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'Geomorlic' or 'Eorlic?' Uncovering Early English Emotional Communities in "The Wanderer," "Deor," and "The Wife's Lament"

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Geomorlic or *Eorlic?* Uncovering Early English Emotional Communities in *The Wanderer, Deor,* and *The Wife's Lament*

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Table of Contents

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Introduction

The Old English[1] poems *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, and *The Wife's Lament* all feature narrators who are involuntarily cast out from a former place of emotional stability and earthly prosperity and find themselves confronted with intense loneliness. In *The Wanderer*, the narrator, literally the *anhaga* (solitary being), finds himself *eðle bidæled* (separated from [his] homeland) and *freomægum feor* (far from [his] kinsmen). In *Deor*, the eponymous narrator and court poet for the Heodeningas laments how he lost his *londryht* (land-right) and seat of privilege after another court poet stole his position. In *The Wife's Lament*, a disaffected wife, frustrated and angered by her husband's abandonment of her, laments her solitary existence. In each instance, the narrators attempt to cope with their emotionally unstable situations by engaging with common strictures of the OE heroic tradition that above all else value emotional restraint in the face of adversity.[2] However, beyond a simple engagement with these values, the narrators locate these values in a sometimes abstracted, sometimes concrete, elusive figure. In *The Wanderer*, after expressing intense disdain for his life as a social exile, the Wanderer remarks how an *eorl*[3] (warrior/nobleman) should lock up his thoughts and not complain

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[1] Hereafter "OE."

[2] For overviews of the tendencies of heroic poetry and the heroic tradition in Old English poetry, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Heroic Values and Christian Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* ed. Malcolm Godden & Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 107-125 and Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

[3]The Dictionary of Old English (DOE) defines *eorl* in two primary general senses. Sense 1, representing the selection of uses outside of poetry, translates it as "nobleman," and sense 1b translates it as "in poetry: warrior man." In a corpus search done thanks to the DOE Web Corpus, the word *eorl* in any of its declined forms appears 234 times in poetry, and 759 times in prose. Based on this information, it seems to be a word more prevalent in prose, but its prose connotation is so vastly different from its verse connotation that it would better be considered as a poetically distinctive word. In prose, as the DOE points out, it denotes to a legal/social class akin to a nobleman, and means "as distinguished from a *ceorl*," which is a general appellation for a man, especially of the peasant class. Almost every prose use highlights a class distinction, exemplified in an excerpt from the *Laws of Alfred* (LawAf): *Swa we eac settað be eallum hadum, ge ceorle ge eorle.* "so we likewise declare for all classes, both peasant and nobleman." *LawAf1*, B14.4.4. From

about his situation: “Ic to soþe wat / þaet biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw, / þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille” (I know it is a noble custom in an *eorl*, that one should bind fast his spirit-chest, hold his treasure-chamber, however he is thinking).[4] Conflicting in nature, the Wanderer’s shift from lament to exhortation demonstrates an engagement with, rather than endorsement of, heroic emotional expectations. He invests those expectations in the figure of the *eorl,* not himself, representing how the invocation of such a figure works as a poetic trope to signal a narrator’s engagement with heroic emotional values. This figure can take many shapes, from an *eorl,* to a *hlaford* (lord), to a *geong mon* (young man); what is important is the distinct connection between the invocation of such an abstracted figure and heroic emotional expectations. For ease of reference, I name this abstracted figure the “heroic emotional avatar”; Its invocation in each of the poems takes a different shape.

In each poem, narrators emotionally engage this avatar, either to distance themselves from it or relate to it. The heroic emotional avatar comes to be a sort of emissary of the emotional values of the heroic tradition. It stands in for what Barbara Rosenwein refers to as an “emotional community,” a term for “groups. . . that have their

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Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project 2009). In poetry, this definition is mostly untenable as it is almost never relates to a legal class. Rather, as I will show in this paper, it is used in association with various moral values and emotional values associated with the “heroic tradition.” Because of this association I have left and will leave *eorl* untranslated in order to preserve what I believe to be its semantic uniqueness as a poetic figure, and more importantly, poetic trope. Unless otherwise specified all translations are my own from *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501 Vol 1*. Ed. Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994). Quotations from Muir’s edition of the Exeter Book from MS 3501, are cited by title and line number, unless otherwise stated. Definitions from the DOE: *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online,* ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018), “eorl”; “ceorl.”

[4]*The Wanderer,* 11b-14b. Old English uses many kennings to refer to the mind or the heart. In this case “spirit-chest” and “treasure-chamber” refer to the chest cavity or the heart, the source of emotion as understood in Old English verse and prose. For more on this topic, see Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

own particular values, modes of feeling, and ways to express those feelings."[5] In these poems, the narrator's attitude towards the avatar reveals that narrator's shifting relationship to the heroic emotional community the avatar represents; the narrators of the three poems relate very differently to the emotional community invoked by the figure of the avatar. In *The Wanderer*, the narrator invokes the *eorl* actively to separate himself from the heroic tradition he represents, but does so in a way that nonetheless preserves his emotional connection to it. In *Deor*, the narrator instead invokes the *eorl* to associate himself with the imagined heroic community as he copes with being ousted from his former community among the Heodeningas. In *The Wife's Lament,* the narrator invokes the avatar through the *geong mon* (young man) and *hlaford* (lord) in order to appropriate emotionally, but not subscribe to, the heroic community to lambast her husband. Thus, these three OE poems demonstrate how the invocation of the heroic emotional avatar functions as a poetic trope to signal narrators' differing affinities with the imagined emotional communities of the OE poetic tradition. By invoking the heroic avatar, narrators create spaces of emotional agency, wherein they can freely associate with means of emotional expression that suit their personal needs.

These three poems are a subset of a traditional category of the OE "elegy," a category that typically includes the following poems: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem, Deor, Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife's Lament, Resignation, The Husband's Message,* and *The Ruin*. "Elegy" as a term denotes a genre connecting these poems that recognizes the various thematic and narrative affinities tied to them: images of the *meaduhealle* (mead-hall) and joyous hall feasting, exiles lamenting lost lords and

[5] Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 4.

husbands, lonely outcasts surrounded by frost-storms and pounding wind and rain, and an overwhelming sense of absence from a previous, imagined heroic world. While various definitions for the genre have been proposed, most find the central theme behind the poems to be a sense of loss that finds resolution in a sense of, if not consolation, at least acceptance. For example, Stanley Greenfield argued for the following definition of elegy: "[poems that] call attention in varying degrees to the transitory nature of the pleasures of the world. . . [and are] relatively short reflective or dramatic poem[s] embodying a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation and expressing an attitude towards that experience."[6] Out of this category, I have chosen to engage in particular *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, and *The Wife's Lament.* In all three poems, the narrators invoke the heroic avatar to work out their own relationship to their associated heroic community. Their emotional disposition might not correspond to the standards associated with the heroic community, but they draw upon its imagery and language to relate their emotional appeal to an audience familiar with its tropes and expectations. To be clear, there is no historical "heroic emotional community," rather, this community is a set of constructed images and tropes in poetry. By choosing these three poems, I aim not to produce an extensive re-analysis of the elegiac genre, but an overview of a concrete poetic trope that gives more structure to our understanding of elegy. By shedding light on the heroic avatar as a poetic trope that corresponds to emotional norms in OE poetry, I hope to move beyond the understanding of elegy as a genre defined by vague thematic affinities surrounding loneliness and consolation to a genre governed by the invocation of specific, poetically charged and emotionally

[6] Greenfield and Calder, *A New Critical History*, 281.

evocative words. Ultimately, this definition will help us better understand connections between the individual elegies and open space for understanding traditionally non-elegiac poems as elegies.

Scholarship on the elegies has traditionally attempted to group the poems together based on thematic affinity between the poems. Prior to the 1960s, scholarship on the elegies often oscillated between reading them as cultural artifacts, signifiers of a pre-Christian, heroic society or of a Latin-influenced Christian society.[7] Inherent to both these classifications is the need to group these poems under a meta-narrative, a need that would begin to be challenged in the mid-1960s when the elegies began to viewed individually as "works of art." In essence, there was a return to the aesthetic rather than the narrative demands of the poems.[8] As Anne Klinck points out, the sub-groupings of elegies, as well as the broader grouping of "elegy" comes primarily from various thematic affinities, as well as their physical proximity in the Exeter Book. For example, *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* are separated by just two other poems, *The Gifts of Men* and *Precepts,* and both deal with exiles who lament the difficulties of a lonely existence and who find consolation in God's providence. For this reason, they have often been studied together and grouped together as Christian consolation poems as well as examples of "wisdom literature." Yet narrative and thematic affinities, which tend to stem from summaries, begin to fall apart upon closer inspection. *The Wanderer*, as we will see later in this project, often violates all of the wisdom statements that scholars use to classify the poem as wisdom literature. He also still maintains a powerful affective

[7] *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research* ed. Martin Green (Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 15; *The Old English Elegies* ed. Green, 16.
[8] *The Old English Elegies* ed. Green, 15.

connection to his former life despite the assumption that he has left it all behind for the greater glory of God. Studying the narrative of these poems is not fruitless, however; my own reading grapples with the narrative content of the poems as well. Rather, grouping the poems together based on narrative similarities alone is too vague and overlooks the emotional complexity of these poems.

In attempting to move towards a more complex yet defined connection between the three "elegiac" poems I study, I engage scholars including Robert Bjork and Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, who have worked to dismantle hegemonic attitudes towards poems like *The Wanderer* and *The Wife's Lament*, respectively. Bjork's analysis challenged the steadfast assumption in scholarship that *The Wanderer* participated in heroic social norms.[9] Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe helped to expand the emotional possibilities of *The Wife's Lament*, particularly regarding how emotional variance in the poem creates spaces for feeling that can equally invoke and critique socio-poetic norms.[10] Tangentially, Michael Matto and his work on technologies of subjectivity in *The Seafarer* demonstrates how the narrator practices subjective agency and decision making.[11] My work principally builds on the writing of these scholars, whose observations helped move away from assumptions about thematic classifications. I hope to show how complex emotional and subjective expression is not limited to single poems but connected throughout multiple poems by the invocation of the heroic avatar. The avatar serves as a

[9] Robert E Bjork, ""Sundor Oet Rune": The Voluntary Exile of the Wanderer," *Neophilologus* 73, no. 1 (1989):119-129.
[10] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "The Wife's Lament and the Poetics of Affect" *Old English Tradition: Essays in Honor of J.R. Hall* ed. Lindy Brandy (Tempe: ACMRS, 2021), 37-51.
[11] Michael Matto, "True Confessions: The Seafarer and Technologies of the Sylf," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 103 no. 2, (2004): 156-79.

more concrete and helpful way of understanding the category of elegy, while also preserving the emotional depth of each poem.

Anne Klinck's *The Old English Elegies* has been particularly influential on my thinking.[12] Amidst the landscape of post 1960s scholarship emphasizing the individuality of the elegies, Klinck published her edition and analysis of the elegies, arguing for their continued grouping as poems that feature "a discourse arising from a powerful sense of absence, of separation from what is desired, expressed through characteristic words and themes, and shaping itself by echo and leitmotiv into a poem that moves from disquiet to some kind of acceptance."[13] Klinck builds upon literary critic Tzvetan Todorov's observation that genre is not necessarily a hard and fast distinction, arguing for the grouping of these poems based on their thematic affinities, even if the affinities are not shared by each poem in the generic category.[14] In my research, I aim to give concrete shape to Klinck's observation that these poems are connected in some critical way, although the poems do not share the same thematic characteristics. The poetic trope of the heroic avatar allows for such a connection, since it connects the poems via heroic language, but allows for varying attitudes towards that language. This more concrete means of understanding the elegiac genre helps move beyond the vague thematic frameworks that often do not even apply, such as the claim that the elegies are "consolatory." For example, in *The Wife's Lament,* the wife mournfully ends the poem with the observation that woe befalls the person who must wait longing for their lover, showing no sign of emotional acceptance. Naturally, some elegies like *The Seafarer* show

[12] Anne Klinck, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
[13] Klinck, *The Old English Elegies*, 246.
[14] Klinck, *The Old English Elegies*, 223-224.

much more emotional closure in their more open praise of the Christian ascetic life, but the vague thematic pattern of disquiet to acceptance unravels once we pull at the seams. The principal methodological aim of this project is to analyze the emotional content and means of emotional expression of *The Wanderer*, *Deor*, and *The Wife's Lament* in order to give concrete shape to their connection as "elegies." I show how narrators use the heroic avatar to engage with the conventions of various emotional communities for their own emotional needs.

My foray into the OE emotional landscape builds on the work of scholars within and around the burgeoning field of emotion studies, a field which has been a font of interdisciplinary study within the last two decades and focuses on the study of emotions, ranging from the fields of psychology to philosophy to literary studies.[15] Most recently, the 2015 volume *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature, and Culture,* has brought this interdisciplinary body of research in contact with Old English studies. Work on emotions in OE literature has taken off as a result. For example, Antonia Harbus shows from a cognitive psychological approach how OE texts like *The Wife's Lament* create complex emotional links between poet and audience and Kristin Mills tackles conflicting and nuanced landscapes of emotion in *Beowulf.*[16] Such work shifted the field away from studying emotions tangentially as emblems of heroic norms to emotions in and of themselves. Nevertheless, as Alice Jorgensen points out, "much remains to be done."[17] I hope this project offers both a partial answer to that

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[15]For a discussion of the interdisciplinary background of emotional research in OE literature, see Alice Jorgensen, "Introduction," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Literature* ed. Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Johnathan Wilcox (New York: Ashgate, 2016), 3-4.
[16] See respectively Antonia Harbus, "Affective Poetics: The Cognitive Basis of Emotion in Old English Poetry," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions,* 19-35; Kristen Mills, "Emotion and Gesture in Hroðgar's Farewell to Beowulf," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions,* 163-176.
[17] Jorgensen, "Introduction," 14.

injunction as well as a mouthpiece for its advancement by furthering our understanding of the complex and vibrant emotional communities present in OE poetry.

Barbara Rosenwein's theorization of the "emotional community" in her work *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* provides the primary theoretical framework that I use to engage the emotional content of these poems.[18] Micro-historical rather than literary in approach, Rosenwein's work seeks to map out continuities and dissonances in emotional expression in Europe from 600-1700. While her observations on early English emotional expression principally deal with Alcuin's work, particularly *On the Virtues and Vices,* her theoretical framework remains invaluable. Important to Rosenwein's work (and mine) is the idea that emotional expression in any culture or time period is not monolithic, constant, or singular. "No society speaks with one voice" as Rosenwein argues. She argues that multiple emotional communities exist at any given time, each interacting with, borrowing from, and clashing with one another.[19] I apply this idea to give formulaic shape to the functional aspect of emotional expression in OE poetry. One of the most famous features of the elegies is that they feature, in contradiction, voices seeming to endorse opposing ideas. For example, as we will see later in *The Wanderer,* the narrator invokes typical heroic injunctions not to express emotional frustration, before immediately expressing such feelings openly. Rosenwein's framework of the emotional community gives me the theoretical language to describe how the Wanderer belongs to two emotional communities—the Christian and the heroic—interacting in a powerful lyric mode. This interaction opens up affective space for the narrator to move freely between the two. Tradition plays a major role in OE

[18] Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling.*
[19] Rosenwein, *Generation of Feeling,* 12.

poetry: it influences form, meter, and thematic content—yet as Rosenwein shows, tradition remains malleable, and communities, particularly emotional communities, can adapt tradition to their own needs; narrators of *The Wanderer, Deor,* and *The Wife's Lament* participate in this style of this adaptation.[20]

While Rosenwein's understanding of emotional communities comes primarily from historical observations, the historical (or at least as it was narratively understood) is intimately *literary* in imagination in early medieval England. The yearning for the image of the "Germanic lord, seated at the head of the mead-hall and calling for the scop to sing the history of his ancestors" forms a central motif of OE poetry.[21] Nevertheless, as Renée Trilling points out in *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia,* this seemingly historical image was an anachronistic and mythical invention.[22] The heroic ethos or heroic tradition that is so prevalent in OE poetry, including its extension as an emotional community, makes up a portion of what Trilling describes as "nostalgia."[23] It describes the socio-mythical narrative through which the early English understood their cultural identity. As Trilling points out, scholarship has often clung "to the image of the Anglo-Saxon warrior as an icon of English values," and yet this figure is largely literary.[24] The heroic tradition and its trappings—from iconic imagery, to emotional injunction to silence—is a "tradition that has been created by the poets and that is continually mourned by poetry." Thus, while it was not the historical reality of early medieval England, its power as a cultural-literary phenomenon bears examination.[25] The nostalgic heroic tradition is that which

[20] Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 9.
[21] Reneé Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia: Historical Representation in Old English Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3.
[22] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 3-4.
[23] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 4.
[24] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 6.
[25] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 6.

stresses “the reciprocal obligations of lord and thegn,” the images of the *meaduhealle* (mead-hall), and the strong, stoic warrior.[26] Particularly in the three poems I analyze, separation from these elements contributes to the emotional situation of the narrator. Furthermore, the narrator of *The Wanderer* helpfully summarizes the heroic emotional element of this poetry: “Ic to soþe wat / þaet biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw, / þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille” (I know it is a noble custom in an *eorl*, that one should bind fast his spirit-chest, hold his treasure chamber, however he is thinking).[27] Succinctly put, the OE hero (in this case the *eorl*), is heroic in part because he does not give in to his emotions. Narrators in the Exeter Book very commonly expresses this sort of wisdom. Someone, usually a man, must not speak their mind. In *The Seafarer*, the narrator states that “Stieran mon sceal strongum mode, ond þæt staþelum healdan, / ond gewis werum, wisum clæne” (A man must steer his strong mind, and keep it in balance, keep with wise men, be purely wise).[28] In *The Wife’s Lament,* the speaker exhorts: “A scyle geong mon wesan geomormod, / heard heortan geþoht, swylce habban sceal / bliþe gebæro, eac þon breostceare / sinsorgna gedreag” (A young man must be sad of soul, have hard thoughts in his heart, similarly he must he have a cheerful bearing, but also many breast-cares and endless sorrow).[29] In *Maxims I* we hear “Styran sceal mon strongum mode” (A man must steer his strong mind).[30] The OE corpus contains many such statements: a man, particularly a wise man, should not speak his mind and should control his emotions.

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[26] Greenfield and Calder, *A New Critical History,* 135.
[27] *The Wanderer,* 11b-14b.
[28] *The Seafarer,* 109a-110b.
[29] *The Wife’s Lament,* 42a-45a.
[30] *Maxims I,* 50a.

Emotional stoicism forms the backbone of the OE heroic emotional community, but its invocation must be treated ideologically. In *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic,* John M. Hill argues that heroic lordship in OE literature, and in particular the poem *The Battle of Maldon,* was a political-mythic construction that sought to cement and legitimize the Alfredian line of succession. Similarly, we can ideologically see heroic lordship as a harbinger of a particular type of emotional expression.[31] Rather than a statement of how early English men behaved emotionally, stoic exhortations are claims to how such men *should* behave emotionally, and its emissary is the heroic avatar. As a literary trope, the avatar's invocation opens up emotional possibilities and does not necessarily endorse its heroic associations.

This project also seeks to continue the important work begun by scholars like Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Antonia Harbus, and Frances McCormack that capitalizes on the ever-expanding field of affect theory as a critical framework for medieval studies.[32] Affect theory is intentionally amorphous and largely began with Eve Sedgewick and Brian Massumi's work in the mid-1990s, growing as a methodological discipline throughout the early 2000s seeking critically to categorize, understand, and relate how human beings are affected physically in the world and how they respond emotionally.[33] Summarizing affect theory remains difficult, as even Gregory Seigworth

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[31] John M. Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

[32] See respectively O'Brien O'Keeffe,. "The Poetics of Affect"; Harbus, "Cognitive Basis," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions,* 19-34; Frances McCormack, "Those Bloody Trees: The Affectivity of Christ," in *Anglo-Saxon Emotions,* 143-162.

[33] Mellissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth mark the publications of Sedgewick and Massumi's articles as a "watershed moment" for affect theory as a theoretical discipline. *The Affect Theory Reader* ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 5. For Sedgewick and Massumi's views see: Eve Kosofsky and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," *Critical Inquiry* 21, no.2 (1995): 496-522; Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): 83-109.

and Mellissa Gregg outline a minimum of eight methodologies attached to affect theory before emphasizing the lists' non-exclusivity.[34] Nevertheless, for this project Hua Hsu's neat summary in his 2019 *New Yorker* piece on Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* proves useful: "[Affect Theory Critics] saw our world as shaped not simply by narratives and arguments but also by nonlinguistic effects—by mood, by atmosphere, by feelings."[35] While some still debate the difference between the words "affect" and "emotion," largely due to the theory's intentional and inherent mutability as an "inventory of shimmers," the words tend to be mutable and interchangeable.[36] As shown by published volumes like the *Affect Theory Reader,* affect theory as a critical framework for understanding the emotional life of beings in the world has influenced fields ranging from psychology to neuroscience to literary studies. Affect theory has also heavily benefitted medieval studies; whether through individual scholars or published volumes like *Medieval Affect, Feeling, and Emotion,* there is a growing effort to re-evaluate our understanding of emotions and emotional expression in medieval literature and OE poetry.[37] Sarah Ahmed's theorization of the "affect alien" in her piece "Happy Objects" proves crucial to my understanding of emotional alienation in *The Wanderer*.[38] While Ahmed primarily studies how feminists and LGTBQ+ identifying people experience emotional alienation in families and society, her observations are enlightening for understanding the affective

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[34] See Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* 5-6.
[35] Hua Hsu, "Affect Theory and the New Age of Anxiety," *New Yorker,* March 18, 2019. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/25/affect-theory-and-the-new-age-of-anxiety.
[36] Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 1-25.
[37] See *Medieval Affect, Feeling, and Emotion* ed. Glenn D. Burger and Holly A. Crocker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[38] See Sarah Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* 29-51.

alienation of the Wanderer. Through the lens of the affect alien, we can understand how the Wanderer feels alienated from the socio-emotional community of the heroic tradition.

Holistically, this project seeks to reimagine affect and emotion in OE poetry. I hope to shed light on a poetic trope that can be used to understand emotional expression in other poems in the corpus. In her study of affect in *The Wife's Lament,* Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe importantly demonstrates how the poem "opens a space of permission for questioning and for thinking, perhaps, disobedience."[39] I hope to open up this sort of affective space in these three poems. Most importantly, I hope to give a more tangible and concrete connection between elegiac poems. As we see the avatar, whether as *eorl, hlaford, or geong mon* in these poems, we find a means of invocation that can define emotional expression in other poems, regardless of how they have been historically categorized. As a poetic trope, the emotional avatar allows poets to invoke competing and conflicting emotional communities. Poetic speakers freely associate between communities, aligning intentionally with one for their affective needs, or abstaining from association altogether while appropriating their ideals for their own ends.

The Wanderer's Self-Alienation

The Wanderer's movement between emotional lament and wisdom statements creates a problem for interpreting the poem's emotional language. As the poems begins, the Wanderer laments how he, weary minded, had to stir the ice-cold sea with his hands in exile. Following this scene, he moves to a terse recognition that an *eorl* (presumably, in a similar situation) must not complain. The Wanderer maintains this contradiction

[39] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "The Poetics of Affect," 51.

throughout the poem. The narrator constantly goes back and forth between, for example, reflecting on how he is "earmcearig, eðle bidæled" (wretched, separated from [his] homeland), to proclaiming that a wise-man must not be "heatheort" (hot-tempered).[40] Scholars have viewed these competing voices in many different ways.[41] In the late 1960s and early 1970s scholars questioned the possibility of "multiple voices" in the poem *The Seafarer*. This debate proposed a solution to the conflict between wisdom statements and personal lament. John C. Pope initially saw the contradictory voices of *The Seafarer* as evidence for multiple speakers.[42] Stanley Greenfield argued for the presence of a single speaker only, and eventually Pope retracted his initial argument.[43] Despite their apparent agreement, more recent scholarship has not let the issue of multiple voices fall to the wayside. Michael Matto took up this debate within the context of the *sylf* (self) in *The Seafarer*. His observation that the voices represent a pre-modern understanding of subjectivity that negotiated tensions between "the heroic and elegiac ethic" extends to *The Wanderer*.[44] He notes that "though critical consensus has settled on one self and one dramatic voice, we should not therefore close the book on the *sylf* in *The Seafarer,*" and

[40] *The Wanderer,* 20; *The Wanderer*, 66a.
[41] Some scholars see the voices as representing different speakers, separating the *eardstapa* (earth-stepper/wanderer) from the *snottor on mode* (wise in mind), some scholars viewed the poem as the journey of a pagan to Christianity, and some have even supposed the text to be an inherently a pagan poem with the last two lines added by a Christian monk. See respectively John C. Pope, "Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and the Seafarer," in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Fr*., ed J.B. Bessinger, Jr. and R.P. Creed (New York: New York University Press, 1965). 164-93; Lawrence Beaston, "The Wanderer's Courage," *Neophilologus* 89, no.1 (2005): 119-137; John Dennis Grosskopf, "Time and Eternity in the Anglo-Saxon Elegies," *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse. ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Gerson Moreno-Riano* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003): 323-30.
[42] See respectively Pope, "Dramatic Voices"; Stanley B. Greenfield, "'Mīn', 'Sylf', and "Dramatic Voices in 'The Wanderer' and 'The Seafarer'." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 68, no. 2 (1969): 212–220; John C. Pope, "Second Thoughts on the Interpretation of 'The Seafarer,'" *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974): 75–86.
[43] Pope, "Second Thoughts," 75.
[44] Matto, "True Confessions, 178.

neither should we close that book in *The Wanderer*.[45] By understanding the self-separation of the Wanderer from the *eorl,* we come to see that the disparate and contradictory voices give rise to the tension between the competing emotional communities of the heroic and the Christian.

The key to unlocking these voices lies in the operative phrase *in eorle* (in an *eorl*) in line twelve and the preceding reflection: "ic to soþe wat" (I know it truly). This reflection signals the following wisdom statement as a custom found only *in eorle,* and the Wanderer's understanding of that fact. The narrator's awareness of a custom that he identifies with an *eorl* but not (at least directly) with himself, lays the foundation for the Wanderer's torment throughout the poem. He vividly remembers his past life and struggles to come to terms with the misery that not only the separation from that past life engendered, but also the misery that the heroic trappings of that society brought him. Because of this misery the Wanderer alienates himself from the heroic tradition, yet in a way that maintains his emotional connection to it. As the Wanderer pivots from emotional lyric reflection to pronouncements of wisdom, he navigates the mores of two conflicting emotional communities, that of Christian consolation and that of the heroic ethos. This pivoting illustrates Rosenwein's observation of movement between multiple communities of emotion in any given society.[46] The voices of *The Wanderer* find coherence in this plurality of emotional communities. The narrator shows his emotional agency by leaving the heroic community behind for the Christian community, yet does so in a way that preserves the image of an imagined heroic past.

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[45] Matto, "True Confessions," 157.
[46] Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling,* 3.

The ambiguous, conflicting voices appear almost immediately in the poem following the opening lament of lines 1-11a in which the Wanderer reveals the extent of his suffering. From this opening lament, he quickly pivots to the first wisdom statement in the poem: "Ic to soþe wat / þaet biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw, / þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde, / healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille" (I know it is a noble custom in an *eorl*, that one should bind fast his spirit-chest, hold his treasure chamber, however he is thinking).[47] Understandably, scholars have been confused by these lines. Why does the Wanderer lament his cares in lines 1-11a if he knows he is supposed to not do that? As Seally Gilles point out, the poem "violates again and again the gnomic injunction to silence."[48] The answer to this confusion lies in the phrase "in eorle". The phrase "in eorle" itself only appears one other time in the corpus, in *Maxims I*. In *Maxims*, the phrase describes the particular qualities of an *eorl*: "Guð sceal *in eorle*, / wig geweaxan, ond wif geþeon / leof mid hyre leodum, leohtmod wesan, / rune healdan, rumheort beon / mearum ond maþmum" (An *eorl* must go to war, with increasing valor, and a lady must lead with the favor of her people, be easy-going, hold her secrets, liberal with horses and valuable things).[49] In the *Maxims I* passage, the reader sees certain qualities in a list that describe a specific person, the *eorl* and *wif.* Aside from these instances in *Maxims I* and *The Wanderer*, the phrase "in eorle" does not occur anywhere else in the corpus. The two uses of this phrase, while different, do have much in common: both the tie wisdom injunction to the *eorl* figure. The difference lies in how the texts treat that figure. By

[47] "I know it is a noble custom in an *eorl*, that one should bind fast his spirit-chest, hold his treasure chamber, however he is thinking." From *The Wanderer*, 11b-14b.
[48] Sealy Gilles, "Text as Arena: Lament and Gnome in The Wanderer." in *The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony. Essays in Honor of Robert O. Payne*, ed. John M. Hill and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (Hackensack: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 211.
[49] *Maxims 1*, 83b-87a.

recognizing and acknowledging that he "knows it is a custom," the Wanderer speaks self-consciously and reflectively. By locating that custom in a hypothetical third person and not in himself, he has already begun separating himself from the heroic emotional community of the *eorl*—the *eorl* we hear of in *Maxims I*. This reading is crucial as it shows that the shift in attitude away from earthly attachments and the heroic emotional community emerges at the very start of the poem, when the Wanderer begins to locate heroic customs outside of himself. The speakers' emotions and wisdom statements juxtapose one another in these lines. The Wanderer recognizes an emotional custom, but also realizes that he is unable to understand and attend to such a custom. In essence, the Wanderer marks emotional restraint as a custom found in a specific type of person who is not himself.

If, as my reading suggests, the Wanderer separates himself from a custom he previously felt bound to, then this reading has implications for our understanding of the poem's heroic language. The heroic community provided the Wanderer with the joys of things like the *meaduhealle* (mead-hall), and the *winedryhten* (lord), but it also engendered suffering when those things passed, leaving him silently to endure their passing according to the heroic emotional customs that came with them. He recollects that he:

> sohte sele dreorig sinces bryttan,
> hwær ic feor oþþe neah findan meahte
> þone þe in meoduhealle min mine wisse,
> oþþe mec freondleasne frefran wolde,
> weman mid wynnum.[50]

> [I] sought out, lamenting the lack of a hall, a giver of treasure, where I, far or near, could find one in a mead-hall who knew my kinsmen, or wanted to comfort me, the friendless one, enticed with joy.

[50] *The Wanderer*, 25a-29a.

With the loss of his physical community, he at first seeks to affirm the tenets of the heroic emotional community by seeking out a new lord. But he could not find another lord, and laments: "Nis nu cwicra nan / þe ic him modsefan minne durre / sweotule asecga" (There is not now one man alive to whom I can impart my weary mind).[51] The *scyppend* (Creator) literally and physically destroyed the heroic community, and this physical destruction makes it impossible for the Wanderer to belong to the heroic community emotionally any longer. The Wanderer would be unable to describe his situation to anyone, regardless of if they live or not. Members of that emotional community could not recognize his self-separation from the communal ethos he had recognized in the figure of the *eorl*. The realization that the heroic community depends on things that must pass away leads the Wanderer to abandon the heroic community altogether for the permanence of the Christian community at the end of the poem. As Rosenwein points out, "an individual will find his or her own way out of the community that induces suffering to one that provides comfort."[52] The Wanderer does exactly this to distance himself from the pain of the heroic for the comfort of the Christian.

As the Wanderer actualizes his separation from the heroic community, he falls into deep despair and anxiety that manifests itself in vivid dreams depicting the culture he was so intimately bound to. He imagines himself kissing and holding his lost lord. This dream comes in a sequence that Gilles describes as memories flooding back as a result of the insistence on self-control.[53] For a time there was hope in his mind, hope that the traditional systems would avail him, that he could find a new lord, but now "Sorg bið

[51] *The Wanderer*, 9b-11a.
[52] Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 319.
[53] Gilles, "Text as Arena," 215.

geniwad" (sorrow is renewed) and "Cearo bið geniwad" (care is renewed) as the Wanderer comes to realize he is utterly alone.[54] In this loneliness, the maxims he is so familiar with flood his brain and pour out of him. The Wanderer marks that "Wita sceal geþyldig" (The wise-one must be patient), and then fires off an anaphoric list of wisdom statements:

> ne sceal no to hatheort ne to hrædwyrde,
> ne to wac wiga ne to wanhydig,
> ne to forht ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre
> ne næfre gielpes to georn[55]
>
> [the wise one] must not be wrathful, nor hasty of speech, nor too weak a fighter, nor too foolish, nor too timid, nor too joyful, nor too greedy, nor too desiring of glory.

By the time these maxims appear, the Wanderer has violated almost all of them. As Robert Bjork points out regarding this phenomenon: "the cultural strictures on the Wanderer seem to account for this odd outpouring of traditional wisdom."[56] The negotiation of the Christian and the heroic, and the Wanderer's leaving the latter for the former incites a sort of reflective onslaught where "the first gnome merely triggers a reflex reaction that produces the others, and it does not matter that they do not really fit the context."[57] He is not exclaiming and exhorting this wisdom in the same manner as the narrator of *Maxims I,* but panicking as he takes the great leap from a set of values and customs with which he is familiar to an emotional community with which he is not familiar.

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[54] *The Wanderer*, 50b;55b.
[55] *The Wanderer*, 65b; *The Wanderer*, 66a-69a.
[56] Bjork, ""Sundor Oet Rune," 124.
[57] Bjork, ""Sundor Oet Rune," 124.

When the Wanderer evokes the famous *ubi sunt* (where are they) motif toward the end of the poem he not only laments the loss of those things but also marks the separation of those concepts from his mind: "Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom maþþumgyfa? / Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?" (Where has the horse gone? Where the kinsmen? Where is the giver of treasure? Where are seats of feasting? Where are joys of the hall?). [58] Not only are these things physically gone, but they are metaphysically disjointed from his current reality: the lord, the horse, the joys of the hall, all of it is gone. When the narrator says "hu seo þrag gewat" (oh, how those times have passed), he reflects not only on the physical institutions of tradition passing, but also their social and communal foundations.[59] The Wanderer is physically no longer in the heroic times that he laments, but also no longer associated with such heroic times. Heroic images are bound to the *eorl,* and now they are gone. This sentiment embodies the anaphoric statements of lines 108-110: "Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne, / her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne, / eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð" (Here cattle are fleeting, here friends are fleeting, here man is fleeting, here wealth is fleeting, everything in this earth's frame passes away in vain).[60] Not only are the objects themselves fleeting, but the tenets of the heroic community are fleeting. This statement leads to the Wanderer's recognition that all the foundations of worldly joys will cease to be. As Gilles points out "The lament, begun as a self-song, is now broadened to address the tragedy of a culture, a beloved community, destroyed."[61] The verses lament not only the destruction

[58] *The Wanderer*, 92a-93b.
[59] *The Wanderer*, 95b.
[60] *The Wanderer*, 108a-110b.
[61] Gilles, "Text as Arena," 217.

of the Wanderer's physical community, but the destruction of his attachment to the corresponding emotional community.

Perhaps we can think about the Wanderer figuratively as a sort of "affect alien," someone who, as Sarah Ahmed argues in "Happy Objects," is alienated from "proximity. . . to objects that are already attributed as being good."[62] Ahmed argues that objects circulate, between individuals and at the societal level, accumulating affect positively or negatively; in essence, objects "are already attributed as being good or bad, as being the cause of happiness or unhappiness" when we encounter them, whether they are an institution or a food.[63] Objects that are collectively attributed positive affect "are passed around, accumulating positive affective value as social goods."[64] The heroic tradition can thus be seen as a sort of social good that has long accumulated positive affective value. Narrators who propagate its values polemically engage with its imagined associations to make the point that a heroic life will lead to happiness; the heroic emotional community and its prominence in the OE poetic corpus as a positive social good alienates the Wanderer further, since the Wanderer's own experience with this positive social good creates an affective gap, to borrow Ahmed's term. That gap gives rise to complex emotions, including the thought "why am I not made happy by this" because the object in question (in this case, the heroic emotional community) is "'supposed' to make us happy" and does not.[65] This idea can in part explain the Wanderer's constant revisiting of wisdom statements. When he acknowledges the maxim that an *eorl* is supposed to lock up his thoughts, or when he attributes heroic qualities to the *wita* (wise-one) he grapples

[62] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 37.
[63] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 35.
[64] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 35.
[65] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 35.

with that question of why those qualities (which are supposed to bring happiness) do no such thing for him. As an affect alien, the Wanderer finds himself prepared to abandon the heroic emotional community, but as Lauren Berlant argues in *Cruel Optimism,* attachment to objects of affection is difficult to loosen.[66]

While the Wanderer clearly marks his own disillusionment with the heroic ethos throughout the poem, he is still deeply attached to it, and preserves its image as he critiques it. In one of the most emotionally powerful scenes of the poem, the narrator describes the effect that his suffering would have on anyone, how they would picture their lost lord, kissing them and laying their head in his lap: "þinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten / clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge / honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær / in geardagum" (He thinks in his mind that he embraces and kisses his lord, and lays his hands and head on his lap, such as he did in days of yore). [67] The memory of the lord, the quintessential figure around whom the heroic ethos is built, is painfully dear in his memory. In this sense, the *mondryhten* (lord) absorbs all the connotations of the heroic ethos like the *eorl*, and the Wanderer kisses him goodbye. The Wanderer sees the passing heroic ethos like the soldiers who lay "wlonc bi wealle" (proud by the wall).[68] The memories of the heroic world are beloved by him and his absence from them is what brings him great pain. Although their transitory nature led him to reject them, nonetheless he feels deeply connected to them. The poem abandons the heroic emotional community while also preserving its memory in an idealized manner.

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[66] Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism," in *Affect Theory Reader,* 93-117.
[67] *The Wanderer,* 41a-44a.
[68] *The Wanderer,* 80a.

Besides the contrasting images of the heroic and the Christian, the poet's ambiguous vocabulary and the appositional syntax of OE poetry also create an environment where heroic language is preserved while being critiqued. As Fred Robinson argues with regard to *Beowulf*, OE appositional syntax mirrors a confrontation between "[the poet's] Christian nation with the heroic age of their heathen ancestors."[69] For Robinson, the appositive structure of *Beowulf* allows individual words to carry multiple meanings, with both heroic and Christian valences possible. While Robinson focuses on *Beowulf*, his observation that appositives and ambiguous valances are central to OE poetry clearly applies to *The Wanderer*. Immediately, the poem presents the reader with ambiguous appositives, as the Wanderer opens his lament with the general observation that often the "Anhaga are gebideð, / metudes miltse" (The lonely one experiences mercy, the favor of the Creator).[70] "Are" (mercy/honor/favor/glory/compassion) here stands in apposition with "metudes miltse" (favor/mercy of the Creator/fate/destiny). These words are ambiguous by nature, and themselves do not deny the possibility of association with the heroic emotional community.[71] This semantic environment, in which

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[69] Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 27.

[70] "The lonely one experiences mercy, the favor of the Creator." From *The Wanderer*, 1a-2a. Entry A of "ar/are" in the DOE translates the word in its more "heroic" sense of "honor," with Entry A.1.C further specifying the options of "dignity/glory/temporal dignity," all possibilities which have much more in common with the heroic ethos of achieving glory in battle etc. from *DOE*, "ar,are,"; Regarding *metudes*, Bosworth-Toller notes that it is "a word only found in poetry. . . The earlier meaning of the word in heathen times may have been fate, destiny death. . . But the word, which occurs frequently, is generally an epithet of the Deity." From Bosworth, Joseph. "metod." In *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. Thomas Northcote Toller, Christ Sean, and Ondřej Tichy (Prague: Faculty of Arts, Charles University, 2014). While it is noted that it typically refers to the Christian God, Bosworth-Toller does emphasize the heroic connotation in so-called "heathen times." Yet scholarship on this matter has pointed out how the "heathen time," what we now would call the heroic ethos or heroic tradition in poetry, was "as anachronistic then as it is now." Therefore, the (solely poetic) usage of *metod* must simultaneously carry Christian and heroic connotations. See Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 3.

[71] For overviews of a Boethian understanding of the poem see, Paul S Langeslag, "Boethian Similitude in Deor and The Wanderer," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 109, No. 2 (2008): 205-22 and A. D Horgan, "The Wanderer--A Boethian Poem?" *The Review of English Studies* 38, no. 149 (1987): 40-46.

words can equally evoke a Christian or a heroic sense, lies at the heart of OE verse. The verse itself both preserves a heroic past while distancing itself from it.[72] The poem's grammar affirms this dialectic of looking back and moving forward. The nature of the OE half-line poetic structure and alliterative meter reflects a constant parlay between earlier lines and future ones, as the half-line "is not necessarily complete in itself, and the reader is often forced to cross a line break in order to get the full sense of the phrase."[73] This forward and backward-looking structure often remains the key to unlocking the troublesome meanings of the appositive phrases. In the case of the line discussed above, the meaning of "are" is unclear without moving from the b half-line of line one to the a half-line of line two, where the appositive "metudes miltse," clarifies a Christian connotation without destroying the built-in tension of heroic valances. Importantly, this ambiguity shows that the Wanderer's emotional struggle, whereby he leaves behind the heroic community while still being attached to it emotionally, is built into the very grammatical structure of the verse.

The final lines of the poem, in contrast, end unambiguously with an appeal to the *faeder on heofonum* (Father in heaven).[74] At first glance, this section appears to omit the sort of preservation of heroic imagery/language that the rest of the poem evinces through the *eorl*, yet this is not so. If the final lines of the poem appear out of place, it is only because they are not placed within their wider framework of what comes before; if the b half-line of OE meter looks to the a half-line for a complete meaning, then so, too, do the tripartite sections of the Wanderer look successively and retroactively to one another in a

[72] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 14-15.
[73] Trilling, *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia*, 12.
[74] *The Wanderer*, 115a

dialectic manner. Indeed, the Wanderer felt tormented in exile, yet ironically only through this conventional worldly torment and suffering, does the Wanderer finds ultimate truth in the Christian emotional community. The Wanderer can only be the *snottor on mode* (wise-in-mind) because he has passed through the *hrimcealde sæ* (frost-cold sea).[75] In this sense, only though the heroic tropes of exile and earthly suffering could the Wanderer see its flaws—the heroic and Christian are joined here. The Wanderer affirms the heroic theme that one must suffer in order to attain wisdom. He affirms his own statement from earlier that "ne mæg wearþan wis wer, ær he age / wintra dæl in woruldrice"[76] (Nor may a man become wise before he has spent many winters in this worldly kingdom). Thus, this "unambiguous" ending is not so, and this section shows how the narrator champions a negotiation between deliberately abandoning the heroic community while preserving it. The ending exclamation comes within this vein: "Wel bið þam þe him are seceð, // frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð[77] (It goes well for him who seeks mercy and comfort in our Father in heaven, where all stability stands for us). The Wanderer finds in the Christian emotional community the thing he desired in the heroic—permanence. But he only finds it through employing heroic tropes throughout the poem, which speaks to the simultaneously forward and backward-looking structure of the poem. The ending, just as the rest of the poem, challenges us not to see the poem as a simple Christian narrative, nor as simply dismissive of the heroic past; the narrator preserves the heroic ethos just as he critiques it.

[75] *The Wanderer*, 111a; *The Wanderer*, 4b.
[76] *The Wanderer*, 64a-65a.
[77] *The Wanderer*, 115a-115b.

The *eardstapa* of *The Wanderer* consciously separates himself from the heroic emotional community associated with the figure of the *eorl*, yet continues using language attached to a heroic communal ethos. The Wanderer yearns for permanence—the permanence of a lord, of a people, of joy. In his prior life, he sought those things on earth—he sought them in the *eorl*—but only in experiencing the suffering inherent to exile does he realize that he can find those things through creating a new emotional community with the Christian God. *The Wanderer* is not just the story of a Germanic hero overcoming exile through mental battle and stoic endurance, but the critical rejection of the customs that gave rise to that exile in the first place, while at the same time preserving their memory as a beloved community now gone.

Deor's Self-Heroization

Where the Wanderer rejects the emotional community connected to the *eorl*, Deor invokes the avatar through the *eorl* to assert his connection to such a community. *Deor* has been among the most difficult of OE poems to unpack, both because of its grammatically confounding refrain and obscure references to Germanic myths. The poem covers five main mythical episodes (before Deor's own episode), beginning with the infamous story of *Welund* (Weland) and his being hamstrung by the Swedish king *Niðhad* (Nithhad), moving into a discussion of the misery of Beadohild, the daughter of king Nithhad whom Weland raped and impregnated. From there, the narrative moves to perhaps the most elusive section, which discusses a vague *Mæðhilde* and *Geat*, which until recently, were both taken to mean specific people.[78] Then, we hear briefly of the

[78] Jennifer Lorden, building on Vladimir Brljak, notes how "if we pull at the seams of the patchwork of emendations, unattested forms, and late analogues from which scholars have reconstructed this episode, we

legendary king Theodric and the terrible reign of the historical and legendary king Eormanric. What connects all of these sections is the ambiguous refrain: "þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg" (that passed over, so can this).[79] This refrain connects the five analogous sections of the poem, as well as the final section relating to the protagonist himself, by means of an acknowledgement that the referenced events have passed away and so may some present event. While scholarship has already noted how Deor takes comfort in the fact that his suffering will eventually end because of how suffering also ended for past heroic figures, it has not commented on how *Deor* actively uses the *eorl* as a poetic appellation to qualify exactly what is heroic about them. In the poem's first section, Deor invokes Weland as a typical *eorl*¸and then proceeds to identify himself as an *eorl* of the Heodeningas. In effect, he writes himself into an emotional community with figures like Weland as he copes with his sudden exclusion from the community in which he had held status as a court poet.

At the start of the poem, Deor describes Weland, the legendary smith known from Norse analogues who suffers when King Nithhad takes him prisoner, as an *anhydig eorl* (steadfast *eorl*). This appellation changes Weland's characterization. Weland is, according to myth, not a warrior but a legendary smith; however, the *Deor* poet chooses

find little solid basis" for taking *Mæðhilde* to be a name. She suggests that this section further specifies details about Nithhad and therefore can still be read as a continuity of the narrative of the first two sections of the poem. For more see (forthcoming) Jennifer Lorden, "Revisiting the Legendary History of *Deor*," *Medium Aevum 40*, no.2 (2021):197-216. For an overview of the editorial issues of *Deor*, including why emending *Mæðhilde* to a formal name is a mistake, see Vladimir Brljak, "Unediting "Deor"," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 112, no. 3 (2011): 297-321.

[79] There is considerable debate over whether the refrain of *Deor* is meant to be consolatory, largely stemming from debates over translating *maeg* in the certain tone of the future tense "will," or the more subjunctive tone "can." There has never been complete consensus, and thus I opt for the translation of "can," supported by the Bosworth-Toller translation as "to be able" from "MAGAN," In Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. For discussions of the refrain, see Lorden, "Revisiting"; Vladimir Brljak, "Unediting"; Hyeree Kim, "On the Genitive of the Anglo-Saxon Poem "Deor"," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 96, no. 4 (1995): 351-59.

to refer to Weland not as a smith, but as an *eorl*.[80] By identifying Weland as an *anhydig eorl*, Deor effectively contextualizes Weland within the heroic communal ideals associated with the *eorl* figure. The poet's choice to classify Weland as an *eorl* signifies not just that Weland is a mythic and heroic figure, but that he belongs to the heroic emotional community of OE poetry and should behave a certain way in the face of suffering. The poem describes Weland's suffering as follows:

> Welund him be wurman wræces cunnade,
> anhydig *eorl* earfoþa dreag,
> hæfde him to gesiþþe sorge ond longaþ,
> wintercealde wræce.[81]
>
> Weland, that steadfast eorl, was with serpents, knew of suffering, endured hardship, he had sorrow and longing for companions, with wintercold misery.

The narrative of suffering here is uncannily similar to the narrative at the beginning of *The Wanderer*. Words such as *wraec* (misery), *earfoþ* (trouble/hardship), and *sorh* (care/anxiety), emphasize the character's suffering. Furthermore, image of the Wanderer stirring the *hrimcealde sae* (frost-cold sea) with his hands symbolizes his misery, just as Weland's misery is qualified as *wintercealde* (wintercold).[82] By highlighting Weland's suffering and not his heroic smith-work, while also describing Weland as an "anhydig eorl" amidst such suffering, Deor focuses on Weland's emotional resolve. As we have seen in *The Wanderer*, the *eorl* functions not just as a word for a warrior, but as a concrete figure invested with qualities of the heroic tradition: chief of all, an expectation to abide suffering with stoic endurance. Though Weland surely suffers, he also

[80] Lorden, "Revisiting," 201.
[81] *Deor*, 1a-3a. Emphasis on *eorl* my own.
[82] *The Wanderer*, 4b; *Deor*, 4a.

overcomes such trouble (as evinced in the refrain).[83] By emphasizing that Weland, who was *anhydig,* overcame his suffering, Deor effectively praises the emotional restrain inherent in the *eorl* figure and the heroic emotional community. In *The Wanderer*, the poet recognizes that an *eorl* in his situation would be expected to endure the suffering without complaining—something he cannot do. Deor identifies Weland as the type of *eorl* that *The Wanderer* describes, but in a positive light. Here, the story of Weland describes not just a legendary smith whose suffering has passed, but also a heroic warrior who actively overcomes his suffering through emotional control. This use of *eorl* sets the stage for Deor's own association with the emotional community of the *eorl* later in the poem.

After invoking Weland as an *eorl*, the narrative moves from section to section, describing legendary events that all relate to consequences of the first section (Weland's imprisonment and torture), before taking a turn into a generalized third-person reflection, wherein the *eorl* makes a re-appearance.[84] *Deor's* organization resembles other elegies, which often move from concrete references to general reflection. However, in *Deor,* the reflection of lines 28a-34b specifically invokes the *eorl* and enables Deor's own later association with such a figure:

Siteð sorgcearig, sælum bidæled,
on sefan sweorceð, sylfum þinceð

þæt sy endeleas earfoða dæl.
Mæg þonne geþencan, þæt geond þas woruld
witig dryhten wendeþ geneahhe,

[83] The refrain, "þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg" (that passed over, so can this) emphasizes the temporality of suffering.
[84] Lorden, "Revisiting," 203.

eorle monegum are gesceawað,
wislicne blæd, sumum weana dæl.[85]

> One sits weary-minded, separated from the hall, their mind darkens, they think to themselves that they might suffer endless hardship. One can think that around this world the wise Lord changes fortune, to many an eorl he shows mercy, certain glory, to some he deals woe.

The *eorl*'s return is markedly different and no longer attached to a specific figure; we hear of God's actions towards *eorle monegum* (many an *eorl*). Though the third-person singular conjugation of the verbs of this section (*Siteð, sweorceð, þinceð, etc.*) leads the reader to assume this section is turning towards general reflection more broadly, Deor in fact describes his own situation. We hear later in the final section how another poet stole Deor's position of prominence: "Heorenda nu, / leoðcræftig monn, londryht geþah" (Now Heorrenda, that man skilled in poetry, took my land-right).[86] He is literally *sælum bidæled* (separated from the hall) that Heorrenda now occupies, and he is certainly *sorgcearig* (sorrowful). All of the observations of suffering that serve as prelude to the re-invocation of the *eorl* in line 33a can apply to Deor himself; within the context of the final lines, the beginning of this sixth section appears to be self-reflection. When Deor then describes how many a generalized *eorl* will at times be treated with mercy and others will be dealt miseries, he actively describes the expectations associated with the trope of the *eorl*. As in *The Wanderer*, the narrator sees endurance of suffering as inherent in the *eorl* figure. An *eorl* expects trials, and takes comfort in the fact that such suffering can be managed with a strong and tempered *mod* (mind). Deor recognizes this

[85] In *The Wanderer*, the narrator describes the vivid picture of a man stirring the ice-cold sea with his hands before moving into the aforementioned gnomic injunction tied to the generalized *eorl. The Wanderer*, 1a-14b. In *The Wife's Lament*, the narrator goes from lamenting her lonely misery trapped in an *eorðscræf* (earth-cave) separated from her husband to a gnomic statement about a generalized *geong mon* (young man). See *The Wife's Lament*, 25b-45a.; *Deor*, 281-34b.
[86] *Deor*, 39b-40b.

fact and remarks on it in order to contextualize his own situation, in order to adopt the emotional stoicism (colloquially understood) evoked by the *eorl.* Deor, too, has been wronged, but just like Weland the *eorl* went through hardship and remained *anhydig* through that hardship. Deor hopes to overcome his own difficulties by becoming an *eorl* figure himself. This reading clarifies to an extent why the poet uses the third person to describe Deor's own situation. The use of the third person signals the invocation of the heroic avatar, by using the avatar in a way that describes his exact situation, Deor mixes his own identity with the emotional community of the many *eorlas* exemplified by figures like Weland.

Following this reflection, Deor drifts into a more obviously personal lyric mode that is a staple of the traditional "elegies:"

> þæt ic bi me sylfum secgan wille,
> þæt ic hwile wæs Heodeninga scop,
> dryhtne dyre– me wæs Deor noma;
> ahte ic fela wintra folgað tilne,
> holdne hlaford, oþþæt Heorenda nu,
> leoðcræftig monn, londryht geþah
> þæt me eorla hleo ær gesealde.[87]

> I wish to say by myself that I for a while was the scop of the Heodeningas, dear to their lord—my name was Deor; I had for many winters a good position, a gracious lord, until Heorrenda, that man skilled in poetry, took my land-right, that before the protector of *eorlas* had given me.

Deor was once in a position of great power, just as Weland before his suffering was a renowned smith. He was a masterful court poet for the Heodeningas (reflected in his command of mythic legend that he relates in the first five sections of the poem). Deor

[87] In her study of the vocabulary inherent and common to the OE "elegies," Anne Klinck argues that a crucial feature is the use of "verbs of intention and narration in the introduction of the speaker." See Klinck, *The Old English Elegies*, 227; *Deor*, 35a-41b.

calls their *hlaford* (lord) the *eorla hleo* (protector of *eorlas*), extending the category of *eorl* to the entirety of this people. By referring to them as *eorlas,* Deor also ascribes to them all of the heroic tenets that govern the emotional communities to which they belong and from which they take their identities. Yet Deor does not only identify the Heodeningas as *eorlas*, he identifies himself as an *eorl* as well. Though he has been ousted from his seat of privilege with them, he still sees himself as a member of their emotional, if not their social, community any longer. The language of lines 37b-41b reflects this situation. Here, Deor relates how he was dear to the lord of the Heodeningas and after being in this position for *fela wintra* (many winters), he is ousted by Heorrenda, a *leoðcræftig monn* (man skilled in poetry). Deor notes how his position was "taken" from him, a position that the *eorla hleo* had previously given him. Deor feels not only frustrated by his loss of position, but the loss of his legal status; the use of *londryht* in this passage suggests this connotation.[88] Within this context, the statement that Heorrenda has taken something that the *hlaford* had previously given to him takes on a much more damning implication for them both. The *hlaford* is supposed to be the *eorla hleo*, by stating that he allowed Heorrenda to take Deor's privileges from him, Deor signals that the lord failed to protect *him*. Because of this failure, the heroic community has let down Deor as well as its own ideals. Deor is separated involuntarily from his emotional community, yet instead of abandoning it like the Wanderer does, he mobilizes its ideals in order to write himself back into it. He accomplishes this aim primarily though reciting Germanic myth and by binding his own lyric reflection to

[88] Bosworth-Toller defines "londryht," or "land-riht," as "the law of the land, the rights and privileges belonging to the inhabitant of a country or to the owner of land." See "land-riht." In Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. This definition defines the term in strictly legal terms. Deor sees his own seat, that was taken from him, as a legal right, and claims that the *hlaford* failed to protect his legal rights.

heroic narrative. His verse embodies the central ideal of the emotional community that has abandoned him—that an *eorl* who is troubled should not despair because his situation will change. Furthermore, he specifically identifies himself as an *eorl* of the Heodeningas; by calling his lord the *eorla hleo* just after relating how he failed to protect his legal privilege, Deor argues that he, too, was an *eorl* whom the lord was supposed to protect.

By naming Weland as an *eorl*, and then associating himself with the figure of the *eorl* multiple times, Deor chooses to associate emotionally with the heroic tradition through the abstracted figure that functions as a heroic avatar. He understands that Weland, who was *anhydig* and an *eorl*, overcame suffering and he hopes to do the same by writing himself as an *eorl*. He yearns for the emotional restraint that his heroes evince. To be emotionally secure is to be Weland, is to be an *eorl*, and therefore, Deor's hope lies in the stoic endurance he chooses. This choice has implications for how we understand the poem's unusual refrain. The refrain, "þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg" (that passed over, so can this) regardless of its semantic interpretation, has generally been understood passively.[89] In other words, the negative event to which *þæs* references is expected to pass on its own or with time, regardless of the actions of the narrator.

[89]Brljak understands the refrain as a maxim of consolation in a worldly sense whereby earthly hardship passes away eventually. See Brljak, "Unediting Deor," 308. Joseph Harris sees the refrain as less of a worldly consolation so much as an observation of how human suffering is subsumed under a greater system of God's providence. See Joseph Harris, "'Deor' and its Refrain: Preliminaries to an Interpretation," *Traditio* 43 (1987): 45. Alfred Bammesberger in his grammatical analysis of the refrain concludes that the refrain states that "there is a time limit to every unhappiness." Nevertheless, this view is still one whereby the narrator is acted upon and has no say in the suffering passing away. See Alfred Bammesberger, "The Old English Poem Deor: Its Structural Units and the Grammatical Analysis of Its Refrain," *Anglia: Zeitschrift Für Englische Philologie* 133, no. 2 (2015): 327. What all three have in common is how they understand the meaning of the refrain as a passive action done to the narrator, that is to say that the "passing over" happens with time, or via God's providence, and does not imply an active action on the part of the narrator to change his situation.

Nevertheless, by understanding Deor's heroic narration as an act whereby he chooses to become a heroic *eorl* through emotional constraint, the refrain becomes active for the audience. "That passed over, so can this," becomes an active mantra for Deor to recite and the very act of recitation verbally commits him to heroic language and its associated emotional community. By calling Weland an *anhydig eorl*, the poem suggests that such characteristic emotional restraint was central to overcoming his difficulties. In Deor's formulation, so should one act who knows that an *eorl* will experience alternating periods of favor and hardship and must resolutely endure both.

Affective Appropriation in The Wife's Lament

The mutable and nuanced relationship between modes of critique and praise of the heroic emotional community comes to the forefront of the poem *The Wife's Lament*, as the reader of OE poetry is thrown into a maelstrom of emotion that has eluded framing for decades. Forty-two lines into the poem, the emotionally despairing wife turns from first-person lyric lament into third-person and seemingly gnomic discourse, invoking an impersonal and enigmatic *geong mon* (young-man)*:*

> A scyle geong mon wesan geomormod,
> heard heortan geþoht, swylce habban sceal
> bliþe gebæro, eac þon breostceare,
> sinsorgna gedreag,. . ..[90]

> A young man must be sad of soul, have hard thoughts in his heart, similarly he must have a cheerful bearing, but also many breast-cares and endless sorrow.

[90]*The Wife's Lament,* 42a-45a

This semantic shift from the wife's own despair to the emotional fortitude of an imagined young man is confusing and rapid. While this shift is narratively confounding without much context, by paying attention to the language used, specifically, its emotional content, we see that this section represents another instance of a poet invoking the heroic avatar. By exhorting traditional wisdom statements that correspond to the heroic emotional community through the figure of the *geong mon* following a conflation of the husband figure with heroic language, the wife invokes the heroic avatar in order to lambast her husband's personal failure.

For some time, scholarship on *The Wife's Lament* has already aimed to work around the narrative ambiguity of the poem. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Amy Clark, and Emily Jensen sidestep narrative readings since the narrative background is so elusive. Jensen notes that the "poetic force" of the poem "does not derive from its narrative situation," echoing Anne Klinck's remark that ""whatever the framework we find for interpreting *The Wife's Lament*. . . the speaker's feelings, not the events of her life . . . are the focus."[91] If the emotional language of *The Wife's Lament* is the "crux," of the poem, what exactly is the language expressing? On this point, O'Brien O'Keeffe crucially points out that the poem is disobedient to heroic imagery in the sense that its emotional language both draws on tropes of "heroic" poetry while also subverting them.[92] It is disobedient because it undermines heroic ideals such as obedience by openly lambasting the lord-figure of the poem, the husband. This poem might be doing something very

[91] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "The Poetics of Affect," 41; Klinck, *The Old English Elegies,* 54. Amy W. Clark, "As Though 'Wit' Never Were: The Dual Pronoun as Interpretive Crux in 'The Wife's Lament,'" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (Forthcoming Summer 2022) ; Emily Jensen, "The Wife's Lament's *Eorðscræf:* Literal or Figural Sign?" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 91, no.4 (1990): 449.
[92] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Poetics of Affect," 39.

similar to *The Wanderer*. However, by carefully analyzing the poem's emotional language and potential, we can view the seemingly gnomic turn in line 42a as more than another instance of reiterating typical poetic gnomes. In light of the wife's invocation of the heroic avatar through the figure of the *geong mon* in line 42a, her heroic appellations for her husband in the first half of the poem become a means of "dressing up" her husband as a failed lord, appropriating the heroic emotional community to critique his personal failures.

Line 42a, cited above, is a famous crux for how it shifts perspective away from the "ic" and "wit," the intimate first-person of the lyric, to the seemingly impersonal third person narrator that is common to both *The Wanderer* and *Deor*, and that manifests a narrator's engagement with the heroic avatar. The narrator of *The Wife's Lament* enacts this same type of imaginative association by invoking the heroic avatar in the language of the *geong mon*. The narrator paints the young man in extremely similar terms to how the Wanderer treatsf the figure of the *eorl.* Both tie a sense of emotional restraint to an obscure third person, turning the abstracted figure into a heroic avatar. Thus, the *geong mon* can be seen as *eorl*-like because he appears as another third-person figure invested with heroic emotional ideals. Through imagining an *eorl* like figure, a *geong mon* who bears sadness with a *bliðe gebæro* (joyful bearing), the narrator effectively and *affectively* invokes an ideal to which she can contrast her husband:

> A scyle geong mon wesan geomormod,
> heard heortan geþoht, swylce habban sceal
> bliþe gebæro, eac þon breostceare,
> sinsorgna gedreag,. . . [93]

[93] *The Wife's Lament,* 42a-45a

> A young man must be sad of soul, have hard thoughts in his heart, similarly he must he have a cheerful bearing, but also many breast-cares and endless sorrow.

In a manner typical of OE verse, particularly of elegiac verse, we find words/expressions of emotional despair (*geomormod)* contrasted with those condemning the expression of that despair (*swycle habban sceal / bliþe gebæro*). According to the wife, this abstracted young man must be sad, but must always battle that sadness with a joyful bearing. If this language sounds familiar, it is because such a description sounds just like the attitude an *eorl* is supposed to take toward sadness according to the Wanderer. The wife here invests heroic emotional expectations in the *eorl*-like figure of the *geong mon.*

This imaginative and gnomic section becomes a sort of "response" by the wife to her husband's failure to protect her. As we will see, the narrator's use of heroic language (*hlaford, leodfruma londes* [lord, leader of the people]) earlier in the poem associates the husband with heroic ideals and thereby with the emotional customs of the heroic community of OE poetry. This conflation enables the wife to communicate emotionally the magnitude of her husband's betrayal to the audience. The poem makes clear that the wife's greatest frustration and sadness stems from the lack of love that she experiences, reflected in the first imaginative episode of the poem:

> Frynd sind on eorþan,
> leofe lifgende, leger weardiað,
> þonne ic on uhtan ana gonge
> under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu.[94]

> Lovers are on this earth elsewhere lying in love, sharing a bed, while I at dawn go alone under this oak-tree around this earth-cave.

[94] *The Wife's Lament*, 33b-36b.

In a manner similar to the dream sequence in *The Wanderer*, the wife imagines the love shared by others, thus continuing the theme of distancing from, yet yearning for, the lost object of affection (the husband). Such intense yearning makes clear that the wife principally desires affection. In dreaming of lovers embracing, the wife displaces her own desire onto an imagined couple.

The classification as *hlaford* and subsequent association with heroic emotion ideals at the start of the poem gives the narrator the necessary vocabulary to convey her frustration to an audience aware of the heroic emotional expectations.[95] In the second imaginative sequence beginning in line 42a, the wife further mobilizes the heroic emotional community through associations with the heroic avatar. She does so in order to juxtapose the ideals associated with this figure to her husband's failed behavior. To an audience familiar with the use of such a heroic avatar, the language of bearing sadness with a joyful countenance immediately invokes the associated emotional community. By invoking the heroic avatar following the important imaginative sequences of the poem, the wife successfully appropriates the emotional standards of heroic poetry in order to admonish or "call out" her husband to live up to his duty as a husband; in a world of heroic emotional resonances, the wife can effectively use the avatar of heroic poetry to highlight the marital failures of her husband.

We can see this phenomenon at the level of diction in the lexical significance of the word *freondscipe* (friendship) in line 25a. Here, the wife emphasizes her fear that her marriage is dissolved: "is nu swa hit no wære / freondscipe uncer" (Now it is as if our relationship never was).[96] While the DOE glosses *freondscipe* as "friendship," I opt for

[95] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Poetics of Affect," 41-42.
[96] *The Wife's Lament,* 24a-25a.

"love" as the romantic nature of the connection between the man and woman is readily apparent by this point in the poem.[97] When the wife describes the relationship between herself and her husband as a *freondscipe,* and then after laments how *frynd sind on eorþan* (lovers are on earth), she yearns for her own *frynd,* her own lover, to return. This scene demonstrates a major instance of the wife's use of lexical juxtaposition, contrasting her *freondscipe* with the loving relationships shared by other *frynd.* This lexical juxtaposition is central to the wife's emotional expression. The poet draws upon associations of imagined situations in order to contrast them to the wife's own situation. This phenomenon highlights the wife's frustration as well as her principal desire—love.

This sort of juxtaposition foregrounds how the wife contrasts the failures of her husband to the ideal of the *geong mon.* To do so, the wife first makes clear that her husband's abandonment causes her misery. She remains in marked emotional distress, and the poem mimics *The Wanderer* in the attention it pays to the narrator's mental state. We hear how the wife and narrator is *geomor* (sad), filled with *uhtceare* (dawn-cares), and experiences *yrmþ* (distress).[98] The poem is filled with such remarks. Despite Anne Klinck's claim that the ultimate causes of this suffering remain narratively indiscernible, the narrator in fact makes the source of her suffering rather obvious. If the particularities of the narrative underpinning her suffering are enigmatic, the source of emotional suffering remains readily apparent:

> Het mec hlaford min herheard niman,
> ahte ic leofra lyt on þissum londstede,
> holdra freonda. *Forþon* is min hyge geomor,
> ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde,
> heardsæligne, hygegeomorne,

[97] "freondscipe," *DOE*.
[98] *The Wife's Lament,* 1b; *The Wanderer*, 7b, *The Wanderer*, 3a.

mod miþendne, morþor hycgendne.[99]

> My husband commanded me to take up my grove-dwelling; I have little love in this land-stead, few faithful friends. For this reason my mind is sad, when I found a man so well-suited to me, yet so unfortunate, so mindful of sorrow, so concealing, so mindful of trouble.

The conjunction *forþon* highlights the wife's recognition of being emotionally affected, and the origin of those affects. The narrator uses *forþon* to connect the recognition that her *hlaford* ordered her into exile to her negative feelings about that situation (*is min hyge geomor*). Therefore, even if the narrator does not blame the husband for the entirety of her situation, she certainly blames the husband for commanding her to dwell alone in the *eorðscrafu* (earth-cave). This movement between desire and condemnation is what O'Brien O'Keeffe identifies as the poems' affective ambiguity—the disaffected wife at once blames her husband and denounces him (disaffinity for the heroic) while simultaneously referring to him in the language of the lord-retainer relationship (affinity for the heroic).[100] The husband has, as John Niles points out, "violated the customary laws that create and sustain the institution of marriage," by abandoning his wife and thus violates a crucial social custom belonging to the heroic tradition.[101] In this sense, despite the husband's scheming kinsmen, the narrator sees her husband as her primary source of misery. [102]

The narrator characterizes her husband in heroic terms in order to highlight his betrayal. Beyond using *hlaford* to characterize her husband (*hlaford*, while a common

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[99] Klinck, *Old English Elegies,* 54; *The Wife's Lament,* 15a-20b. Emphasis added.
[100] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Poetics of Affect," 43.
[101] John D. Niles, "The Problem of the Ending of the Wife's Lament," *Speculum* 78, No. 4 (2003): 1143.
[102] Earlier in the poem, the wife notes how "þæt monnes magas hycgan / þurh dyrne geþoht þæt hy todælen unc" (That man's kinsmen plotted in secrecy, that they would separate us). *The Wife's Lament,* 11a-12b.

word for husband, has the alternate association of "lord"), the wife calls her husband *leodfruma londes* (the prince of our people) and was determined, following the husband's departure, to follow him in earnest: "hæfde ic uhtceare / hwær min leodfruma londes wære. / ða ic me feran gewat folgað secan" (I had cares at dawns regarding where my leader of the land was, when I went seeking service under him).[103] By describing her attempt to seek and follow her husband after his departure, the wife echoes the Wanderer's initial search for a new lord following the loss of his own. The situations are notably different, as the Wanderer seeks not his dead lord but a new one, but by invoking the same motif of seeking for a lord who has in some way left the narrator (a *wraec* [exile] in both poems) the wife characterizes her husband as a lord figure and herself not just as a disaffected wife, but a retainer seeking a lost lord. By invoking herself as a retainer figure in exile from her lost lord, the wife sets up a contrast between the heroic emotional avatar, which here assumes the language and form of *hlaford*, and her husband—a contrast that she completes through the *forþon* construction discussed above. The lines preceding as well as following *forþon* describe the husband's betrayal. The wife suffers because her husband has abandoned her to a life of loneliness and exile, and he does so presumably because he is *morþor hycgend* (mindful of murder).[104] Thus, the poem contrasts the husband's idealized form (*geong mon/hlaford/leodfruma*) with his actual failure as a husband. These words immediately evoke heroic implications in the minds of the reader familiar with this poetry. This contrast between the reality of her treacherous lord and the ideal of a lord figure permits the wife to acquire emotional agency in a situation where agency is hard to come by.

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[103] *The Wife's Lament*, 7b-9b.
[104] *The Wife's Lament,* 20b.

The wife, as the loyal retainer, follows her husband and lord: despite this ardent loyalty, her husband repays her with abandonment. By identifying the husband as a lord-figure, the wife recasts his personal, emotional betrayal as a betrayal to his heroic position, as well as a betrayal to their marriage. O'Brien O'Keeffe (rightly) points out that the simultaneous invocation and rejection of heroic ideals "opens a space of permission for questioning and for thinking, perhaps, disobedience," and the wife's use of the *geong mon* in line 42a defines that disobedient space.[105] By portraying her husband as a lord figure who abandoned her and juxtaposing him to the idealized *geong mon,* the wife shows agency in disobeying her failed husband.

The syntax of the final lines of the poem demonstrates the narrator's ability to create new spaces of feeling, the result of the emotional appropriation throughout the poem. The subjunctive statements in these lines qualify the husband's failure as a heroic failure to live up to his status. When the wife says "sy æt him sylfum gelong / eal his worulde wyn, sy ful wide fah / feorres folclandes. . ." (may he be responsible for his own joy, may he be entirely cursed and far removed from his people), the narrator mobilizes the tenets of the heroic emotional community to call on her husband to behave as a true *hlaford* would.[106] However, she expresses her frustration in this language not because she finds inherent value in heroic emotional tenets (something evident in the very lyric expression of her lament) but to gain some semblance of affective control. That is to say the narrator creates an affective space of her own within her *eorðscræf* (earth-cave) wherein she can call upon ideals of emotional control with which she herself does not identify with in order to call out the hypocrisy of her husband's abandonment of her. As

[105] O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Poetics of Affect," 51.
[106] *The Wife's Lament,* 45b-47a.

Clark explains, the wife (alienated from both her physical community and a heroic emotional community that contributed to her suffering) envisions her lord alone and suffering "not for the sake of punishment, but in order to bring his *mod*—his experience of the world—back into alignment with hers."[107] Severed from emotional customs she rejects, the wife uses the subjunctive mood to call her husband to see the shortcomings of those emotional expectations. The subjunctives have the emotional resonance to convey such feelings as they scream out in the realm of potential rather than fact: one day the husband, too, may find himself in a miserable situation, and he should have to bear it with honor—after all, he is a *hlaford*.

The wife's invocation of the heroic avatar demonstrates her inability to align with any particular emotional community, while appropriating the language of the heroic community for her emotional needs. The wife uses heroic tropes and language to call out both her husband's failure as a failure of *heroic* proportions, as well as to create an affective link with an audience who will better understand her marital frustration in the language of heroic poetry. Where the heroic avatar appeared as the *eorl* in *The Wanderer* and *Deor*, in *The Wife's Lament* the *hlaford* and *geong mon* serve the same purpose. These terms together exemplify the affective mutability of the heroic avatar as a poetic trope that demonstrates how poems feature the heroic avatar in order to display unique and personal means of emotional expression. *The Wife's Lament* has no narrative resolution, just as it has no core narrative. What it has is a sense of raw emotion, pure frustration channeled through different modes—the lyric, the heroic—to draw out personal grievances. Less of a narrative and more of an emotional space, *The Wife's*

[107] Clark, "As Though 'Wit' Never Were," (Forthcoming Summer 2022).

Lament reveals a new means of emotional expression in conversation with the emotional communities of the poetic tradition. Where the Wanderer showed emotional agency by leaving one community for the other, and where Deor showed emotional agency by identifying with a community he aspired to, *The Wife's Lament* shows how individuals can positively appropriate emotional communities they themselves have no connection to, communities they may even resent.

Conclusion

These three short poems contain a wealth of diverse emotional expression. Each poem shows a different stance towards emotional expression and the affective forces acting upon its speaker. In *The Wanderer,* the narrator consciously separates himself from heroic emotional expectations and tenets to align himself with the Christian emotional community, all the while retaining an affective attachment to the images of the heroic world. In *Deor,* the narrator emotionally aligns himself conversely with the tenets of the heroic avatar, realized in the figure of the *eorl,* in order to reclaim an imagined heroic identity that he had previously held in his position as court poet for the Heodeningas. Finally, in *The Wife's Lament*, we find an emotionally and maritally frustrated woman who appropriates the avatar in order to critique the personal failure of her husband to live up to his marital duties. Yet this apparent confusion is the true richness of early English poetry. Poets create emotionally rich characters who associate with competing and overlapping communities of emotion. The *eorl,* the *hlaford,* and the *geong mon* represent a heroic poetic emotional community and emotional behavior, which narrators can choose to associate with or not based on their differing emotional needs. The poet can draw on "generations of feeling," available reserves of "older and coexisting emotional

traditions," to highlight the vivid emotional landscape of early English poetry.[108] An individual poet or character traverses these communities to "imitate, borrow from, or distance themselves from one another"; where the Wanderer distances, Deor borrows and imitates, and the wife appropriates. All coexist within the OE poetic tradition.[109]

The heroic emotional avatar, with its corresponding emotional community, is a device that enables poets to display diverse attitudes towards emotional expression. This device at once opens up the possibilities for elegy while also giving it more concrete definition. By signaling not just an endorsement of the heroic emotional community but a conversation with it, invocations of the heroic avatar provide a means of diverse emotional expression. This device grounds connections between the elegies in the poetic lexicon and imagined associations with crucial poetic terms within that lexicon. The device also can expand elegy as a genre, giving opportunity to seek this form of emotional expression in poems that invoke the heroic avatar but which aren't considered "elegiac," such as *Maxims I*.[110]

In his moving article "Passing Over, Passing On: *Survivance* in the Translation of *Deor* by Seamus Heaney and Jorge Luis Borges," Ben Garceau analyzes the emotional impact of *Deor* on both Heaney and Borges, noting that for the two poets, "Old English was far from a neutral or inert source; it was overburdened by an intense and perhaps ungovernable affective charge."[111] Garceau shows how studying the emotional power of OE verse, in particular *Deor,* led Heaney and Borges to think about their own work and

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[108] Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 9; Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 4.
[109] Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 15.
[110] As mentioned in *The Wanderer* section, *Maxims I* invokes the *eorl* to highlight his qualities as a war-like figure, perhaps signaling another instance of the avatar.
[111] Ben Garceau, "Passing Over, Passing On: Survivance in the Translation of Deor by Seamus Heaney and Jorge Luis Borges," *PMLA* 132 no.2 (2017): 298.

its impact. This affective link between the text and the modern reader mirrors the ways that the web of OE emotional communities operates, allowing us to engage these texts not as historic artifacts representing a straightforward, heroic culture, but as wells of complex emotional potential. The invocation of the avatar and associated heroic community, with all its imagery and emotional associations, provides a means of working through emotional difficulty for both narrator and reader alike. *The Wanderer, Deor,* and *The Wife's Lament* all display this complex affective web. Poetic narrators necessarily invoke the emotional avatar to differentiate their own emotions from those that the avatar invokes; as readers we are invited into the state of *in-between-ness,* the space between, within, and without different emotional communities and customs.[112] As we have seen, poets and poetic subjects often take defined stances towards these communities, eventually landing in one or at least moving towards them, but the reader sees a range of conflicting stances toward familiar poetic tropes, within a poetic tradition defined by its potential for vibrant diversity, not structured exclusivity.

[112] Gregg and Seigworth identify "in-between-ness" as the origin space of affect, due to its inherently relational quality. See Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.

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