the strand of joy so that one cannot exist without the other and as the two tones merge into one, a new tone is produced, a tone of hope. Illustrations of this tonal tapestry may be found in the following:

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<sup>1</sup>See Campbell "Structural Patterns," 234. He remarks that the requests in the lyrics are "spoken in the voice of a group of living human beings. This group includes the poet and people of his generation for whom he is speaking. It also of course, includes the reader of the poem."

<sup>2</sup>The Christ of Cynewulf, p. xxviii.

Naefre wommes tacn  
 in þam eardgearde eawed weorþeþ,  
 ac þe firina gehwylc feor abugeþ,  
 waergþo ond gewinnes. Bist to wuldre full  
 halgan hyhtes, ll. 54b-58a.

(Never the sign of sin shall in that dwelling be seen but every fault shall flee far from thee, all evil and strife. Thou art gloriously full of holy joy).

In his very praise of the Virgin the poet cannot forget man's servitude to sin. He posits her immunity to sin as the cause of her joy and implicitly alludes to the Saviour's healing power as a remedy to man's sorrow. The individual aspect of the two tonal strands takes on a different shade in lines 149b-154 and 158-163:

Nu þu sylfa cum,  
 heofones heahcýning. Bring us haelolif,  
 werigum witeþeowum, wope forcymenum,  
 bitrum brynetearum. Is seo bot gelong  
 eal aet þe anum ... oferþearfum.  
 Haeftas hygegeomre hider ...es;

(Come now Thyself High King of heaven. Bring salvation to the tormented slaves overcome with weeping, with bitter tears. The remedy is dependent completely on Thee alone. Visit us in extreme distress, captives sad in spirit).

The poet plays on the imagery of man's sorrow with accentuated decorum and immediately following weaves it into an imagery of joy:

wuldres aepeling, ne laet awyrgde ofer us  
 onwald agan. Laef us ecne gefean  
 wuldres þines, þæt þec weorþien,  
 weoroda wuldorcýning, þa þu geworhtes aer  
 hondum þinum. þu in heannissum  
 wunast wideferh mid waldend faeder. ll. 158-163.



In Lyric XI the heavy emphasis is on joy, a delirious joy in praise of the Holy Trinity:

þæt soþfaeste seraphines cynn,  
 uppe mid englum a bremende,  
 unapreotendum þrymmum singað  
 ful healice hludan stefne,  
 faegre feor ond neah. ll. 386-390a.

(the righteous, the race of seraphim above, with angels ever praising, sing in unwearying numbers full highly and with voice exalted, sweetly far and wide).

But even there the poet requires the strand of sorrow to bring out the beauty of his design:

þa mid ryhte sculon reordberende,  
 earme eorþware ealle maegene  
 hergan healice, nu us haelend god  
 waerfaest onwrah þæt we hine witan moton.  
 ll. 381-384.

(Whom all the wretched dwellers upon earth, endowed with speech, must rightly with all power praise highly, for now the trusty Saviour hath revealed God unto us, that we may know Him).

He calls on the "wretched earthdwellers" to fulfill their duty, that they give exalted praise to the Trinity, that they unite their voices with those of the race of Seraphims because "gebletsad leofa" 412b (the blessed One) came to "heanum to hroþre" 414a (the humble as a comfort).

When speaking of color in Old English poetry, W.E. Mead remarks: "We may describe Old English religious poetry as a series of studies in black and white or rather darkness and light...darkness applying to hell and devils and light, to heaven and angels and saints. The former was to the

Germanic mind something fearful and terrible, the latter was symbolic of joy and bliss."<sup>1</sup> Upon analysing the Advent Lyrics in terms of light and darkness, one finds that the words connoting light such as "sunnan, enlihted, earendel, beorhtast, leoma, torhtes, lixende, aepelan," reappear throughout the twelve lyrics twenty-one times, while words connoting darkness such as "þrosme, þeostrum, sinneahtes, deorc, þystro, swearta" reappear only six times. However, if we insert in both series the synonymous connotations to light and darkness by including words pertaining to glory, triumph, joy, blessedness, on the one hand and the words meaning miserable, abject, sad, captive, sin, affliction on the other, the number surprisingly balances off to seventy-six references to light and seventy-eight to darkness. The poet interweaves with apparent abruptness these images of light and darkness and creates a tonal interlace of color. In lines 104-114:

Eala earendel, engla beorhtast,  
ofer middangeard monnum sended,  
ond soþfaesta sunnan leoma,  
torht ofer tunglas, þu tida gehwane  
of sylfum þe symle inlihtes!  
Swa þu, god of gode gearo acenned,  
sunu soþan faeder, swegles in wuldre  
butan anginne aefre waere,  
swa þec nu for þearfum þin agen geweorc  
bideþ þurh byldo, þæt þu þa beorhtan us  
sunnan onsende, ond þe sylf cyme

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<sup>1</sup>"Color in Old English Poetry," PMLA, 14 (1899), 175.

(O brightness, the brightest of angels, sent to men on earth, and true light of the sun, glorious beyond the stars, Thou from Thyself illuminest forever all the tides of time. As Thou, God of God, of old begotten, Son of the true Father, wast ever without beginning in the glory of heaven, so now, in need Thine own work prayeth Thee in confidence, that Thou send us the bright sun, and that Thou Thyself come).

there is Christ Himself, the true sunbeam out of the east, bright beyond the stars flooding all ages with His divine light immediately interrupted by lines 115-118:

þaet þu inleohte þa þe longe aer,  
þrosme beþeahte ond in þeostrum her,  
saeton sinneahtes; synnum bifealdne  
deorc deapes sceadu dreogan sceoldan.

(that Thou enlighten those who long since were wrapt in darkness and here in gloom sat in perpetual night, shrouded in sin, and had to suffer the dark shadow of death).

where man is wrapped in darkness, shrouded in sin and enduring death. These poetic figures of light and darkness, have a moral implication for man in his relation to his creator, where "misery is to /the poet/ synonymous with the deprivation of light, and bliss with its intensity and abundance."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the tonal strands which have just been discussed, there can be perceived woven into the lyric, image-fragments reminiscent of secular heroic poetry. These fragments supply the strands for the heroic tone. By their

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<sup>1</sup>Cook, The Christ of Cynewulf, p. lxxxvii.

earthly aspect they contrast with the main tonal strands of spiritual joy and sorrow, as they evoke heroic emotions which parallel the religious emotions that make up the main tonal strands. The heroic tone then, consists of concepts alluding to the Germanic lord-thane relationship, treasure giving, ruin and battle motifs. The lord-thane relationship is referred to in:

Swylce þa hyhstan on heofonum eac,  
Cristes þegnas, cwepað ondsingað  
þæt þu sie hlaefdige halgum meahtum

ll. 282-284.

(Also the highest in the heavens, the thanes of Christ say and sing that thou art lady with holy might).

Heaven is represented as a Germanic court where the loyal thanes of Christ sing the praises of the Virgin, who represents the queen or the peace-maker. Later in lines 397-399, is given the throne image around which the thanes eagerly crowd and from which the Lord distributes His gifts:

ond ymb þeodenstol þringað georne  
hwylc hyra nehst maege ussum nergende  
flihte lacan friþgeardum in.

(and around the royal throne they crowd eagerly which one of them nearest may to our Saviour move about in flight within the home of peace).

And again in lines 409-410a, "wigendra hleo, wuldres þines, / helm alwhta," (Protector of warriors, with Thy glory, Protector of every creature), the poet refers to Christ as Protector of warriors, a formulaic title usually attributed

to a generous king. Greatness in heroic times consisted in being attached to a great king. In return the king became the protector of his warriors and admitted them around the gift throne as his special friends, who would give their lives and services in his defence. The concept describes beautifully the relationship which Christianity wished to establish between God and man.

In the following lines can be seen how the poet clothes, in heroic phrasing, heaven's spiritual gifts to man as he makes use of the treasure giving topos:

bryd beaga hroden, þe þa beorhtan lac  
 to heofonhame hlutre mode  
 siþþan sende. ll. 292-294a.

(ring-adorned bride, thou who dost send the bright gift back to the heavenly home with pure spirit).

The ideal of the lord-thane relationship included a constant interchanging of gifts in a spirit of pure love and loyalty. In the above lines the Virgin, the ring-adorned bride, sends back to heaven the gift she has received, that is, Christ the Saviour. In lines 372b-375a:

Cym nu, haeleþa cyning,  
 ne lata to lange. Us is lissa þearf,  
 þaet þu us ahredde ond us haelogiefu  
 soþfaest sylle,

(Come now, King of men, do not delay too long. We need mercy, that Thou deliver us, and give us the righteous gift of salvation).

the poet has man beg for the gift of salvation which he is sure to receive just as the thane was sure of the gifts of his lord. Finally, in one of the concluding lines of this lyric: "He him þaere lisse lean forgildeþ,/ se gehalgoda haelend sylfa," 434-435 (The holy Saviour Himself, will reward him of his love), the poet confirms all he has said, that the Saviour Himself will reward all those that love Him.

The ruin motif or exile topos is one of the largest threads in all secular poetry. It is also one of the dominant threads in the Advent Lyrics. However, while the secular exile was completely ruined when he lost his lord, the Christian exile is given hope even after he has lost his lord through sin. He waits patiently in his state of spiritual ruin:

Nu hie softe þaes  
bidon in bendum hwonne bearn godes  
cwome to cearigum. ll. 146b-148a.

(Now they patiently awaited in bonds until the  
Child of God should come to the afflicted).

Unlike the secular exile, the Christian exile knows that his affliction will come to an end, that he will be accepted back into the friendship of his Lord.

The battle motif or blood feud is allusively referred to in the following:

Hreowcearignum help, þæt þin hidercyme  
afrefre feasceafte, þeah we faehþo wiþ þec

þurh firena lust gefremed haebben.

ll. 367-369.

(Help the wretched so that thine advent here may comfort the miserable, though through our lust of sin we have engaged in a feud against Thee).

The allusion to battle or feud can also be reminiscent of the heroic blood feud which consisted in avenging the death of a kinsman by killing someone in the enemy family. The inability to fulfill this requirement was a life-long shame for the Germanic hero. The concept is here carried over to Christian thinking, for Christ is asked to avenge the spiritual death of humanity which He has adopted as His kinsmen through His Incarnation. Through sin humanity has engaged in a feud against God and has killed in itself the image and likeness of its Creator. And only if Christ avenges this death, will humanity be restored again to its former place of honor. Here, the Advent poet skilfully makes use of heroic emotions and parallels them with the spiritual ones in order to express an abstract reality in concrete terms that could be understood by the Germanic warrior.

In this chapter we have seen how the poet, through the contrasting imagery of joy and sorrow, light and darkness, the heroic and spiritual, has joined meaning to form as he revealed the diversity of man's ills on the one hand and Christ's will and power to save him on the other. He has interwoven these opposing strands with creative competence and inspired them with a new poetic life in accord with his design and style.

## CHAPTER IV

### TIME INTERLACE

Another characteristic of interlace structure is its allowance "for the intersection of narrative events without regard for their distance in chronological time."<sup>1</sup> The poet on entering into the realm of the spiritual enters at the same time into the realm of the timeless, which permits him to weave the images of time into the desired interlace pattern. The Advent Lyrics are an account of man's spiritual history from the time of his creation to that of his future admission to the heavenly kingdom, which is outside of time.

It is most significant and interesting to note how the poet constructs his pattern of time interlace by means of flashbacks and anticipations. Thus in Lyric I, the poet's reflection on the need of a Saviour, who would restore sinful man to his former honor (lines 14b-15), is interrupted by a flashback to man's creation, "He þæt hra gescop, / leomo laemena; (He that body created, the limbs of clay), an event that happened 4000 years before according to biblical testimony. In Lyric II lines 25-30a, the poet describes again man's need for a Saviour as he sits sorrowfully yearning for his protector after the fall. This

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<sup>1</sup>Leyerle, "Interlace Structure," 8.

narrative is suddenly crossed by an allusion to his final admission to glory: "þe he to wuldre forlet," 30b (whom He to glory hath admitted). Strangely enough the poet puts this phrase in the past tense even though it will take place only after the general judgment. Then immediately in the following line occurs a second flashback to the earthly paradise, which witnessed man's fall and his consequent exile: "þa we heanlice hweorfan sceoldan / to þis enge lond, eþle bescyrede" 31-32 (when we miserably to depart were obliged unto this narrow land, of home deprived).

Again in Lyric IX lines 294a-298, from the image of the ring-adorned bride who offered back to heaven the glorious gift of the Saviour, the poet turns abruptly to the time of the Annunciation when she conceived Him:

Forþon heht sigores fruma  
 his heahbodan hider gefleogan  
 of his maegenþrymme ond þe meahta sped  
 snude cyþan, þæt þu sunu dryhtnes  
 þurh claene gebyrd cennan sceolde

(Wherefore the Lord of victory bade his high messenger hither fly, from his great glory, and make known to thee that thou in pure conception shouldst bear the Son of the Supreme).

In the same Lyric, lines 301-310 go still farther back to where the ancient prophet spoke of the Virgin who would be that door-way through which Christ would pass in order to come to the sinners:

Eac we þæt gefrugnon, þæt gefyrn bi þe  
 soþfaest saegde sum wopþora  
 in ealdagum Esaias,  
 þæt he waere gelaeded þæt he lifes gesteald  
 in þam ecan ham eal sceawode.  
 Wlat þa swa sisfaest witga geond þeodland  
 oþþæt he gestarode þær gestapelad waes  
 aepelic ingong. Eal waes gebunden  
 deoran since duru ormaete,  
 wundurclommum bewripen.

(Also we have heard what of old concerning thee,  
 Isaiah, a certain true prophet has said in times  
 past. That he was led where was the dwelling place  
 of life in the eternal home. The wise prophet  
 looked and beheld beyond the inhabited region until  
 he saw where was established a noble entrance.  
 All was bound with precious gold, the immense door  
 with wondrous bands encompassed).

It seems as though the Advent poet purposely makes an abundant use of time images so that by distorting their order or merging two categories of time into one, he can show that time does not exist in the spiritual kingdom. Words referring to timelessness such as, "worolde, sipþan, symle, a to worulde forþ, butan anginne, eces, to widan feore, in aelce tid," are repeated thirty eight times.<sup>1</sup> Words evoking the past such as, "aer, in aerdagum, gearo, on frymþe, gefyrn, geardagum, ealddagum," appear twenty-three times. Words indicating the future such as, "toward in tide, eft, siþe, forþ seþeah, þon tida gegong," are used ten times. And the word "nu" representing the present is repeated twenty-five times.

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix III, pp. 74-75.

Very often two categories of time so weave into one another that one cannot distinguish which is meant. In the case of "siþþan forþ" 375b (forever henceforward), the time image could belong to the timeless or the future. Again in lines 122b the poet says, "nu eft gewearþ flaesc" (now later became flesh), in which the present "nu" and the future "eft" are all one to him. He weaves together these different categories of time in a complete neglect for order when without a sign of transition he abruptly returns to a dropped thought and fits it into a new order of time.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis of the Advent Lyrics from the aspects of thematic, stylistic, tonal, and time interlace, has revealed their beauty and technical excellence. The application of the concept of interlace to the themes of the Advent Lyrics, especially those of praise, longing for a Saviour, man's misery and the Virgin theme has shown how they merge with one another in a manner that makes each theme a necessary unifying element within the otherwise independent nature of each lyric in the group. Interlace has also affected the style of the lyrics as seen in a study of the poet's use of variation. Variational phrases or verse repeats are so interwoven as to form a distinct pattern in the poetic text. Stylistic braids resulting from the interweaving of from two to as many as seven variations have transformed the work into a verbal carpet page. From the point of view of tone, the poet has succeeded in creating a tonal carpet page by interweaving the opposing tonal strands of joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heroic and spiritual. Finally by interweaving the threads of past, present, future, and the timeless, he has made a time braid, where he reveals his complete detachment from chronological order. The poet's talent has carried him beyond the rules set by time; he has excelled them by his poetic genius.

Attributes of ChristEternal Godhead and Majesty:

- 1b cyninge -- King  
8b wuldres ealdor -- Lord of glory  
18a reccend -- Ruler  
18b riht cyning -- righteous King  
46b waldend -- Ruler  
61b heofones cyning -- King of heaven  
83b wuldres þrym -- Glory of glory  
94a maere meotudes suna -- Son of the glorious God  
104a earendel -- rising brightness  
104b engla beorhtast -- brightest of angels  
106 sopfaesta sunnan leoma--true splendour of the sun  
109a god of gode -- God of God  
110a sunu soþan faeder -- Son of the true Father  
113b beorhtan sunnan -- the bright sun  
120a word godes -- Word of God  
126a meotudes bearn -- Son of God  
134b rodera weard -- Guardian of heaven  
136a cyninga cyning -- King of kings  
140a eces alwaldan -- eternal Ruler  
143a sunu meotudes -- Son of the Creator  
150a heofones heahcyning -- high King of heaven  
158a wuldres aepeling -- Prince of glory  
197b sunu meotudes -- Son of the Creator  
204b lifes þrym -- glory of life  
205a beorhtne sunu -- the bright sun  
210a maerum meotudes -- glorious Son of God  
215a cyninga cyning -- King of kings  
222b rodera weard -- Ruler of heaven  
223b freobearne -- noble Son  
239a snyttro -- Wisdom  
257b dryhten -- Lord  
258b waldend -- Ruler  
272b ece dryten -- eternal Lord  
273b lifgende god -- living God  
281 selestan swegles bryttan -- greatest Lord of heaven  
297b sunu dryhtness -- Son of the Lord  
328b waldend frea -- Ruler Lord  
332b engla þeoden -- Prince of angels  
348 halga heofona dryhten -- holy Lord of heaven  
366b ece dryhten -- eternal Lord  
391a cyninge -- King  
394a Waldend -- Ruler

Eternal Godhead and Majesty continued:

- 395b frean aelmihtges -- Lord almighty  
 396b ecan dryhtnes -- eternal Lord  
 402a aepelne ordfruman -- noble creative source  
 403b heahengla brego -- Lord of archangels  
 405a dryhtna dryten -- Lord of lords  
 423b rodera prym -- glory of the skies  
 424a heofona heahfrea -- high Lord of heaven  
 435 gehalgoda haelend sylfa -- the holy Lord Himself

Triumphant Dealings with Humanity as Saviour:

- 2a weallstan -- corner-stone  
 4b heafod healle maerre -- Head of the temple  
 12a craeftga -- Craftsman  
 15b liffrea -- Lord of life  
 19a se þe locan healdeþ -- He who holds the keys  
 19b se þe lif ontyneþ -- He who life openeth  
 23b þone þe mon gescop -- He who created man  
 27a liffrea -- Lord of life  
 44b lifes fruman -- Creator of life  
 126b monnes sunu -- Son of men  
 128a sigedryhtne -- triumphant lord  
 130a gaesta god -- God of souls  
 132a Emmanuhel -- Emmanuel  
 140b ae bringend -- bringer of law  
 141a lara laedend -- giver of wisdom  
 147b bearn godes -- Child of God  
 157b Crist nergende -- Christ Saviour  
 161a weoroda wuldorcyning -- glorious King of men  
 198a gaesta geocend -- Saviour of souls  
 205b bearn eacen godes -- the Great Child of God  
 215b Crist aelmihtig -- Christ almighty  
 227a lifes ordfruma -- Creator of life  
 229b weoroda ealdor -- King of men  
 243b sigores weard -- Lord of triumph  
 244a meotod moncynnes -- Creator of mankind  
 250b haelende Crist -- Saviour Christ  
 261b nergend -- Saviour  
 266b haeleþa scyppend -- Creator of men  
 274a helm alwihta -- Protector of every creature  
 294b sigores fruma -- Lord of victory  
 324b nergend god -- Saviour God  
 331b Crist aelmihtig -- Christ almighty  
 334b lifes brytta -- Lord of life

Triumphant Dealings with Humanity as Saviour continued:

347b	<u>weoroda god</u> -- Lord of men
358b	<u>haelend Crist</u> -- Saviour Christ
361b	nergende god -- Saviour God
372b	haeleþa cyning -- King of men
383b	haelend god -- Saviour God
391b	Crist -- Christ
398b	ussum nergende -- our Saviour
400a	leoflicne -- the Dear One
404a	sigores frea -- Lord of victory
407b	weoroda god -- God of men
409a	wigendra hleo -- Protector of warriors
410a	helm alwihta -- Protector of every creature
412b	gebletsad leofa -- Blessed One
417b	milde scyppend -- merciful Creator
420b	sigores agend -- Ruler of victory
426b	folca nergend -- Saviour of mankind
428b	dryhten weoroda -- Lord of men

In the above table are shown Christ's attributes as grouped into their two main categories. The underlining refers to titles included among the twelve exact repetitions.

Attributes of the VirginPurity of the Virgin:

- 36a maegþ manes leas -- a maid free from sin  
 54b-55 Naefre wommes tacn in þam eardgearde eawed  
 weorþeþ -- Never of sin the sign, in that  
 dwelling seen shall be
- 56 ac þe firina gehwylc feor abugeþ -- but from  
 thee every sin far shall flee
- 72 faemne freolicast ofer ealne foldan sceat  
 Maiden the fairest over all the earth's surface
- 175b Eala faemne geong -- O Virgin young  
 176a maegþ Maria -- maiden Mary  
 187b faemnan claene -- a maiden pure  
 188a womma lease -- free from sin  
 195b faemne -- maiden  
 211a faemne forþ seþeah -- a Virgin henceforth  
 276a seo claeneste cwen -- the purest queen  
 289a maegþhad -- maidenhood  
 290a butan synnum -- without sin  
 300a efne unwemme -- forever unspotted  
 331a claene ond gecorene -- pure and select

Her Power and glory:

- 50a sibbe gesihþ -- vision of peace  
 50b sancta Hierusalem -- holy Jerusalem  
 51a cynestola cyst -- best of thrones  
 51b Cristes burglond -- city of Christ  
 52a engla eþelstol -- home of angels  
 57b-58a wuldre full halgan hyhtes -- gloriously full  
 of holy joy
- 71a wifa wynn -- joy of women  
 82b-83a treow in þe weorþlicu wunade -- faith in thee  
 exalted dwelt
- 88a symle sigores full -- ever full of triumph  
 98b-99a gewuldrad is se heanra had--glory of the humble  
 sex
- 275a þu maera -- glorious lady  
 284 hlaefdige halgum meahtum -- lady with holy might  
 330b meahtum gehrodene -- in might adorned

Her Role in the Plan of the Redemption:

- 61b-63a cyning siþe geseceþ, ond sylf cymeþ, nimeþ  
eard in þe -- The King seeketh thee and cometh  
Himself, taketh dwelling in thee.
- 64 -65a witgan wisfaeste wordum saegdon cyþdon Cristes  
gebyrd -- The wise prophets made known the  
birth of Christ for thy comfort.
- 122-123 efenece mid god ond nu eft gewearþ flaesc  
firena leas þæt seo faemne gebaer -- the coe-  
ternal with God became flesh free of sin that  
the maiden bore.
- 206b Nu ic his tempel eam gefremed -- Now I his  
temple have become.
- 297a-298 þæt þu sunu dryhtnes þurh claene gebyrd cennan  
sceolde -- that thou the Son of the Lord in  
pure conception shouldst bear.
- 307b-308a gestapelad waes aepelic ingong, -- was  
established a noble door-way.
- 320b-321 faeder aelmihtig, on þurh þa faestan locu  
foldan neosan -- the almighty Father Himself  
will through these firm locks visit the earth.
- 328-329 þu eart þæt wealldor, þurh þe waldend frea  
aene on þas eorpanut siþade, -- thou art that  
wall-door, through thee the Lord Ruler once  
on this earth travelled.
- 417b-418 milde scyppend onfeng aet faemnan flaesc  
unwenne, -- the merciful Creator from a virgin  
received flesh immaculate.

Time ImageryWords referring to Timelessness:

- 8a worolde -- forever  
 39b sippan -- ever after  
 53b symle eawed weorþeþ -- eternally  
 88a symle -- forever  
 101b a to worulde forþ -- forever and ever  
 103b symle -- forever  
 107b tida gehwane -- of all time  
 108b symle -- forever  
 111a butan anginne -- without beginning  
 128b symle -- forever  
 140a eces -- eternal  
 159b ecne -- eternally  
 163a wideferh -- forever  
 194b sippan -- ever after  
 209b ecne -- eternal  
 230b a to widan -- forever  
 271a butan ende -- without end  
 272b ece -- eternal  
 277b to widan feore -- from time eternal  
 305a ecan -- eternal  
 313a on ecnesse -- eternally  
 322b ece -- forever  
 323a symle singales -- always forever  
 339b sippan -- ever after  
 346b sippan -- ever after  
 355b ecan -- eternal  
 375b sippan forþ -- forever henceforward  
 376b symle -- forever  
 393a symle singales -- always forever  
 396b ecan -- eternal  
 404b symle -- forever  
 406b in aelce tid -- to all eternity  
 411a ece -- eternal  
 417a butan ende ece -- without end eternal  
 432a symle -- forever  
 438b sippan -- ever after  
 439a ealne widan feorh -- forever and ever  
 439b butan ende -- without end

Words referring to the Past:

39b aer -- before  
 45a aer -- before  
 63b aer gefyrn -- of old  
 79a in aerdagum -- in days past  
 109b gearo -- of old  
 115b longe aer -- long before  
 121a on frymþe -- in the beginning  
 133a aerest -- first  
 135b gefyrn -- of old  
 161b aer -- before  
 216a aer -- before  
 223a aet frymþe -- in the beginning  
 225b aet fruman aerest -- in the very beginning  
 238a aerþon -- formerly  
 251b geardagum -- in days of old  
 252a ful longe aer -- full long ago  
 258b aer -- before  
 269a aer -- before  
 301b gefyrn -- of old  
 303a in ealddagum -- in times past  
 349b gefyrn -- of old  
 355a aerest -- first  
 436b aer -- before

Words referring to the Future:

62a siþe geseceþ -- in time will seek  
 82a toward in tide -- in future time  
 86b eft -- afterwards  
 122b eft -- afterwards  
 133b eft -- afterwards  
 146a siþe -- in time  
 211a forþ sepeah -- henceforth  
 232b cende weorþen -- brought forth shall be  
 235b þon tida begong -- according to the passage  
 299b forþ -- henceforth of time

Words referring to the Present are all represented by the word "nu" (now), and are found in verses: 9a, 11b, 13b, 15b, 66b, 83b, 100a, 112a, 119a, 134b, 149b, 166a, 188b, 206b, 208b, 219a, 230a, 243b, 247b, 122b, 341a, 342a, 370a, 372b, 383b, in a total of twenty-five repetitions.

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In the present thesis the twelve Advent Lyrics of the Exeter Book are examined and analysed from the point of view of Interlace Structure, revealing their beauty and technical excellence. Their interlace structure is considered under the four aspects of thematic, stylistic, tonal, and time interlace. Thematic interlace is subdivided and discussed as an interweaving of the thematic threads of praise, longing for a Saviour, man's misery and the Virgin theme. The themes of praise and longing are combined in the same unit for they seem most often to form a single thread but with two facets. For example the poet praises Christ, first in His eternal Godhead and majesty, then in His merciful dealings with man as Saviour. In the first case man is overwhelmed by the majesty of Christ as God; in the second, Christ is made attainable to man as Saviour, a fact which results in a form of praise that simultaneously expresses man's expectant longing for His advent.

The theme of man's misery stands out as the chief element of contrast with the other themes. It runs through the lyrics under the form of metaphors and allusions describing man's pitiful spiritual state in concrete picturesque imagery. This theme is shown to be closely interwoven with the themes of praise and longing.

The Virgin theme is developed under the three

aspects of her purity, her power and her role in the plan of the Redemption. The poet delights in extolling her praise under these three aspects and presents her as a necessary instrument in the reconciliation between God and man. She is the meeting place of the divine and the human, where man regains his friendship with God, and in whom the guilt of Eve is obliterated.

In stylistic interlace the variant threads or verse repeats are shown to be so interwoven as to form a distinct pattern in the poetic text, which is pure decoration for its own sake. The interweaving of two or more variants is referred to as a stylistic braid. Stylistic braids are shown to appear in different passages of the lyrics in combinations of from two to four variant strands braided together.

Tonal interlace appears in the placing side by side of opposites such as joy and sorrow, light and darkness, the heroic and the spiritual. These opposing strands create a rising and falling effect as each strand appears and disappears like in a woven tapestry.

Time interlace stresses the poet's complete detachment from following any chronological order. His numerous shifts from one period of time to another, and from time into the realm of timelessness, interweave to form a final pattern of poetic tapestry.