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Tempered Gold and Blessed Exile:

Theological Coherence Through Poetics in the Old English *Phoenix*

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Abstract

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The Anglo-Saxon immigrants to Britain, after formally adopting Christianity, developed a deeply pious monastic system that was also the center of their literary culture. Some of the poetry the Anglo-Saxon monasteries produced exposes a latent incompatibility between their Roman religion and the secular Germanic pedigree of their poetic conventions, attitudes, and styles. *The Phoenix*, an Old English translation and expansion of the 3rd century poem *Carmen de ave phoenice* by Lactantius, addresses and condemns this incompatibility while modifying its Latin source to Christianize the phoenix myth. The *Phoenix* poet's corrective impulse is particularly evident in the poem's ironic conception of exile, which Daniel Calder calls “the epitome of misfortune in heroic life” and its reevaluation of treasure, which Calder labels “the material symbol of human worth.” In a Germanic poetic realm anchored in an idyllic—but secular—past, Calder's assessments hold true. But *The Phoenix*, by filling the space created by mortal exile with God and by casting treasure as a metaphorical symbol of spiritual worth, challenges these theologically incoherent Anglo-Saxon poetic tropes.

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Introduction

Norman Blake's authoritative edition of the Old English *Phoenix* dismisses the bird's introduction as *anhaga* [solitary being, recluse] as misleading.[1] Blake insists the traditional translation of the word ("solitary man, lone dweller, recluse, wanderer") "goes against the interpretation of the whole poem, for neither the phoenix nor any of its allegorical equivalents is lonely."[2] He suggests that the poet rather intended a sense of 'uniqueness' and drew a nonexistent connection between *anhaga* and *ænlic* [one, singular, solitary]. Blake resists the word's connotation and associations; it occurs eleven times in poetry and each occurrence is charged with some measure of wretchedness or loneliness and often connected with exile.[3] Perhaps its most recognizable application occurs in the opening line of *The Wanderer*:

> Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
> metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig
> geond lagulade longe sceolde
> hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
> wadan wræclastas: wyrd bið ful aræd. (ll.1a-5b)[4]
> [Often the exile awaits Grace, God's mercy, though he, sorrowful in spirit, must for a long time, across the ocean, stir with his hands the rime-cold sea—travel the wretch-paths. Fate is entirely inexorable].[5]

These first five lines effectively establish the tone and imagery of The Wanderer,neither of which is characteristic of *The Phoenix.*[6] The titular bird and central figure of the latter poem is an allegorical representation of the *eadige* [blessed] (ll. 381a–393b, 552a–569b),[7] and his fiery

1 Blake 1990, p. 72. All citations of *The Phoenix* are from Blake's edition.
2 Clark Hall 1984, p. 22. All definitions provided in this paper are based on this dictionary.
3 For a discussion of the specific uses of *anhaga* in the various poems, see Dunning-Bliss 1969, pp. 39-40.
4 See Klinck 1992 for all citations from *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Ruin*. For convenience, the texts of all Old English poems has been copied from Tony Jebson, ed. *A-Z Index to Old English Poetry*, Accessed November 25, 2012. http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/medieval/labyrinth/library/oe/alpha.html.
5 The translation here is my own. I will defer to Bradley's when his translation does not disrupt my argument. This will be indicated by the citation: (Bradley 1995).
6 Noteworthy analyses of elegiac imagery include Klinck 1992, pp. 223–230; Clark and Wasserman 1979; Dunning and Bliss 1969 [henceforth Dunning-Bliss 1969], pp. 37–74; Hume 1976; Leslie 1966, pp. 41–44.
7 For a brief synopsis of the allegory in the poem, see Blake 1990, pp. 32–35. For a more thorough and

resurrection symbolizes the immortality of their souls. Just as a faithful Christian has nothing to fear, so, too, is the phoenix *saelum geblissad* [blessed with delight] (ll. 140), not *modcearig* like the wretched exile. He *fareþ feþrum snell / flyhte on lyfte* [journeys swift on wings, in flight in the air] (ll. 123) instead of [*hrerende*] *mid hondum hrimcealde sæ*. There is no *wyrd*—only *Dryhten*. *The Wanderer* only grows more gloomy and pessimistic beyond its first five lines and all within the context of the journey of an *anhaga*, so we may initially understand Blake's skepticism. But although the phoenix itself does not resemble a traditional Anglo-Saxon poetic exile in mood, we might still think of it as an exile, and although the connotation of *anhaga* suggests wretchedness, we should certainly have some confidence in the poet's capability for irony. The purpose of that irony is worth investigating.

The poetic qualities introduced in the first five lines of *The Wanderer*—the exile, the depression, the sea-journey, the rime, the inexorability of fate, etc.—are characteristic of the so-called "elegy" genre in Old English poetry by which nine poems in the corpus are traditionally categorized: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Resignation*, *The Husband's Message*, and *The Ruin*.[8] All of these "formal elegies" are found in the Exeter Codex, while poems said to be more heroic in theme and mood — such as *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, and *Christ and Satan*—are often recognized as having elegiac qualities.[9] *The Phoenix* has rarely been associated with these poems and never in any

comprehensive study, see Shaw 1989 and Calder 1972.

8 For an outline of what constitutes an "elegy" in Old English poetry, see Greenfield and Calder 1986, pp. 280–302, and Klinck 1992, pp. 223–251. Woolf wishes to define *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* as poems of the genre *planctus* (Woolf 1975, p. 192), but I will defer to Klinck's argument, based on Tzvetan Todorov's theory of genres, that a "plurality of genres" may be applied to any collection of works characterized by certain motifs or themes (Klinck 1992, pp. 223–24).

9 Greenfield and Calder 1986, pp. 280, 296–98.

meaningful capacity.[10] But why would it be? What do its sweet odors, delightsome plateaus, and grand vistas have in common with the wretched cold and ruin of the elegies? In fact, in many cases, the images and motifs of *The Phoenix* seem to be direct antithetical or appositive responses to those common in the elegies. In fact, *The Phoenix* often seems to contrast distinctly elegiac images with with these antithetical responses, and sometimes the negative images or motifs are converted to positive ones, and such is the case with *anhaga*. This process of integration and response cultivates a corrective theme in *The Phoenix*. Why the elegies might need correcting requires some understanding of their typical themes and agendas.

According to Klinck, "the essential element of elegy as it is found in these Exeter Book poems is the sense of separation: a distance in time or space between someone and their desire."[11] In *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* most explicitly, and in *Resignation* and *The Ruin* to a certain extent, the primary separation and source of anxiety is the transience of earthly things, particularly those important to heroic Germanic value systems.[12] The narrators lament the inevitable loss of kinsmen and lords, the destruction of their halls and treasures, their own wretched states of exile, and the inexorability of fate.[13] In the poems mentioned above, with the exception of *The Ruin*, "a progress towards consolation is fundamental."[14] This consolation is

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10 For example, Dunning-Bliss recognize its use of *anhaga*, (Dunning-Bliss 1969, p. 40).

11 Klinck 1992, p. 225.

12 Klinck includes *The Riming Poem* in this category, but I find it has little more to contribute to my discussion than *The Wanderer* already does (Klinck 1992, p. 226). For a comprehensive discussion of thematic elements in all the elegies, see Klinck 1992, pp. 225–226; and Irving 1967. For a discussion of these elements specifically in *The Wanderer*, see Dunning-Bliss 1969, pp. 78–102; Leslie 1966, pp. 1–25. Keenan insists that the speaker in *The Ruin* is not emotionally invested in the fall of his poem's subject but Hume and Klinck say otherwise, and I follow their authority here (Keenan 1966, p. 109; Hume 1976, p. 35; Klinck 1992, p. 226)

13 On the loss of kinsmen and lords: *The Wanderer* ll. 58a–62b, ll. 77a–84b, ll. 92a–110b. On the destruction of their halls and treasures: *The Wanderer* ll. 73a–77b, ll. 92a–110b; *The Ruin* 1a–49b. On their states of exile: *The Wanderer* ll. 1a–57b; *The Seafarer* ll. 1a–47b; *Resignation* ll. 82a–104b. On the inexorability of fate: *The Seafarer* ll. 80a-102b; on *The Wanderer* ll. 5, 106a–7b; *Resignation* 117a–18b.

14 Klinck 1992, p. 226.

found in God whose immutability starkly contrasts with the transient elements of secular Germanic value-systems the Anglo-Saxons inherited through cultural tradition. They should not, however, even need consolation. Augustine, whose theology was known to the Anglo-Saxons, lectures on grief extensively in his *Confessions.* He could very well be speaking of the wanderer or seafarer (that is, the exiles themselves) when he says *et miser est omnis animus vinctus amicitia rerum mortalium et dilaniatur, cum eas amittit, et tunc sentit miseriam, qua miser est et antequam amittat eas* [every soul is wretched that is bound in affection of mortal things: it is tormented to lose them, and in their loss becomes aware of the wretchedness which in reality it had even before it lost them].[15] So the elegiac exiles are not just wretched for lack of their former comforts, they are wretched for feeling that separation.

I do not suggest that the Anglo-Saxons themselves were without faith in God, but some of their artistic modes of expression were, by their very nature, systematically incoherent with Christian teachings. Alcuin's famous remark to Bishop Hygebald, *quid Hinieldus cum Christo?* [what has Ingeld to do with Christ?], speaks to this incoherency.[16] Niles reckons that "the great challenge facing authors of [the Anglo-Saxon] period was to find ways of integrating this Germanic heritage with the worship of Christ" for, as Holderness notes, this heritage carried with it "cultural [and literary] traditions embodying values and attitudes that proved to some extent difficult to square with Christianity."[17] Sometimes their attempted reconciliation heavily

15 Augustine 2007, p. 121. Translation, and all subsequent translations of Augustine, is Sheed's (Augustine 2006, p. 60). Selzer argues explicitly for the Anglo-Saxons' familiarity with his *Confessions* (Selzer 1983, p. 231). Wilson adds that "Pope Gregory the Great, being a devoted student of St. Augustine, imparted the Augustinian principles to Augustine of Canterbury, whom he sent to England in 597 to convert the Germanic tribesmen" (Wilson 1974, p. 20). For more passages in the *Confessions* condemning this sort of unchecked despair, see his condemnation of stage plays in book 3 and his self-abuse for mourning both for the death of Monnica in book 9.

16 Cherniss 1972, p. 8.

17 Holderness 1999, p. 66; Niles 1991, p. 140.

favors the Germanic heritage, as in *The Wanderer.* In this poem particularly, God's grace and the promise of salvation are thematically central but structurally peripheral—paradoxically marginalized by the poetic laments for the very transitory values salvation should invalidate.[18] In other cases, this reconciliation is more balanced, such as in *The Seafarer* and *Resignation.* But in these, God is still a source of solace from the failings of this world rather than an end unto Himself. Indeed, the very poetic process that generates elegies undermines the omnipotence of God's Grace. For if the wanderer is sufficiently comforted by God's providence then his misery should not "become overpowering and hence, in this case, a poem" at all.[19] For these reasons, Graham Holderness questions the efficacy of these poems' intended Christian lessons:

> [*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*] could be described as 'second-order' elegies, in that they initially express regret for the loss of a temporal world of comfort and security, then move on, again regretfully, to renounce the fundamental values of that world in favor of the greater promise of eternal salvation . . . We can glimpse the signs of strong attachment to a traditional pre-Christian culture . . . [since] the pilgrim-exile still laments the secular lord he loved, even though that loyalty has now been supplanted by allegiance to a greater king.[20]

Goldman similarly observes that the wanderer is only "half comforted" even from the opening line and Wilson adds that it is possible "the entire poem [*The Wanderer*] . . . remain[s] a gloomy one, even in spite of the Christian consolation passage which closes it."[21] He also argues that the elegies, so often thought to be essentially Christian narratives that use Germanic elements to

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18 Compare the laments and prescriptions for reticence (identified by Robert Bjork, "Sundor æt Rune: The Voluntary Exile of The Wanderer." *Neophilologus* 73, no. 1 (1989): 119-29, [123] as a traditionally Germanic practice in the face of adversity) of ll. 1–110 to the brief celebration of God's grace in ll. 111–115.

19 Goldman 1979, p. 77.

20 Holderness 1999, p. 81.

21 Goldman 1979, pp. 79, 77. Wilson claims this is the case if *forþon* in line 58a of *The Wanderer* is translated as "therefore" rather than "and thus," which would effect an overall positive conclusion to the poem in which the wanderer is definitively enlightened (Wilson 1974, pp. 76–7). He points out that this problem of translation "has proved a major crux in the poem's translation" (ibid, p. 76). Given the nature of poetics I contend it was intentional ambiguity on the poet's part and that both readings are possible.

support their narratives, are actually examples of traditional Germanic narratives somewhat warped by Christian influence.[22] And just as the Anglo-Saxons apparently clung to these poetic traditions, so too did they cling with a powerful nostalgic melancholy to the values they traditionally expressed.[23] So although the very natures of these two value systems might dictate by default the primacy of Christianity, such a hierarchy is not reflected in the poetry.

This apparent theological incoherency, though acutely present in Old English elegy, is symptomatic of its larger presence in Old English poetry as a whole from a Christian perspective. What the elegies so plainly expose, and why they merit examination, is the friction between a secular, Germanic system of values and Christian doctrine in an artistic setting. Alcuin's quotation (*quid Hinieldus cum Christo*) speaks not only to the existence of this friction but an *ecclesiastical* Anglo-Saxon awareness of it. Cherniss observes, however, that in a poetic setting, "Anglo-Saxon society appears to have nourished a system of secular heroic values alongside of its Christian values, often without recognizing any essential contradiction between the two."[24] This was likely due to the limitations of Anglo-Saxon poetic style; their oral-formulaic tradition of verse brought with it a great deal of pre-Christian themes, formulas, motifs, and conventions that, rather than discarded, were simply applied to the new subjects of their poetry. So it was either a lack of awareness or a penchant for the rich poetic possibilities

22 See Goldman 1979, p. 69. Holderness additionally points out that "Christian poetry was made by adapting language and verse forms that had previously been used for composing, within a Germanic oral tradition, heroic lays, elegies and love songs" (Holderness 1999, p. 66).

23 The very transitory quality of these values may have been inherently attractive to the Anglo-Saxons according to Woolf: "far from suggesting that their subjects are worthless [the elegies] confer a deep nostalgic value upon them, and the very fleetingness which the questions call to mind enhances rather than diminishes their preciousness" (Woolf 1975, p. 201). Bjork comments on their cultural importance of these subjects as well, noting that both exile and feud are almost masochistically desired because of their "validating power" within the culture (ibid, pp. 119, 121).

24 Cherniss 1972, p. 27.

afforded by the conflation of Germanic and Christian themes and motifs that produced poems like *The Wanderer*; either way, the poet would likely balk at a judgment of his poetry as theologically incoherent as if he had just been told alliteration were blasphemous. I believe, however, that the poet of *The Phoenix* was keenly aware of the contradiction Cherniss observes and specifically its effect on religious poetry, which tends to slip into theological incoherency when it appropriates pre-Christian poetic conventions. So although his source poem, Lactantius' *Carmen de ave phoenice,* is written in Latin elegiac couplets, I would not consider *The Phoenix* a 'first-order' elegy not only because it does not conform to conventional elegiac form or content, but also because it is impossible to claim, based on the limited corpus, that the poem specifically corrects a genre we retroactively label as “elegy.” Rather, it seems that the *Phoenix* poet, cognizant of the larger theological incoherency of contemporary religious poetry, offers a poem that corrects the contradictions symptomatic of that incoherency by specifically artistic means in a specifically artistic setting. I will argue in this paper that *The Phoenix* addresses and corrects two major contradictions: the exile theme, which exposes an inordinate investment in worldly companionship, and the various poetic conventions involving treasure, which exposes an excessive fondness for terrestrial wealth. It accomplishes this by directly challenging those poetic themes through a series of poetic flourishes of its own including irony, linguistic allusion, and dynamic symbolism. *The Phoenix*'s poetic medium for this “correction” is the translation of Lactantius' *Carmen*, which offers a mythology well suited to the Anglo-Saxon poet's purposes: an exotic bird and paradise that inherit the sun's cosmic regularity through a process of cyclical immolation and rebirth. The poet renders divine that mythology and its themes of infinite permanence and sets it against the impermanent secular Germanic values present in elegy and

"tainted" religious poetry. Thus *The Phoenix* juxtaposes worldly transience against a permanent divine order by not only gnomically prescribing (as the elegies do) but also poetically celebrating matters of Christian rather than Germanic priority. God is the *maþþumgyfa*, and the *maþþum* is salvation. A host of blessed souls resurrected after judgment day replaces the *comitatus*. Instead of bewailing the destruction of the hall, *The Phoenix* rejoices in the immortality of the soul. The poem ironically appropriates some features of secular Germanic poetry to expose its theological incoherency. It stages others without irony to contrast with antithetical images of grace, joy, and permanence prioritized by the *Phoenix*. The resulting poem is, as Calder says, "a rendering of the relationship between beauty and salvation" rather than one between horror and ruin with the prospect of redemption hiding in the peripheries.[25] *The Phoenix* stands out as an Old English poem that does not struggle to reconcile its literary and cultural heritage with Christianity but maintains the firmest confidence in the latter's primacy both theologically and poetically.[26]

25 Calder 1972, p. 168.

26 See Blake for a brief discussion of some heroic elements in *The Phoenix* (Blake 1990, p. 29). As for the conceivability of *The Phoenix* poet's familiarity with the elegies, I cannot assume that he knew the nine extant elegies specifically despite his poem accompanying them in the Exeter Codex. However, their very existence coupled with the appearance of their conventions in other poems such as *Beowulf* and *Andreas* makes for a strong case that the author of *The Phoenix* was at least familiar with elegiac motifs and their application.

Part 1: Noble Exile

Although Blake considers the traditional connotations of *anhaga* so contrary and disruptive to the sense of *The Phoenix* that the author must have been confused about the word's meaning, I find a much more compelling argument in that he uses the word ironically not only to fit the poem's sense but to improve its message. The poet uses *anhaga* twice and in both iterations the word's most basic translation of "alone" readily fits the immediate context. The first use describes the phoenix beholding its dwelling, an edenic paradise of which it is the sole identified inhabitant:[27]

> ðone wudu weardaþ wundrum fæger
> fugel feþrum strong, se is fenix haten.
> þær se anhaga eard bihealdeþ,
> deormod drohtað. (ll. 85a–88a)
> [The bird strong in wings, wondrously fair, inhabits that wood; he is called "Phoenix." There the exile beholds the land, the courageous dwelling].

The second appearance of the word identifies the bird as it poignantly leaves its earthly *wilgedryht fugla* [willing band of birds] (l. 342b) and departs the world to again return to the *eard*—the *drohtað*—it was surveying at its introduction and first identification as *anhaga*.[28]

> seo wilgedryht
> wildne weorþiað, worn æfter oþrum,
> cræftum cyþað ond for cyning mærað
> leofne leodfruman, lædað mid wynnum
> æþelne to earde, oþþæt se anhoga
> oðfleogeð, feþrum snel, þæt him gefylgan ne mæg
> drymendra gedryht, þonne duguða wyn

27 The only others mentioned are the generic *bearwes bigenga* of l. 53a.

28 The second appearance of this word at ll.346 is actually *anhoga* rather than *anhaga.* For a discussion on the possible converging etymologies of these two words, see Leslie 1966, p. 65; Dunning-Bliss 1969, pp. 37–40; Klinck 1992, p. 106; and Cook 1919, p. 128. They suggest that *anhaga* may have ties to *haga,* "enclosure" and *hecgan* "to enclose" while *anhoga* likely comes from *hogian*, "to think." Both Dunning–Bliss and Leslie, as Klinck observes, "think it likely that the two forms originally developed separately and then fell together" (Klinck 1992, p. 106), and Dunning-Bliss similarly conclude that the two forms of the word are more or less interchangeable, and so will they be considered for the purposes of this study (Dunning-Bliss 1969, p. 38).

> of þisse eorþan tyrf eþel seceð. (ll. 342b–349b)
> [The willing band worships the wild one, one after another, and proclaim with effort and glorify as a king the beloved lord—lead with joy the noble one to the land, until the exile flies off swift on his wing so that they, the singing company, may not follow. Then the delight of the people seeks his home away from the land of earth.]

The word posses a unity of sense across its two appearances by connecting the bird to its private and paradisaic home. Additionally, it is important to note that these are two very key moments in the phoenix's narrative: at its introduction and at its departure.[29] The irony is that, while the phoenix is literally an "exile," he is not wretched or miserable as *anhaga* implies in its usual contexts. He may be an *anhaga* but he is also *deormod* as he *bihealdeþ* his *eard* and the *wyn duguða* as he *seceð* his *eþel.* Both the *Phoenix* poet and his Anglo-Saxon audience would have recognized the irony in this use of *anhaga* given its surviving occurrences we can survey today. In *Riddle* 5, the speaker, a shield, is *anhaga iserne wund, / bille gebennad, beadoweorca sæd, / ecgum werig* [an exile wounded by the iron, scarred by the blade, tired of the battle-work and weary from the blade] (l. 1a–3a)and seeks *geoc* [help] (l. 5a). *Elene*'s Judas is an *anhaga* (l. 604b) as he endures imprisonment and *gnornsorge wæg* [bears sadness] (l. 655b). Beowulf is an *earm anhaga* [wretched exile] (l. 2368a) as he swims alone across the north sea—the sole survivor of the disastrous Frisian raid which kills his uncle. The wretchedly lonely wolf of *Maxims II* is also labeled as *earm anhaga* (l. 19a), and *Resignation*'s hypothetical exile is similarly described. Greenfield even considers *earm anhaga* one of the "key phrases designating the status of excommunication [a synonym for "exile" in his paper]."[30]

29 The life and lot of the phoenix are reiterated sporadically throughout the rest of the poem (on which Blake comments [Blake 1990, 33-5]) but the passages mentioned him more or less summarize moments in the first half of the poem, so we can consider the bird's flight back to his home his departure as a character from the poem.

30 Greenfield 1955, p. 201. Greenfield adds that "a*n-haga* is used with greater freedom in exile contexts [than other formulaic expressions]. In addition to the distinctive D-verse formula [*earm anhaga*], we find such verses

In fact, Greenfield's classification of *anhaga* as a formulaic expression of exile is the key to understanding the irony's purpose. Although the phoenix is not miserable, he can still be an exile at least in the sense that he is an outcast. On his plateau he is indeed alone; he does not dwell amongst other birds until he flies to Earth. While this scenario would be cause for despair and subsequent poetic lamentation for the wanderer or seafarer, the phoenix finds it in no way unfavorable. Instead, it is paradoxically a cause for joy. For although the phoenix is an exile in terms of separation from other birds, he is in the company of a greater and more permanent lord than those whose loss the wanderers mourn. This lord is, of course, God.

While God is not explicitly present in the phoenix's paradise, He is allegorically represented by the sun. The poet never plainly identifies this relationship as he does for the phoenix bird's allegorical connection with the *eadige* [blessed], but the descriptions of the phoenix's relationship with the sun as well as contextual clues in the language, all of which I will explore, make the allegory clear. Additionally, in staging this allegory the poet has addressed the "passed lord" elegiac convention (one of the hardships that makes exile so unbearable) by offering the immutable God as a replacement for an impermanent mortal lord all while ironically maintaining the bird's status as *anhaga*.

First we direct our attention to the *Phoenix* poet's expansion of the bird's relationship with the sun from his source poem. In the *Carmen*, the phoenix *paret et obsequitur Phoebo memoranda satelles* [—an attendant to be remembered—obeys and yields to Phoebus] (l. 33).[31] And later she rests following the sunset *igniferumque caput ter venerata* [having venerated the

as *Oft him an-haga* (*Wan* 1a), where the accompanying adjective has been omitted . . . and *Ne mæg þæs an-haga* (*Res* 89b)," (ibid, 202). So although the word's occurrences in *The Phoenix* do not follow the proposed formula, they likely still effect a conventional sense of exile.

31 Lactantius 1982, p. 652. All subsequent excerpts from *Carmen de ave phoenice* are from this source. Translations are my own until otherwise noted.

fire-bearing prince three times] (l. 54). Both Blake and Cross note that all references to classical deities and specific myths have been removed from the strictly Christian Old English *Phoenix*, but Cross goes so far as to claim that the Anglo-Saxon poet, in his attempt to "avoid Latin references to the part that the Phoenix plays in the rites of the sun cult," presents the bird's "relationship with the sun . . . in a general way . . . any indication of veneration or adoration is avoided."[32] I find this wholly incorrect. As I will demonstrate, the phoenix actually both venerates the sun as a blessed individual should venerate God and adores it as a thane would his lord.

Look to the wanderer as he dreams of his dead *goldwine* for a good example of the latter, a convention of elegy. Pure misery has driven him to hallucination as he dreams of his lost king:

> Þonne sorg ond slæp somod ætgædre
> earmne anhogan oft gebindað.
> Þinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten
> clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge
> honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær
> in geardagum giefstolas breac. (39a–44b)
> [Then sorrows and sleep together, simultaneously, often bind the wretched exile. He thinks to himself in his mind how he may kiss and hug his lord and lay hand and head on his knee as he did when he for a while, earlier, in the days of yore, enjoyed the gift-stools.]

Klinck, Dunning-Bliss, and Leslie all comment that this passage "evidently refers to a ceremony in the hall" by which a retainer was initiated into the *comitatus*.[33] It apparently resembles a formal ceremony found in the *Norges Gamle Love* in which the retainer, "after kneeling, touching the hilt of the king's sword and kissing his hand . . . [rises] and [takes] the oath of

32 Blake 1990, p. 27. Cross 1967, pp. 130–31.
33 Quotation is specifically Klinck 1992, pp. 113–14. See also Dunning-Bliss 1969, p. 112 and Leslie 1966 p. 74.

fealty."[34] Leslie adds that "since it was usual for gifts of value to be given at the initiation ceremony, it seems possible that the original oath of fealty might have revived in this ceremony whenever treasure of value was distributed" and both Klinck and Dunning-Bliss note that *hwilum* in line 43b supports the hypothesis that this was a repeated action.[35] All three cite "giefstolas breac" (*Wan* 44b) as further evidence that this was a ceremony of gift-giving.[36] So there are three things to take away from this passage before we return to *The Phoenix*. First, it was quite likely a ritualistic ceremony that occurred with some frequency. Second, it was an occasion for gift-giving—a central element of the lord-thane relationship that reinforced the benevolent generosity and guardianship of the former and the loyal submission of the latter.[37] And last, the poetics of this passage mark it as a very emotionally significant experience for the speaker. *The Wanderer*'s second use of *anhaga* reinforces his exiled status introduced in first line and suggests what follows will be a grievous, if not the *most* grievous, condition of his exile. His *sorg ond slæp gebindað* him, starkly contrasting with the freedom the phoenix enjoys. The abject misery caused by *sorg ond slæp* is directly contrasted with the proportionally comforting *clyppe ond cysse*—the syntactic echo sharpens the contrast, and the slight onomatopoeia renders that comfort more tactile and immediate for the reader, simulating the vividness of the wanderer's hallucination. His acceptance of God at the end of the poem (ll. 111a–115b) is not remotely as personal or emotional. He offers a simple maxim lacking in poetic flourish: *wel bið þam þe him are seceð, / frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð* [It

34 Leslie 1966, p. 74.
35 Quotation is Leslie 1966, p. 75. See Also Klinck 1992, p. 114 and Dunning-Bliss 1969, p. 112.
36 Dunning-Bliss 1969, p. 112; Leslie 1966, p. 74; Klinck 1992, p. 114.
37 Klinck 1992, p. 114. The significance of gift-giving in the Anglo-Saxons' literature and culture has been sufficiently established, in my opinion, and evidence for it in the elegies alone can be found in *The Wanderer* at ll. 25a–38b, 91c, *The Seafarer* ll. 40a, 83, etc. See Michael Lapidge, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 119 for a quick summary of the role of gift-giving in the *comitatus.*

will be well for him who seeks grace, consolation from the Father in heaven, where for us all the immutable abides] (ll. 114b–115b).[38]

The phoenix conducts a ritual with the sun each morning that resembles a retainer's relationship with his lord in that it is habitual, an occasion for a sort of gift-giving, and intensely emotionally significant; the quality of the gifts—essentially eternal paradise—and the identity of the lord—God—are different and thus the means of correcting the original Germanic model.

That the phoenix's practice of watching the sun is routine is drawn directly from both the phoenix myth as written by Lactantius and natural phenomenon—the phoenix *sceal þære sunnan sið behealdan / ond ongean cuman godes condelle* [is accustomed to observe the sun's course and to address himself towards God's candle] (l.90a–91b) because the sun naturally rises and sets every day.[39] The *Phoenix* poet exploits this fact to illustrate the immutability of God and his grace through cosmic regularity. More crucial to our understanding of how the *Phoenix* poet challenges the elegists' conception of exile is an observation of the gifts the phoenix's Lord bestows as opposed to those received by the elegiac exiles and the emotional states that result.

In the typical Germanic–Heroic fashion, the wanderers are primarily concerned with gifts of treasure: rings, jewels, etc. Although these were expressions of the king's love for his thanes, they still promoted an excessive affection, or even greed, for worldly objects. The *Phoenix* poet would think such displays of generosity count for little when compared to the gifts of the Lord. He may have also supposed that the anguish the elegiac subjects express over the passing of these treasures exposes their misplaced priorities. *The Wanderer*'s wanderer, expressing the

38 Bradley 1995, p. 325.
39 Ibid 1995, p. 288.

extent of his anxieties and their sources for the first time in the poem, calls his lost lord a *goldwine* [gold-friend] (Wan l. 22b), which lexically equates gold with friendship.[40] He then *sohte seledreorig sinces bryttan* [sought a sorrowful hall—the treasure of a lord] (l. 25) who *frefran wolde, / weman mid wynnum* [would befriend him and win him over with joys] (ll. 28b–29a). W*arað hine wræclast, nales wunden gold* [the paths of exile occupy him,not at all wound gold] (l. 32); the alliterative opposition of *wræclast* and *wunden gold* echoes that of *anhaga* and *are* in the first line, emphasizing the exclusivity of the two concepts. Exile prohibits twisted gold just as it forestalls grace. He then fantasizes about the *sincþege, / hu hine on geoguðe his goldwine / wenede to wiste* [treasure-giving, how his gold-friend entertained him at the feast] (ll. 34b–36a) before exclaiming *wyn eal gedreas*! [joy has entirely perished!](l. 36b). He so miserably misses his lord and the gifts of treasure he bestowed upon him as a thane that he concedes joy has *entirely* perished. His gnomic conclusion at the end of the poem promises rather plainly *wel bið þam þe him are seceð, / frofre to fæder on heofonum* [it will be well for him who seeks grace, consolation from the father in heaven] (ll. 114b–115a).[41] Maybe there is consolation, but there is no restoration of the passion as he feels for these more traditional and Germanic values; he finds little joy in God.

The phoenix has a much more positive experience as an exile and we can attribute this to the superiority of his gifts and Lord: namely the Grace of salvation and God. In doing so, the poet also directly undermines and challenges the secular Germanic value-systems. The

40 Greenfield notes of lines 22a–23a (*siþþan geara iu goldwine minne / hrusan heolstre biwrah*): “This 'darkness' as subject of the action, hiding the twin prized values of gold and friendship, in its way foreshadows the central theme of the poem, the transience of all earthly values” (Greenfield 1972, p. 120). Though this suggests the poet has a greater awareness of the futility of such lamentations than the speaker does, it does not undermine my argument that the *Phoenix* poet desired to correct the poetic, not just thematic, priorities of the elegists.

41 Bradley 1995, p. 325.

Germanic obsession with treasure was no doubt contrary to the Anglo-Saxon Christian ethos, but, as *The Wanderer*'s poetics indicate, there was a deep reluctance to part with its cultural value. *The Phoenix* exploits and corrects this nostalgia. It redirects the cultural valuation of treasure to a religious appreciation of God Himself by figuring Him and what He offers humanity as the most precious treasures of all. The poet accomplishes this correction by ironically presenting the sun, God's allegorical representation, in terms that are ordinarily applied to 'human' treasure. When the sun first rises and the phoenix begins his daily worship, it is called *Godes condelle, / glædum gimme* [God's candle, a brilliant gem] (91b–92a). This is not wholly remarkable in and of itself; describing the sun as the gem of the sky, firmament, heavens, etc. is a poetic convention seen in *Andreas*, *Guthlac*, *Beowulf*, the Meters of Boethius, etc.[42] How frequently the poet employs this convention, however, is very much worth our attention. The sun is identified as a *gim* five times in the 677 lines of *The Phoenix* and four of those times by the poetic formula of *wuldres*/*heofones*/*swegles gim*—a formula that appears only four times elsewhere in the Old English poetic corpus. The literal sense of *gim*—that is, a precious stone—appears dozens of other times in the corpus; an Anglo-Saxon would not have typically assumed "sun" when he heard *gim* just as we would not when we hear "gem." Additionally, the poet describes the sun as *fæder fyrngeweorc frætwum blican* [the old work of the Father, ornately shimmering] (l. 95)—diction most commonly applied to the vital gifts of jewelery or weapons that bound retainers to their lords.[43] So although _____-*es gim* may be a relatively

42 *Andreas* l. 1268; *Guthlac B* l. 1212; *Beowulf* l. 2072; *Meters of Boethius* #22 l. 23.

43 My primary source for this assertion is *Beowulf*. *Frætwe* is used in its various forms 13 times in the poem; it is used of treasure as general gifts (ll. 37b, 896b, 1921a, 2163a); more notably of the dragon's treasure which is cursed and ill-gotten (ll. 2794a, 2784a, 3133b); and more notably (and prolifically) still of treasure-gifts (or weapon-gifts which can occupy the same symbolic role as treasure) in direct connection to the various inter-human feuds alluded to in the poem (ll. 1207b, 2054a, 2503a, 2620a, 2919b, 2989a). So if *Beowulf* is any indication, the word could readily be connected with the treasures and gifts given by lords to their retainers.

unexceptional formula, its heavy repetition and conjunction with *fyrngeweorc frætwum* figures it as the sort of gift the wanderer wretchedly pines for.

These five uses of *gim* to describe the sun occur in the first half of the poem, but when the allegory starts, this motif is redirected from the sun to God. If the sun is mentioned, it is merely the sun; it enjoys none of the poetic treatment it does in the first half. This is because God (or Christ) has replaced the sun, His allegorical representation, as a poetic subject. This conceptual gap is bridged by a sixth use of the "gem of heaven" motif. Following a vivid description of judgment day, the gem returns, but it does not describe the sun. God is (and always was) the true brilliance of the firmament:

> þonne on leoht cymeð
> ældum þisses in þa openan tid
> fæger ond gefealic fugles tacen,
> þonne anwald eal up astelleð
> of byrgenum, ban gegædrað,
> leomu lic somod, ond lifes gæst,
> fore Cristes cneo. Cyning þrymlice
> of his heahsetle halgum scineð,
> wlitig wuldres gim. Wel biþ þam þe mot
> in þa geomran tid gode lician. (ll. 508b–517b)
> [Then in that hour of revelation shall come in radiance to men, lovely and delightsome, the portent of this bird, when the divine authority raises up from their tombs and gathers all the bones, limbs and body together, and the spirit of life, before Christ's knee. Majestically from his high throne the King, heaven's comely Gem, will shine upon the saints. It will be well for those who, in that bleak hour, may find favour with God.][44]

Note the resemblance to the gift-giving ceremony depicted in *The Wanderer*. The *cneo* of *The Wanderer's mondryhten* becomes the *cneo* of Christ—the *Dryhten* of *mondryhtnes*—and the

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Furthermore, the vivid connection between treasure and tragedy in *Beowulf* may have been part of the religious 'counter-cultural' commentary that the *Phoenix* poet is also making. For more on the significance of *frætwe* in *The Phoenix,* see my next chapter.

44 Bradley 1995, p. 297.

souls of all men have come before that *cneo* in hopes of receiving a gift no *mondryhten* could offer: eternal salvation. The Christian blessed souls among them will be the recipients: *þus eadig eorl ecan dreames, / heofona hames mid heahcyning / earnað on elne* [thus the blessed man earns by valour joy everlasting and a heavenly home with the high king] (ll. 482a–484a).[45] So we may think of the gift of salvation as a dwelling in Heaven, and indeed the poem, by virtue of its allegory, focuses on the Heavenly paradise. One of the gifts *heofones gim* bestows on the phoenix is its fiery resurrection and thus the opportunity to return to its paradisaic plateau—the poem's allegorical representation of heaven—and so the plateau itself is a gift of sorts. In fact, the fifth use of the _____*-es gim* motif and its final application to the literal sun occurs just as the phoenix is being given this gift of immolation and thus resurrection and return to paradise: *þonne swegles gim / on sumeres tid, sunne hatost, / ofer sceadu scineð . . . þonne on swole byrneð / þurh fyres feng fugel mid neste* [when in the season of summer the sun at its hottest, gem of the firmament, shines upon the gloom . . . then in the heat the bird burns along with his nest in the grip of fire] (ll. 208b–215b).[46] The use of the poetic convention links not only the Sun and God across the allegorical gap but also the gifts they bestow.

Before we discuss how *The Phoenix* asserts this treasure's superiority to those the wanderers covet, I should concede that the speakers in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* receive the gift of salvation as well. However, that gift does little to mitigate what the *Phoenix* poet might have considered a particularly un-Christian attribute of elegiac exiles: the insecurity of their speakers. The exiles of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* both claim ultimately to find

45 Bradley 1995, p. 296.
46 Ibid, p. 290.

consolation in God, but their credibility is undermined by their poems' elegiac conventions. The speaker of *Resignation*, after having spent 81 lines praising God and His glories, abruptly shifts his focus and spends most of the remaining 37 bewailing his wretched exile (ll. 82b–118b). The seafarer, even after identifying the superiority of the Lord's providence to worldly values, again lapses and waxes elegiac, bewailing the inevitable deterioration of the *eorþan rices* [riches of earth] (ll. 80b–96b). The wanderer recognizes God's *ar* [grace] from the very first line but remains miserable for over a hundred lines. And for *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, the primary metaphor for this insecurity is also the poems' central poetic image: the sea. The wanderer *longe sceolde / hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ, / wadan wræclastas* [must stir with hands the rime-cold sea for a long time, the wretch-paths occupy him] (ll. 3b–5a) and the seafarer *earmcearig iscealdne sæ / winter wunade wræccan lastum* [wretchedly sorrowful inhabited the paths of the wretch for many winters] (ll. 14a–15b). No other metaphor for pathetic, lonely aimlessness would resonate as powerfully with the Anglo-Saxons as a man adrift, and indeed, the sea and the wintry weather conditions associated with it are direct reflections of the mental, emotional, and spiritual states of the elegiac speakers. Holton remarks that the sea is a metaphor for "postlapsarian life, the flux and bitterness of which it well reflects . . . the flux of the sea indicates the loss, occasioned by sin, of this primordial state and the instability which results from living in a world where all things pass away . . . as all things must which are divorced from God."[47] So the psychological conditions of the wanderer and seafarer

47 Holton 1982 pp. 209–10O. f *The Seafarer* specifically, Holton additionally notes that "the chaotic waters indicate the spiritually lost condition of the Seafarer" (ibid, p. 210). He also claims that "even though the Seafarer travels on the medium of death and evil, his voyage leads to eternal life in heaven. The surging of the sea is a metaphor for the lack of grace, but the Seafarer finds grace none the less" (ibid, p. 215). I do not disagree that he does find grace, I only contend that the *Phoenix* poet offers a far less poetically pessimistic vision of life on earth that is more in keeping with Christian theology.

are poetically defined not by consolation—confidence in God's grace—but some "postlapsarian," sin-born anxiety for all things necessarily separate from God.

Additionally, this insecurity often poetically manifests in hail, rime, snow, rain, or any element of the "'bad-weather' theme, which, like the 'exile' theme, is one of the topoi of elegy" (Klinck 229). Just as frozen precipitation binds the earth for a season, so does it bind the wanderer and seafarer in their exile and misery. Several critics acknowledge this use of imagery. Of the Wanderer, Clark and Wasserman observe that "the wintriness of the sea matches his frozen heart, which is also bound and 'hrimcealde'" and Cook says "the frost of winter binds the earth . . . in 'The Wanderer' . . . the seasonal binding of nature . . . explicitly [relates] to the dramatic speaker's internal state."[48] We witness winter's reflection on the wanderer's psyche most plainly in the poem's original compound *wintercearig* [winter-anxious] (l. 24a), but the internalization of wintry bedlam might be more vividly—and certainly more violently—illustrated by *The Seafarer.* A frigid oceanic tempest rages with *hrimgicelas* [rime icicles] (l. 17a), *hægl* [hail] (l. 17b, 32b), *iscalde wægas* [ice-cold ways] (l. 19a), etc. and this storm would *þær stanclifu beotan* [beat the stone-cliff there] (l. 23a). Shortly after, the seafarer describes an internal struggle that plagues him as a result of this icy pandemonium: *Forþon cnyssað nu / heortan geþohtas, þæt ic hean streamas, / sealtyþa gelac sylf cunnige* [therefore some thoughts now strikes my heart, that I myself must explore the tumult of the salt-waves and the deep currents] (ll. 33b–35b). *Cnyssan* [strike, hew to pieces, dash, crush] is similar in meaning to *beotan* [beat, pummel] though even more visceral. Klinck notes the difficulties many translators have had with *cnyssan* in this context; she concludes that "this verb suggests distress rather

48 Clark and Wasserman 1979, p. 293; Cook 1996, p. 130.

than eagerness" and "could be translated either as 'thoughts agitate my heart' or as 'the thoughts of my heart agitate (me).'"[49] She also notes that "recent scholarship has understood the seafaring [about which *cnyssan* signals the seafarer's anxiety], whether literal or not, as a representation of a spiritual pilgrimage."[50] To explain why the seafarer would be anxious about embarking on a pilgrimage to find God, Klinck concludes "that the Seafarer has troubled thoughts (lines 33–34a) while he wishes to go to sea (lines 36–38) because there is no one (lines 39–41) who cannot be fearful about such a voyage (lines 32–43)."[51] Although she acknowledges his trepidation, she and all the critics she cites fail to translate the word correctly and thus miss the severity of his fear. We should not be so quick to change our translation from "dash" or "crush" to "agitate" considering that *cnyssan*, to an Anglo-Saxon, would maintain its physical connotation in whatever context it was used—especially in a poetic setting. And, in this case, it additionally serves to link the seafarer's inner turmoil directly to the icy tumult of the first 26 lines, the action of which is introduced by the etymologically related *cnossað* [strikes, hits upon] (l. 8a).[52] Thus the poet equates the intensity of his fear with the severity of an apocalyptic blizzard; his thoughts do not just "agitate" his heart—they pummel it just as the *stormas stanclifu beotan*. Nor do the thoughts of his heart "agitate" him—they *cnossað* him *be clifum* [against the cliff] (l. 8a). But of course he is not really worried about seafaring. *Cnyssan* in line 33b serves to link the metaphor for his fears—seafaring through a winter storm—to his actual fears which he expresses in the section *cnyssan* introduces:

Forþon nis þæs modwlonc mon ofer eorþan,

49 Klinck 1992, p. 132.
50 Ibid, p. 132.
51 Ibid, pp. 132–33.
52 Klinck is my source for the etymological assumption about *cnossian* and *cnyssan* (Klinck 1992, p. 127). Definition of *cnossað* is Clark Hall's (Clark Hall 1984, p. 72)

> ne his gifena þæs god, ne in geoguþe to þæs hwæt,
> ne in his dædum to þæs deor, ne him his dryhten to þæs hold,
> þæt he a his sæfore sorge næbbe,
> to hwon hine dryhten gedon wille. (ll. 39a–43b)
> [For there is no one on earth so confident of temperament, nor so generous of his gifts, nor so bold in his youth, nor so courageous in his deeds, nor his lord so gracious to him, that he never worries about his seafaring.][53]

So his actual fears are couched in the fragility of heroic values and these insecurities define his soul just as the wintry vestments define the landscape of his exile. The *Phoenix* poet would contend that God's grace is not so weak during our time on Earth and a greater confidence should be maintained.[54]

Holton supports my understanding of this metaphor in *The Seafarer*: "the fallen nature of the Seafarer's world is strongly re-emphasized by the imagery of frozenness and barrenness in the poem."[55] And indeed, the key word here is "fallen." Klinck says "in those poems which meditate on the destruction of a society, words for falling are characteristic, applied to the descent of snow and hail . . . as well as to passing away in an abstract sense and the decline of the world in general."[56] The best example of this metaphorical application of snowfall occurs at the end of *The Wanderer* as the speaker's lament for the world's impermanence reaches a crescendo:

> hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð,
> wintres woma, þonne won cymeð,
> nipeð nihtscua, norþan onsendeð
> hreo hæglfare hæleþum on andan.

53 Bradley 1995, p. 333.

54 See Job's speech at the end of the poem: "Me þæs wen næfre / forbirsteð in breostum, ðe ic in brego engla / forðweardne gefean fæste hæbbe" (ll. 567b–569b), the blessed souls who "hu hi beorhtne gefean / þurh fæder fultum on þas frecnan tid / healdaþ under heofonum" (ll. 389b–391a), and the phoenix, who "drusende deað ne bisorgað, / sare swyltcwale, þe him symle wat / æfter ligþræce lif edniwe, / feorh æfter fylle" (ll. 368a–371a).

55 Holton 1982, p. 210.

56 Klinck 1992, pp. 228–29.

> Eall is earfoðlic eorþan rice,
> onwendeð wyrda gesceaft weoruld under heofonum.
> Her bið feoh læne, her bið freond læne,
> her bið mon læne, her bið mæg læne,
> eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorþeð. (ll. 102a–110b)
> [A falling snowstorm fetters the earth, winter's howling. Then darkness comes; the shadow of night spreads gloom and sends from the north fierce hailstorms to the terror of men. The whole kingdom of earth is full of hardship; the dispensation of fate makes mutable the world below the heavens. Here wealth is ephemeral; here a friend is ephemeral; here man is ephemeral; here kinsman is ephemeral; all this foundation of earth will become desolate.][57]

The *wyrda gesceaft* which makes the world mutable (and thus its inhabitants insecure) is implicitly imagined as the *hrið hreosende* and *hæglfare* which bind the Earth, the exiles, and their souls in wintry insecurity—indeed, in *wintercearig*.

The explicit and emphatic absence of these elements in the phoenix's plateau exhibits not only the superiority of the gift it symbolizes (God's grace and human salvation) but also the appropriate spiritual security it instills in its inhabitant—all while challenging the excessive insecurity and pessimism of the elegies. A look at his source material, the *Carmen*, reveals to what extremes the *Phoenix* poet has taken these corrective measures even in the opening description of the plateau. Lactantius' initial description of the plateau's weather conditions is relatively spartan: *patet aeterni maxima porta poli, / nec tamen aestivos hiemisve propinquus ad ortus / sed . . . Sol verno fundit ab axe diem* [the greatest portal of the eternal sky stands open / not, however, near the rising of the Summer or Winter sun / but . . . the Sun pours out the day from the sky in spring] (ll. 2–3). He stresses the plateau's perpetual state of Spring (a conventional paradisaic climate) and moves on with his description. The *Phoenix* poet's description is much more robust and specific:

57 Bradley 1995, p. 325.

> ðær bið oft open eadgum togeanes
> onhliden hleoþra wyn, heofonrices duru.
> þæt is wynsum wong, wealdas grene,
> rume under roderum. Ne mæg þær ren ne snaw,
> ne forstes fnæst, ne fyres blæst,
> ne hægles hryre, ne hrimes dryre,
> ne sunnan hætu, ne sincaldu,
> ne wearm weder, ne winterscur
> wihte gewyrdan, ac se wong seomað
> eadig ond onsund. (ll. 11a–21a)
> [There heaven-kingdom's portal is often open and the delightfulness of singing voices revealed to the blessed. It is a delightsome plateau. There the green woodlands, spacious beneath the skies, not rain nor snow, nor breath of frost nor scorch of fire, nor falling of hail nor drizzle of rime, nor heat of the sun nor incessant cold, nor torrid weather nor wintry shower may spoil a whit, but the plateau remains perfect and unmarred.][58]

Of first significance is the repetition of *wyn* [joy] which Blake identifies as one of the poet's "favorite words" meant to "express in positive terms what heaven means to the soul."[59] By the thirteenth line the poet has firmly established the phoenix's plateau as an exceptionally positive place which starkly contrasts with the excessively melancholy sea-homes of the wanderer and seafarer. As for the weather, he emphasizes not Lactantius' *ver* but *nec aestas hiemsve*—now an ostensibly balanced juxtaposition of those seasons' extremes. A second look exposes the poet's preoccupation with advancing his own corrective agenda (by stressing the absence of snow and rime) while struggling to retain the *Carmen*'s emphasis on Springtime. First, there are simply more chilly and wet things (rain, snow, frost, hail, rime, perpetual cold, winter-showers) than hot things (fire's blast, heat of the sun, warm weather) absent from this plateau. Second, the poet is obviously more comfortable describing features of winter weather than those of summer—likely because his literary culture has better equipped him to handle the former

58 Bradley 1995, p. 286.
59 Blake 1990, p. 30.

poetically. The questionably threatening *Sunnan hætu* and almost laughably tame *warm weder* hold little poetic weight against the powerfully resonant compounds *sincaldu* and *winterscur*, both of which fit well into the "winter-weather" topoi. *Sincalda* occurs in *Exodus* (l. 473a) to describe the sea that annihilates the pursuing Egyptians and *winterscur* belongs to a number of *winter-*_____ compounds–most notably *The Wanderer*'s *wintercearig* (l. 24a) which sets winter as an integral component of the wanderer's internal misery. *Fyres blæst* seems uncharacteristic of weather patterns even in hyperbole and likely serves only to establish the passage's internal end-rhymes and extend the very effective onomatopoeia of *forstnes fnæst*—a meteorological phenomenon a Northern European would actually recognize and have cause to fear.[60] The purely aesthetic rhyme in line 15 serves to make the thematically crucial rhyme in line 16 less awkward. I call it crucial for a number of reasons. *Hryre* and *dryre* are both related to *hreosan* and *dreosan*, respectively—two of the "falling" words often used in elegy (Klinck 229). The rhyming and juxtaposition of these words vivifies the "falling" imagery and may evoke their horizontally related and also rhyming *lyre* and *gryre*, effecting a tumult of collapse, loss, and the terrible power of sin all bound in the icy fetters of the highly elegiac *hægl* and *hrim*.[61] But we should remember that the *Phoenix* poet taps the elegiac poetic reservoir not to encourage pity, sadness, or fear in his audience as the elegists do but rather offer relief; these wintry conditions do not exist in Heaven. In comparison, the consolation the elegies offer seems paltry.

The poet's emphasis on the absence of snow and rime in these ten lines might seem

60 Blake suggests *fyres blæst* would normally imply the fires of judgment day, and indeed the *Phoenix* poet even uses *liges blæst* (l. 434a) to describe the fire at the phoenix's resurrection which is explicitly compared to Doomsday (Blake 1990, p. 70). This may have been the poet's intention, but I think it unlikely given the mildness of *sunnan hætu* and *warm weder*.

61 Anderson identifies the horizontal linguistic relationship between *lyre* and *gryre* (Anderson 2005, p. 121). *Hægl* appears four times in the elegies (*Seafarer* ll. 17b, 32b; *Wanderer* ll. 48b, 73a, 105a [*hæglfare*]. *Hrim* occurs six times (*Seafarer* ll. 17a [*hrimgicelum*], 32a; *Wanderer* ll. 4b [*hrimcealde*], 48a, 77a; *Ruin* l. 4b).

purely coincidental until he repeats himself 40 lines later. Here occurs another "*non sunt*" passage (if I may call it that) for which, unlike the first, there is precedence in the *Carmen*:

> Non ibi tempestas nec vis furit horrida venti
> nec gelido terram rore pruina tegit;
> nulla super campos tendit sua vellera nubes
> nec cadit ex alto turbidus umor aquae. (ll. 21–24)
> [No tempest nor bristly force of wind rages there nor does hoar-frost cover the earth in icy damp; no clouds extend their fleeces over the plains nor does stormy moisture of water fall from on high.]

Also, unlike in Lactantius' first discussion of the grove's climate, there is specific precedence here for wintry imagery. However, discounting *horrida* which might have some chilly connotation, it is confined to line 23 in the Latin. The Anglo-Saxon poet exercises uncharacteristic economy by expanding these four lines of Latin into only five and a half, but in four of them (to the Latin's one) he stresses coldness:

> Ne wintergeweorp, ne wedra gebregd,
> hreoh under heofonum, ne se hearda forst,
> caldum cylegicelum, cnyseð ænigne.
> þær ne hægl ne hrim hreosað to foldan,
> ne windig wolcen, ne þær wæter fealleþ,
> lyfte gebysgad. (ll. 57a–62a)
> [Not wintry squalls nor the flurry of tempests and stormy weather beneath the heavens, nor does harsh frost oppress anyone with its freezing icicles. Neither hail nor rime is there, falling to the earth, nor wind-blown cloud, nor does the water there, agitated by the breeze, fall downwards.][62]

The generic *tempestas* is now a *wintergeweorp* and its *hearda forst cnyseð caldum cylegicelum* just as, in *The Wanderer*, *stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað* [storms beat upon those heaps of stones] (l. 101) while *hrið hreosende hrusan bindeð* [a falling snowstorm fetters the earth] (l. 102), and in *The Seafarer stormas þær stanclifu beotan* [there storms pound the rocky cliffs]

62 Bradley 1995, p. 287.

(l. 23a).[63] And of course *hrim* and *hægl* make their appearances again and *hreosað* to Earth accompanied by *wæter* that *fealleþ.* But again, all these elements are absent. The phoenix's plateau is blissful and resplendent and reflects his confidence in a cosmic order, imposed by God, that remains beyond the grasp of the elegiac exiles.

The phoenix wanders, but he is not afraid and retains a firmer *fides* than the elegiac exiles. Because his journey is cyclical and begins in the same Eden to which he will return, he more fully understands that there is no reason to lament his brief existence on earth. His supernatural perception affords him a confidence and joy that the poem well reflects, of which mortals are also capable, and which Scripture prescribes:

> Iuxta fidem defuncti sunt omnes [Hebraeos] isti, non acceptis repromissionibus, sed a longe eas aspicientes, et salutantes, et confitentes quia peregrini et hospites sunt super terram. Qui enim haec dicunt, significant se patriam inquirere. Et si quidem ipsius meminissent de qua exierunt, habebant utique tempus revertendi: Nunc autem meliorem appetunt, id est, caelestem. Ideo non confunditur Deus vocari Deus eorum: paravit enim illis civitatem. (Heb 11:13–16) [All these [Hebrews] died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. For they that say these things, do signify that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that from whence they came out, they had doubtless time to return. But now they desire a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.][64]

The elegiac exiles may recognize Grace, but they do not *salutant* it. The heavenly city is too far away; both elegiac poet and elegiac exile instead “greet” and bemoan a long, wretched earthly existence while only acknowledging that salvation will eventually come. The phoenix, in contrast, after he has left his edenic paradise to endure his brief existence on earth, *siteð siþes fus* [settles down, eagerly anticipating his destiny] (l. 208a). And this is his poem as well—an

63 Bradley 1995 pp. 234–25.
64 The Douay-Rheims translation and edition of the Vulgate are used for all Biblical quotes.

eager anticipation, not a wretched lament.

Part 2: Treasure and Ruin

Elizabeth Tyler, in her comprehensive study of treasure in Old English verse, aptly comments on both treasure's ubiquity and relevance in the poetic corpus:

> Treasure is almost ubiquitous across the corpus, whether mentioned simply in passing or developed for thematic purpose. This prevalence is of consequence for our understanding of an Anglo-Saxon *ars poetica* since it suggests that treasure was not simply a common motif but rather part of the fabric of poetic discourse in a manner analogous to stylistic phenomena such as formulas, variation and kennings: it is itself a convention of subject matter.[65]

When we traced the development of the *swegles gim* motif to *Cristes cneo*, we observed the Phoenix's conception of treasure as it figures in the lord-thane relationship; we only touched upon the poet's conception of treasure itself, understanding at the most basic level that, in *The Phoenix*, the only relevant treasure is Grace. However, as Tyler observes, treasure occupied such a significant part of the Anglo-Saxon poetic imagination that, not only is it a crucial thematic element of the *comitatus* motif in Old English verse, it is a poetic convention in and of itself. In my discussion of exile in *The Phoenix*, it was appropriate to draw comparisons primarily to the elegies, as those are the poems in which exile is most thematically central. It seems less appropriate to confine *The Phoenix*'s discussion of treasure to a correction of elegiac motifs because of its omnipresence as a motif in Old English poetry. To discuss *The Phoenix*'s use of treasure in the context of an elegiac correction may seem appropriate, as elegies use treasure

65 Tyler 2006, p. 18. I will refer to Tyler's exhaustive and foundational survey of treasure in Anglo-Saxon verse often to facilitate my own more narrow study of treasure.

to construct an image of transience and ruin and *The Phoenix* antithetically uses treasure to construct an image of permanence and creation. Treasure, however, is often a symbol of transience in Old English religious prose and poetry and the elegies are typical rather than exceptional in this regard, so to suggest *The Phoenix* was responding specifically to elegy is to restrict our focus artificially.[66] Rather, in developing its own conception of treasure the poem accomplishes something far more significant; it challenges the secular Anglo-Saxon appreciation for treasure itself and offers a fully realized and dynamic image of what treasure should be: God's permanent Grace and the promise of salvation.

An appreciation of this image benefits from an understanding of the theological and cultural tensions that might have inspired it. Even if we accept that treasure's ubiquity in Old English verse makes it something of a poetic device, it is, unlike meter and alliteration, an impure poetic expression loaded with its own cultural and artistic associations. Treasure's importance to the Anglo-Saxons as an artistic element was no doubt due to treasure's significance in their ancestral social structure, the Germanic *comitatus,* for which "treasure is the material manifestation of the honor to which a warrior is entitled for worthy deeds which he has performed or for virtues which he possesses."[67] The *comitatus* and the treasure-gifts that constituted its social currency were ancestral relics by the time *The Phoenix* was written, and though forms of that ancient social structure and its values might have persisted, its representation in poetry is deliberately archaic.[68] As evidence of this archaism, Tyler points to the 184 occurrences of gold over the 28 occurrences of silver in Old English poetry, the latter of

66 Tyler 2006, pp. 9, 35.
67 Cherniss 1972, p. 82.
68 See Tyler 's analysis of *The Battle of Maldon* (Tyler 2006, pp. 157–172).

which was by far more common in late Anglo-Saxon England after 700.[69] The *Beowulf* poet, who mentions gold, gold-halls, gold-friends, gold bedecked treasure, etc. no fewer than 53 times, was probably and appropriately looking to the "extensive gold hoards of northern Europe, especially from Scandinavia," the ancestral *patria* of the Anglo-Saxons, rather than his own culture where gold was relatively scarce.[70] In reality, the function of *gold*, the *goldwine*, and indeed the *comitatus* itself was being replaced by a material culture based on coined money rather than gifts of treasure.[71]

Even though Anglo-Saxon society and government had left behind its dependence on treasure, there must have remained some cultural or artistic appreciation anchored in a bygone pagan era, and we see it in Old English poetry. The Church was well aware of and often resisted this antiquated appreciation of treasure; we are able to observe that "attitudes to treasure were shifting, and at a fundamental level: not least, Christian teachings about earthly and divine treasure, mediated not only through homiletic teaching, but also through a new intellectualization of the pagan past, were putting a new gloss on the idea of treasure itself."[72] We see evidence of this in the Old English Gospel of Matthew which translates its instruction on treasure in terms of gold-hoards:

> Nellen ge goldhordian eow goldhordas on eorþan, þær om and
> moðde hit fornimð, and þær ðeofas hit delfað and forstelaþ. Goldhordiað eow

69 Tyler 2006, pp. 19–21.

70 Webster 2000, pp. 52, 54. Connections to *Beowulf* my own. For the usages of *gold* and its compounds in *Beowulf*, see Klaeber 2008, p. 387.

71 Tyler illustrates the inconsistencies between the image of Alfred in *The Metrical Preface to Waerferth's Translation of Gregor's Dialogues*, in which the King is depicted as an archaic ring-giver, to the conditions of his will and his translation of Boethius, both of which suggest he had been developing a treasury and exacting taxes of his subjects rather than giving them rings and swords (Tyler 2006, pp. 22–4). In fact it's quite likely that, by the time *The Phoenix* was composed, the *comitatus* monarchical structure was a complete anachronism, but since dating the actual composition is next to impossible there is no way to know.

72 Webster 2000, p. 57.

> soþlice goldhordas on heofenan, þær naðor om ne moþðe hit ne fornimð, and ðar þeofas hit ne delfað ne ne forstelaþ; witodlice þær ðin goldhord is, þær is þin heorte. (Matt 6:19–21)
> nolite thesaurizare vobis thesauros in terra: ubi aerugo, et tinea demolitur: et ubi fures effodiunt, et furantur. Thesaurizate autem vobis thesauros in caelo, ubi neque aerugo, neque tinea demolitur, et ubi fures non effodiunt, nec furantur. Ubi enim est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.
> [Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.][73]

Not only is there a scriptural basis for a Christian censure of treasure, but also some Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics thought it appropriate to frame that censure in the specific context of their ancestral/cultural appreciation of treasure. Additionally, Webster considers an image in the Tiberius Psalter "most telling of all" regarding the Anglo-Saxon Church's attitude towards treasure: a drawing of Satan tempting Christ, as Fox observes,"not with kingdoms but a treasure hoard." According to the Church, the allure of the gold-hoard—so often coveted in an Anglo-Saxon poetic setting—could be in some cases Satanic.[74]

These shifting attitudes toward treasure are evident in religious poetry, but they are by no means as binary as in the didactic sermons and homiletic teachings of the Church nor the marginalia of monastic texts. Since the verse form is a vestige of their Germanic heritage and its subject matter Christian, the poetry is a synthesis of Teutonic and Roman legacies.[75] It follows that the poetic conventions and mechanics cultivate that synthesis, and treasure, being one of the chief conventions of Old English verse, is a key element of that process. Tyler even supposes

73 Bright 1910, p. 23. Timothy Reuter cites additional Biblical censure of treasure in Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Numbers, and the Gospels (Reuter 2000, p. 12).
74 Webster 2000, p. 58.
75 For more on this synthesis, see Cherniss 1972, pp. 1–29.

that "the power of treasure as an image in Old English verse is predicated both on its familiarity and on this fusion of potentially conflicting values."[76] I would argue, however, that the symbolic capacity of treasure to express theological concepts can be sometimes subverted by its secular resonance. If treasure is mere charming decoration then it will not elucidate, complicate, or beautify a theological concept except superficially. In *Genesis B*, Satan illustrates a contrast between his current unhappy imprisonment in *hat helle* [hot hell] (l. 362a) and his former days in the the *godan rice* [wealthy kingdom] (l. 410b) of heaven, when he *gesaelige sæton* [sat blessedly](l. 411a) on his throne and dispensed *þeodenmadmas* [prince-treasures] (l. 409b) to his *þægne* [thanes] (l. 409a). A particularly vivid contrast is set up when he worries that Adam may now *wesan him on wynne* [situate himself in bliss] (l. 367a) on the same *stol* [stool] (l. 366b) from which Satan once distributed gifts as Lucifer.[77] Meanwhile the damned angel now *þis wite þolien* [suffers this torment] (l. 367b) on the opposite side of the caesura in the same line. His wretchedness is defined by his separation from a treasure-giving society in heaven. This is a particularly powerful image to secular Anglo-Saxon sensibilities, but perhaps a bathetic means of expressing the joys of heaven. In *The Dream of the Rood*, the cross is famously gaudy; contrasting with the observer *synnum fah* [stained with sins] (l. 13b), the cross is *begoten* [covered](l. 7a) and *gegyred* [decked] (l. 16a) *mid golde* [with gold] and *bewrigene* [covered] (l. 17a) with *gimmas* [gems] (ll. 7b, 16b).[78] Both observer and cross are *forwunded* [wounded] (l. 14a, 62b), but the wound of the former bedecks him in sin while the latter in treasures. Even so,

76 Tyler 2006, 18.

77 Admittedly, this is Satan speaking, and we should be wary of any duplicity or ironic undertones in his speech, but he seems to maintain a surprisingly sensitive awareness of the conditions of his fall, and the poet confirms this: *Fynd ongeaton / þæt hie hæfdon gewrixled wita unrim / þurh heora miclan mod and þurh miht godes / and þurh ofermetto ealra swiðost* (ll. 34b–37b).

78 Bradley 1995, p. 160.

when he later thinks longingly of the *dream on heofonum* [joy in heaven] (l. 140a), we must wonder if the common reader shares in that *dream* appropriately or if his appreciation for the Passion is partly founded on the secular allure of trinkets; like a child, does he eat his vegetables for the promise of cake, or does he understand the vegetables *are* the cake?

In *The Phoenix*, the vegetables are the cake. Rather than decorate a theological concept with treasure, the poet figures treasure as the unifying dynamic symbol in his metaphorical conceptions of creation, Grace, divine beauty, mystery, and poetry. He accomplishes this unity by centering the development of divine wealth about a single word-group for treasure: *frætwe* [ornaments], its adverbial form *frætwum* [ornately], and the related verb *gefrætwian* [to ornament]. We can anticipate that word holds special significance in *The Phoenix* simply by looking at the number of times it appears. In the poem's 677 lines, the noun *frætwe* occurs eight times, *frætwum* twice, and *gefrætwian* four times.[79] The only other poem to use *frætwe* and its derivatives at least as or more frequently is *Beowulf*, in which *frætwe* and *gefrætwian* appear seventeen times—only three more times than in *The Phoenix* although *Beowulf* is almost five times as long and heavily concerned with treasure.[80] The *Christ* poems (A, B, and C) in their collective 1664 lines use it the next most often after *The Phoenix* at eight times. The Anglo-Saxons had many words for treasure, and that *Beowulf* and the *Christ* poems have a much

79 These occurrences, all of which will be explored in detail, occur in the following lines: *frætwe* (ll. 73, 150, 200, 257, 330, 335, 508, 610); *frætwum* (ll. 95, 309); *gefrætwian* (ll. 116, 239, 274, 585).

80 The noun *frætwe* occurs in the following lines: 37, 214, 896, 962, 1207, 1921, 2054, 2163, 2503, 2620, 2784, 2794, 2989, 2919, 3133. The verb *gefrætwian* occurs in lines 96 and 992. The adverb *frætwum* does not appear in the poem. A look the word's application in *Beowulf* reveals just how commonly *frætwe* and *gefrætwian* were associated with treasure in poetry. Of the seventeen uses of the word, only two do not refer to literal treasure, physical ornamentation, or war gear. The sense of one of these (l. 962a) is controversial, and could just as easily label the ornamentation of Heorot as the human gore with which Grendel could be splattered—itself a sort of figurative war gear. See Klaeber's note on the line for more on this critical controversy (Klaeber 2008, p. 174). The other of these two outliers (l. 96a) refers to God's adornment of the world at Creation—a common usage of *frætwe* in religious verse that I will explore myself in this study.

lower rate of *frætwe* per number of lines than *The Phoenix* makes them in no way abnormal; they simply used the other words in their lexicon. These same words were available to the *Phoenix* poet, yet when he has the option, he almost exclusively relies on *frætwe.* As we cannot responsibly conclude the poet struggled with vocabulary, it is likely he found the word's peculiar characteristics as a word for treasure especially suited to his purposes.

According to Tyler, "ornamentation and beauty lie at the center of the meaning of *frætwe*, but the term is regularly applied to or associated with precious objects, often war equipment."[81] A sense of ornamentation, beauty, and preciousness is indeed the common connotation of the word, but in Old English poetry *frætwe* bears a number of distinct associations none of which seem particularly more dominant than the others. The word is regularly applied to the adornments of angels, the decorations of architecture, elaborate weapons, armor and war-trappings, fruits and vegetables, and, of course, treasure. Its disparate and diverse poetic associations render the exact definition of *frætwe* elusive. *The Phoenix* takes advantage of this elusiveness and treats it on one metaphorical level—specifically the religious—like an empty vessel to be filled. It fills this vessel in stages to construct an image of Grace from its various elements as they are manifest in *The Phoenix.* Like the fruits of the bird's sacred grove, *frætwe* is permanent. Like the sun's light, it is salvific. Like the herbs the phoenix gathers, it is transformative. Finally, as the adornments of the resurrected phoenix, *frætwe* is beautiful. And yet the physical and material senses of *frætwe* are emphatically implied at every stage of the word's evolution. The fruits are ancient craftworks as is the sun which embellishes the world below it. The phoenix uses the herbs to construct an ornamented hall and, once

81 Tyler 2006, p. 35.

resurrected, its eyes are precious stones and its feathers metal. These associations with treasure are ultimately a commentary on Anglo-Saxon materialism as this empyrean treasure functions in a way terrestrial treasure never could. By demonstrating that the former is permanent, salvific, and beautiful, the poet of *The Phoenix* in turn suggests that the latter is transient, corrupting, and ugly, thereby redirecting the misplaced value in worldly treasure to divine gifts.

Appropriately, the first common usage of *frætwe* the *The Phoenix* poet exploits is that of the fruits and vegetation with which God is said to "adorn" the world, or Eden, at Creation. According to Tyler, *frætwe* exclusively means "vegetation" in prose, and when it retains that sense in poetry it almost always refers to extraordinary vegetation—the sort fittingly imagined in poetry—and for the Anglo-Saxons the Earth has never offered fruits more extraordinary than those at Creation.[82] Moreover, the passages in which *frætwe* refers to the adornments of the earth at Creation are highly elaborate and elegant which speaks to the poetic power of the word in these contexts. The author of *Genesis A* finds the word suitable to describe the adornments of Earth as God himself looks upon his *weorca wlite* [fresh work] (l. 207a): *hwæðre wæstmum stod / folde gefrætwod* [however the land stood decorated with fruits] (ll. 214b–215a). In *Beowulf*, the only appearance of *frætwe* that does not definitely refer to treasure or war-gear is in just such a context. The suffering of Grendel is defined by the agony he endures as he listens to Heorot's scop sing of creation:

> se ælmihtiga eorðan worhte,
> wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð,
> gesette sigehreþig sunnan ond monan
> leoman to leohte landbuendum
> ond gefrætwade foldan sceatas
> leomum ond leafum, lif eac gesceop

82 Tyler 2006, p. 35.

> cynna gehwylcum þara ðe cwice hwyrfaþ. (ll. 92a–98b)
> [the Almighty created the earth, / a bright and shining plain, / by seas embraced, / and set, triumphantly, the sun and moon / to light their beams for those who dwell on land, / adorned the distant corners of the world / with leaves and branches, and made life also / all manner of creatures that live and move.][83]

The wondrous Creation of Earth in *Beowulf* is defined by three things: the arrangement of the heavens, the genesis of life, and the adornment of the Earth, for which the verb *gefrætwian* is used. This is the sort of scenario that brings joy to men—they *dreamum lifdon, / eadiglice* [lived in joy / blessedly] (ll. 99b–100a)—and subsequently throws Grendel into a murderous rage.[84]

Such is the poetic power we can assume *The Phoenix* poet sought as he fabricated his own effusive description of paradise. In much the same way the image of pre-lapsarian Creation opposes the raw sin of Grendel in *Beowulf*, *The Phoenix* answers the extensive *occupatio* of post-lapsarian weather phenomena (ll. 50a–62a) with a starkly contrasting image that describes in equally vivid terms the flourishing vegetation of the bird's plateau. *Frætwe* appears in the opening lines:

> Sindon þa bearwas bledum gehongne,
> wlitigum wæstmum, þær no waniað o,
> halge under heofonum, holtes frætwe.
> Ne feallað þær on foldan fealwe blostman,
> wudubeama wlite, ac þær wrætlice
> on þam treowum symle telgan gehladene,
> ofett edniwe, in ealle tid
> on þam græswonge grene stondaþ,
> gehroden hyhtlice haliges meahtum,
> beorhtast bearwa. No gebrocen weorþeð
> holt on hiwe, þær se halga stenc
> wunaþ geond wynlond; þæt onwended ne bið
> æfre to ealdre, ærþon endige

83 All translations of *Beowulf* are from Liuzza 2000.

84 Cherniss helpfully notes that “Grendel's reaction to this joyous song helps to define him as an evil creature” and goes on to discuss the possibility that it may be the Christian nature of the scop's verse that so agitates him given his progenitor Cain (Cherniss 1972, pp. 138, 137–141).

> frod fyrngeweorc se hit on frymþe gescop. (71a–84b)[85]
> [There the wood's adornments, sanctified though below the heavens, never fade, nor do the blossoms, the beauty of the trees, fall brown to the ground, but there on those trees, perpetually, like a work of art, the laden branches continue green on the grassy plain, and the fruit fresh through all time, and that most dazzling of groves pleasantly bedecked by the powers of holy God. Never does the wood come to be marred in its appearance; the sanctified perfume there lingers throughout that land of delight. Never to the fullness of time will this be changed before the wise God who shaped it in the first place brings to an end his ancient work.][86]

Because *frætwe* is often used for the natural adornments of Eden at Creation, it may be tempting to limit its sense here; given its definition as "vegetation" in prose, we know it is a "nature" metaphor for treasure, not a "treasure" metaphor for nature. This ambiguity, however, contributes to the poetic force of the image; this is indeed treasure, but it is not the sort of treasure we are used to. There are other clues in this passage that suggest these *wæstmas* are somehow exceptional in both their classifications as treasure and as fruits.

The first clue is *wrætlice* (l. 75b). Defined as "artistic, ornamental; curious, wondrous, rare," it is itself somewhat rare, appearing only 48 times in the poetic corpus in either its adjectival or adverbial forms.[87] *As* with *frætwe*, a simple statistical observation strongly suggests

85 Regarding the transmutation of the "natural" features of the phoenix bird's plateau into something altogether remarkable, Daniel Calder comments:"we are to take the fruits on one level as fruits indeed, though this display of divine artistry transforms them into the ornaments that mirror a divine grace through the agency of nature" (Calder 1972, p. 171). He goes on to argue that the primary purpose of this passage is to contribute to the poem's "kaleidoscopic . . . mulch-faceted . . . rendering of the relationship between beauty and salvation" (ibid, p. 168). He supposes that the poet uses the language of treasure to suggest beauty which simplifies the divine mystery of Grace allowing humans, restricted by their limited mortal faculties, to imagine it. Calder's approach to this poem seems to project a Kantian ideal of the aesthetic on the Anglo-Saxon author and audience of *The Phoenix*. Treasure's identity as an autonomous poetic convention in Anglo-Saxon verse affords it a universal resonance (at least to the early English) equal to or even greater than "beauty" in this context and I think this passage serves to begin developing and establish the conception of Grace as a divine treasure via the permanent beauty of Eden rather than the other way around.

86 Bradley 1995, p. 287.

87 For the definition, see Clark Hall 1984, p. 421. Anderson comments on the definition and connotation of the word: "usually translated abstractly as 'wondrous, curious; excellent, beautiful', but often implying something more physical: a complex, intricately designed surface" (Anderson 2005, pp. 125–26). This physical intricacy makes it a good pair for the highly ornamental *frætwe*.

the word holds special significance in *The Phoenix*; it occurs six times in the poem—more than in any other single work. The considerably longer poems *Beowulf* and *Andreas* each use it five times. Although it is used to describe a wide range of things, its unifying quality seems to be a sense of mystery. *Riddle 70* demonstrates this plainly: *wiht is wrætlic þam þe hyre wisan ne conn* [it is a wondrous thing to him who does not know its ways] (l. 1). In fact, the Old English riddles of the Exeter Codex account for almost half the word's appearances at twenty uses and all of these iterations, most of them in the first two introductory lines of their respective poems, are meant to suggest the arcana of the riddle's subject.[88] The word also seems to be strongly associated with crafted works—specifically weapons, architecture, and treasure—or the ability to craft such things in the typical context in which the adverb *wrætlice* occurs; these contexts account for half of the words' appearances outside *The Phoenix* and the Exeter riddles.[89] For most of the crafted works characterized as *wrætlic*, their extraordinary and often unnatural craftsmanship defines their poetic identities. In *Beowulf*, the remarkable Hrunting is a *wrætlic wægsweord* [wondrous wave-patterned sword] (l. 1489a), and the spectacular wonder of the *Brosinga mene* [Brosinga necklace] (l. 1199b), the necklace Wealtheow gifts to Beowulf for slaying Grendel, is *wrætlicne wundurmaððum* [wondrous ornamented treasure] (l. 2173a).[90] *Gifts of Men* emphasizes the physical craftsmanship of *wrætlic* when it identifies man's artistic ability to *wrætlice weorc ahycgan / heahtimbra gehwæs* [wondrously construct any sort of

88 *Riddle 23* (l. 2a); *Riddle 26* (l. 14a); *Riddle 31* (l. 18b); *Riddle 33* (l. 1b); *Riddle 36* (l. 2a); *Riddle 39* (l. 24b); *Riddle 40* (ll. 6a, 85a, 102a, 104a); *Riddle 42*(l. 1a); *Riddle 44* (l. 1a); *Riddle 47* (l. 2a); *Riddle 51* (l. 1a); *Riddle 55* (l. 3a); *Riddle 59* (l. 16a); *Riddle 67* (l. 2a); *Riddle 68* (l. 2a); *Riddle 70* (ll. 1a, 5a).

89 For contexts concerning physically built, see *Andreas* (ll. 712a, 740b); *Elene* (l. 1019a); *Fortunes of Men* (l. 93a); *The Gifts of Men* (l. 44a); *Beowulf* (ll. 1489a, 2173a, 2339a); *Maxims II* (l. 3a); *Exodus* (l. 298a); *The Ruin* (l. 1a). For contexts concerning words which are metaphorically "built," see *Andreas* (ll. 93a, 1200a) and *Christ B* (l. 509a).

90 The translation of *wrætlic wægsweord* is my own. Liuzza translates *wrætlic* as "splendid" (l. 1490), but his syntax does not fit my own (Liuzza 200, p. 99).

lofty building] (l. 44a–45a). Other authors similarly apply the word to crafted works, but, like the *Beowulf* poet, clearly intend a mythic resonance. In *Maxims II*, the *orðanc enta geweorc* [ingenious constructions of giants] is the *wrætlic weallstana geweorc* [ornate fortresses of dressed stones] (ll. 2a, 3a), and the appalling desolation of a once legendary structure in *The Ruin* is predicated on a whimsical glimpse of its former splendor: *wrætlic is þes wealstan . . . enta geweorc* [wondrously ornate is the wall-stone . . . the work of giants] (ll. 1a–2b).[91] So it is very likely, given these strong and consistent associations of *wrætlic*, the *holtes frætwe* that *wrætlice telgan gehladene* in the phoenix's plateau would have looked to an Anglo-Saxon something like the various marvels the *entas geweorcen*: intricate, mysterious, illustrious, and, most importantly, crafted.

This brings us to the second clue: *fyrngeweorc* [ancient-work] (l. 71a). We should keep in mind that the fruits of this plateau need not look like anything other than fruit given the conventional application of *frætwe* to the flora of Eden. And yet *fyrngeweorc*, which adds a sense of distant antiquity to its craftsmanship, is clear evidence of the poet's effort to remind us of the sort of "bad" treasure that *Beowulf*'s dragon guards—itself referred to as *frætwe*, *eald enta geweorc* [old work of giants], and *fyrngeweorc.*[92] Indeed, the fruits share an emphasized archaism in connection with the old works of giants, which, if they are not *eald* (*eald enta*

91 Bradley 1995, pp. 402, 513.

92 For *frætwe* applied to the dragon's treasure, see ll. 2784, 2794, 3133. For *eald enta geweorc*, see l. 2774a. On l. 2774, Klaeber claims "by *enta geweorc* is most likely meant the stone chamber (cf. Note 2718 f.) than the hoard itself" because the dragon's chamber, and the housing of this treasure, is so named in line 2717b (Klaeber 2008, p. 256). However, I think we can make some allowance for some possibly intentional ambiguity considering the treasure is already *fyrngeweorc.* Additionally, the previous old work of giants seen in the poem is the sword Beowulf recovers from the cave of Grendel's mother. Depicted on the hilt of the *enta ærgeweorc* (l. 1679a) the annihilation of the *giganta cyn* (l. 1690b). When the poet warns *þæt wæs fremde þeod / ecean dryhtne; him þæs endelean / þurh wæteres wylm waldend sealde* (ll. 1691b–1693b) we may anticipate the misfortune that will come to the Geats, also a people foreign to God, and their own ironically useless *endelean* —the dragon's treasure.

geweorc is something of a formula) are often *enta ærgeweorc* [earlier/old work of giants].[93] Similarly, the last line of the passage describing the phoenix's grove before the poet advances the narrative not only confirms that this plateau is a work of craftsmanship via –*geweorc* and *gescop*, but also that it was crafted in a bygone era signaled by *frod* [old], *fyrnge*– [former—], and *frymþe* [origin]. According to Jacob Grimm, that this grove is ancient (*frod*), extraordinary (*wrætlic*) and, crafted (–*geweorc*) lands it squarely, as far as Germanic legend is concerned, in the realm of devils: *bauten der vorzeit, von seltsamer structur, die lange jahrhunderte überdauert haven und die das heutige geschlecht nicht mehr unternimmt, pflegt das volk den riesen oder dem teufel zuzuschreiben* [ancient *buildings* of singular structure, which have outlasted many centuries, and such as the men of to-day no longer take in hand, are vulgarly ascribed to *giants* or to the *devil*].[94] This uncomfortably close resemblance is just the point. The poet redirects to this holy grove the arcana and mythic strength attributed to the old work of giants which the Anglo-Saxons would have admired with a guilty nostalgia; Grimm calls it a *halbwehmut* [half melancholy/wistfulness].[95] But, where pagan infrastructure (and thus paganism) fails, the sacred forest endures through *haliges meahtum*; while *enta geweorc* is often prone to tragic dissolution, as in *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*, the *fyrngeweorc* of the phoenix's Eden boasts its permanence no less than fourteen times in the first 84 lines of the poem, and half those in the few lines cited above which cast the grove as treasure.[96] Tyler notes that *frætwe* when designating "ornaments of the earth can include man-made phenomena and

93 *Eald enta geweorc*: *Andreas* (l. 1495a), *The Wanderer* (l. 87a), *Beowulf* (l. 2774a). *Enta ærgeweorc*: *Andreas* (l. 1235a), *Beowulf* (l. 1679a).

94 Grimm 1844, p. 500. Translation is Grimm (tr. Stallybrass)1883 p. 534.

95 Grimm 1844, p. 496. This translation is my own.

96 For the dissolution of the *eald enta geweorc*, see *The Wanderer* (ll. 85a–87b) and *The Ruin* (ll. 1a–49b). The permanence of the phoenix's grove is described in the following passages: ll. 33a–49b, ll. 71a–84b.

also carry the negative connotations of 'worldliness' and 'temporality'" but this *frætwe*, though it looks "man-made," (or giant-made), is not. It is indeed crafted but extraordinarily—*wrætlice*—so by God's hands. In fashioning Eden, He creates the origin and symbol of Grace—a more righteous treasure than any work of smiths.

The evolution of *frætwe* and *The Phoenix*'s conception of treasure continues as the scope of the description of paradise widens and its theological allegory intensifies. We have seen original Grace poetically figured as treasure in the phoenix's plateau—the allegorical symbol for Eden—and now we will see the distributor of Grace similarly figured in the Sun—the allegorical symbol for God.[97] We observed earlier how the _____-*es gim* epithet helps anchor the Sun in a lord-thane relationship with the phoenix but not how it cultivates the larger treasure motif within the poem. As the Sun rises over the plateau and emerges for the first time in the poem, shortly after it is identified as a *glædum gimme*, (l. 92a), the poet dresses it in the same treasure-language established in the description of the plateau:

> up cyme æþelast tungla
> ofer yðmere estan lixan,
> fæder fyrngeweorc frætwum blican,
> torht tacen godes. (ll. 93a–96a)
> [Up comes the noblest of stars over the wavy ocean, blinking in the east, the ancient work of the father shimmers with adornments—the bright token of God.]

The Sun, just like the grove and its fruits, is a *fyrngeweorc* explicitly crafted by God that shines *frætwum*. However, this is not quite the same *frætwe* we saw in the grove; it has evolved as a symbol. If those were literal fruits that look metaphorically like treasure which redirect an appreciation from human treasure to the divine treasure of Grace (fruits to treasure to Grace) then this is something else that looks metaphorically like treasure but which bears the same

97 See Blake for an explication of the allegory (Blake 1990, p. 73).

thematic function (_____ to treasure to Grace). That *frætwum* modifies *blican* in this context makes it quite plain that "light" should fill this blank, but, much like the fruits that came before it, this light is somehow extraordinary. Although light and brilliance are strongly associated with *frætwe*, it seems that the ornamental connotation of *frætwe* rather than any inherent brightness generates that association. For example, the half-line *frætwum blican* is even something of a formula, appearing five times in the poetic corpus. Yet, each time it refers to something probably adorned in one way or another. Angels *frætwum blican* three of those times, but it is easy to imagine angels decked in gold, jewels, and various finery as they appear to humans.[98] Moreover, Tyler notes the number of times saved souls and angels are lavishly adorned, often in *frætwe*, in Old English poetry.[99] The other referent of *frætwum blican* is the panther of the *Physiologus* poems whose variegated coat renders the formula highly physical; we can easily imagine his coat shimmering the same way reflected light dances over fine jewelry. So sunshine's description here in *The Phoenix* suggests ornamentation or adornment or, more likely, the ability to adorn with its light.

The poet figures its illumination in exactly these terms when he reemphasizes a metaphorical ornamentation at the end of the passage describing the Sun:

> swegles tapur
> ofer holmþræce hædre blice,
> leohtes leoma. Lond beoð gefrætwad,
> woruld gewlitegad, siþþan wuldres gim
> ofer geofones gong grund gescineþ
> geond middangeard, mærost tungla. (114b–119b)
> [the taper of the firmament, a lamp of light, brightly glints over the tossing of the deep. The land is embellished, the world beautified, when across the expanse of the ocean the gem of heaven, of stars the most glorious, illumines the earth

98 Angels that *blican frætwum* can be found in *Christ* (ll. 507b, 522b) and *Juliana* (l. 564a).
99 Tyler 2006, pp. 93–96.

throughout the world.][100]

This is the only use in the corpus of the verb *gefrætwian* to describe embellishment via light and is a brilliant conception of the process of adornment. Not only does it suggest the Sun brings something of the divine permanency associated with the *frætwe*-as-fruits of the plateau in its own sunlight, thereby further permeating the land in God's Grace, it adds another layer of meaning to the word by charging it with the theological implications that light carries in religious Old English verse. Light is strongly associated with divine beauty in Anglo-Saxon poetry and often symbolizes a number of theological moods and concepts. Darkness functions oppositely. Though this dichotomy is quite common in religious poetry, perhaps nowhere is it better demonstrated than in *Guthlac*. As the cannibals torture the saint, he anticipates their dark reckoning and compares it to the bright future awaiting himself. Guthlac begins his speech by twice invoking God as the *lifes leohtfruma* [light-giver of life] (ll. 593a, 609a), inextricably coupling life and light, then describes his salvific faith, announcing he is *leohte geleafan . . . gefylled* [filled with the light of belief] (l. 652a–653a) in his *feorhlocan* [breast] (l. 653b) and *leomum inlyhted to þam leofestan / ecan earde* [radiantly illumined towards that most beloved everlasting abode] (l. 655a–656a).[101] He denies his captors the *lleohtes leoma ne lifes hyht / in godes rice* [radiance of light [and] the hope of life] (l. 659a–660a) and condemns them to a an *ece fyr / ðær* [they] *sceolon dreogan deað ond þystro* [everlasting fire where [they] shall endure death and darkness] (l. 634a–635b)—a *bælblæsan* [fire-blaze] (l. 676a) trapped in *sweart sinnehte* [swarthy endless night] (l. 678a).[102] The saint *dæghluttre scan* [shone

100Bradley 1995, p. 288.
101Bradley 1995, p. 265.
102Translations are my own and Bradley's (Bradley 1995, p. 265).

with day-brightness] (l. 693b) against the *þeostra þegnas* [dark thanes] (l. 696a) and later, at Guthlac's death, 15 lines are devoted to describing the *æþele [scima] ymb æþelne* [noble light about the noble man] (l. 1286b–1287a) that shines brighter than the heavens, scattering the threatening dark. Light is the life that God gives us and His power; darkness is the absence of that life and thus painful, eternal death. Holton summarizes this concept: "night and darkness are most usually associated with Satan and are in contrast to the brightness of the Heavenly City (Apocalypse 22.5) or to the light of Christian truth, shed from the *sol iustitiae*, which is Christ."[103] In *The Phoenix*, the "*sol iustitiae*, which is Christ" is the literal Sun, and, much like Guthlac at his death, puts *seo deorce niht* [the dark night] (l. 98b) to flight. We know that sunlight will be the ultimate catalyst for the phoenix's immolation and resurrection (l. 208), and we will see how brightness henceforth figures into appearances of *frætwe*, but here we see the origin of a salvific light that dispels darkness and adorns the world with a shimmer characteristic of treasure, although this treasure is actually of use to the souls of men.

Bearing the permanence of the fruits in the Edenic plateau and the spiritual brilliance of the sunlight that adorns it, *frætwe* again develops the poem's conception of treasure at a key development in the allegory of the phoenix. The bird has left its verdant Edenic paradise and now occupies a much different landscape twice labeled a *westen* (ll. 161a, 201b) which can, and often does, imply a spiritual as well as literal wasteland. Nonetheless, the phoenix manages to find a suitable tree in which he, as we learn later, *wundrum fæst / wið niþa gehwam nest gewyrceð* [he builds a nest marvelously secure against every malicious attack](ll. 468b–469b).[104] And indeed, there is a great deal of emphasis on the craftsmanship and distinctly human

103Holton 1982, p. 210.
104Bradley 1995, p. 296.

structurality of his nest, but with the fantastical twist that we have come to expect from things that look man-made in the world of the *The Phoenix.* The *wyrta wynsume* [blessed herbs] with which the bird builds its nest are the treasure in this passage:

> þær he sylf biereð
> in þæt treow innan torhte frætwe;
> þær se wilda fugel in þam westenne
> ofer heanne beam hus getimbreð,
> wlitig ond wynsum, ond gewicað þær
> sylf in þam solere. (ll. 199b–204a)
> [There he himself bears the splendid treasure into the tree where in the wasteland the wild bird builds a house at the top of the tall tree, lovely and delightsome, and there in that solarium he installs himself.][105]

That these "treasures" are *torhte* and *wyrta* makes them a synthesis of both the literal and metaphorical senses of the two previous iterations of *frætwe. Wyrta* lands them in the natural sphere of flora along with the eternal *wæstmas* of the plateau—the poet even intentionally confuses the two when he explicates the symbols of the allegory in the second half of the poem: *þis* [good deeds] *þa wyrta sind, / wæstma blede, þa se wilda fugel / somnað under swegle* [these [good deeds] are the herbs and the fruits of the plants which the wild bird gathers . . . below the sky] (ll. 465b–467a).[106] *Torhte* immediately recalls the *frætwum blican* of the Sun; Tyler notes that *beorht*—similar to *torhte*—and *frætwe* collocate fairly regularly in poetry, but, as with *frætwum blican*, the prevailing context is of things physically or metaphorically adorned.[107] Therefore, condensed in these shining herb-fruits are both the

105Bradley 1995, p. 290.

106On this, Blake comments: "an important features of the poet's allegory is that the fruit of the trees in the phoenix's home and the scented roots and spices which the phoenix collects before immolation correspond to the good works done on earth. The poet does not, however, draw any firm distinction between the fruit and the roots or between these and the spices. In the poem, *wæstm*, *bled*, *frætwe*, *wyrt*, and *stenc* are synonymous. At ll.206–6 *halgum stencum* is paralleled by *eorthan bledum*, at ll.465–6 *wyrta* by *wæstma blede*; and many other parallels could be adduced" (Blake 1962, p. 57). Translation is Bradley 1995, p. 296.

107Tyler 2006, p. 92.

timeless and redemptive qualities of the two previous iterations of *frætwe* as well as the sense that they may be somehow crafted.

The latter sense of craftsmanship, although inherited from previous iterations of the word, makes its most crucial thematic contribution yet to the poem as the phoenix uses these *frætwe* to build its funereal nest. As the two figurative identities of *frætwe*—human and divine treasure—converge at the end of their thematic arc, they become more vivid. Metaphorical language like *fyrngeweorc* and its extratextual semantic connotations only suggested *frætwe*'s connection to treasure when the word was used of the fruits in the phoenix's grove and the sun's embellishing rays. The above passage, however, confirms that this suggestion is intentional. Blake cites this as a crucial example of the poet's "distinct tendency to anthropomorphize the phoenix in the first half and to give the bird characteristics which are more appropriate to men and heroes."[108] He claims the identification of the bird's nest as a *hus* [house] (ll. 202b, 212a, 217a), *solere* [solarium] (l. 204a), *willsele* [good hall](l. 213b), and *hof* [house] (l. 228a) indicate the poet wanted this nest to look like a heroic hall. But Blake only points to how this vocabulary strengthens the allegorical connections between the bird and the blessed souls it signifies; he does not consider the important implications of including a hall in an Anglo-Saxon poem and how *The Phoenix* uniquely incorporates this extraordinarily powerful cultural and poetic image into its own expression of God's Grace.

Kathryn Hume, in her excellent exploration and contextualization of the concept of the hall in Old English poetry, calls the hall not an image or a motif but rather an "idea-complex," speaking not only to the great number of cultural and poetic elements associated with the hall

108Blake 1962, p. 53. Faraci also considers this an element of the poet's effort to "link the destiny of the animal with the destiny of man" (Faraci 2000, p. 233).

but the diversity of attitudes towards those elements.[109] But, until it encounters rival idea-complexes associated with Christianity, at its most pure "the hall is poetically equivalent to the *mondream* it encloses, the best feature that society could offer to its members" and stands at the center of the Germanic society the Anglo-Saxons poetically conceived as their heritage.[110] It is a figurative and physical nexus of cultural values with an almost religious significance to the secular realms in Old English poetry, and the religious friction it generates against Christianity is obvious and expected. Hume notes the absolute rejection of the hall and the social structure it represents in religious poems like *Andreas*, *Guthlac*, and *The Seafarer*, observing that "clearly Christianity contributed new dimensions to the poetic handling of halls and *burga*, often disapproving."[111]

The idea-complex of the hall threatens the coherency of the Christian message because it resonates in an almost religious register in Anglo-Saxon poetry that even a modern audience can sense. Helterman demonstrates how the *Beowulf* poet imagines Heorot, the most famous hall in Anglo-Saxon literature, as the "center of the universe, i.e., the place from which creation, order radiating in a circle, was begun."[112] If the hall is a temple, then the religion practiced is the heroic code of the *comitatus* and their ceremonial worship the hallowed rituals of "singing, feasting, and drinking, gift-giving and magnanimity of spirit."[113] The Lord of a hall is not God, but merely a lord—a *dryhten* but not *Dryhten*—and as His Grace is the dogmatic center of Christian

109Hume 1974, p. 63.
110Ibid, p. 67.
111Ibid, pp. 71–72.
112Helterman 1968, p. 6. Specifically, he demonstrates how Heorot is described in similar terms as Creation in *Genesis* and how that, along with evidence presented in the rest of his paper, places Heorot in the same register as the chief palaces or temples of "all primitive cultures, extending up until classical Greece and Rome." (Ibid, p. 6)
113Greenfield and Calder 1983, p. 140.

doctrine, the distribution of gifts in the form of rings, weapons, and various treasure seems "to have been the imaginative centre of all the clustered hall associations."[114] In *Beowulf* the best halls are those whose lords give the most treasure; when Hrothgar orders a *healreced* [hall-building] that *yldo bearn æfre gefrunon* [the sons of men should remember forever] (ll. 70a–70b) he defines its quality by his generosity in gift-giving, the poet indirectly compares to God's own: *ond þær on innan eall gedælan / geongum ond ealdum, swylc him god sealde, / buton folcscare ond feorum gumena* [and there inside he would share everything / with young and old that God had given him / except for the common land and the lives of men] (l. 71a–73b).[115] And indeed he is generous; Heorot is the site of a number of significant gift exchanges, and the quality of the treasure he shares is a subject of much poetic energy.[116] Treasure is so integral to the concept of the hall and the surrounding culture that it can become a material in the hall's physical structure. Heorot necessitates for its marvelous construction *weorc gebannan . . . folcstede frætwan* [the work . . . was . . . proclaimed . . . to come adorn the folk-stead] (l. 74b–76a) and, similarly, after the glorious celebration of Grendel's defeat *ða wæs haten hreþe Heort innanweard / folmum gefrætwod* [then it was quickly commanded that Heorot / be adorned by hands inside] (l. 991a). As Beowulf approaches it for the first time, he sees a *sæl timbred, / geatolic ond goldfah* [timbered hall, splendid and gold adorned] (ll. 308b–309a) and that *lixte se leoma ofer landa fela* [its light shone over many lands] (l. 311) with a radiance we might normally expect reserved for God. The treasure-giving, mirth, and light associated with the hall idea-complex was a source of great comfort and security that might

114Hume 1974, p. 64.

115Liuzza notes the alternate reading "a greater meadhall / than the sons of men had ever heard of" (Liuzza 2000, p. 55).

116See for example ll. 1008b–1063a, 2155a–2162b. See also Hrothgar's sermon (ll. 1700a–84b) in which, as Hume notes, "he mentions dispensing treasure no less than five times" (Hume 1974, p. 64).

easily replace that taken in God. Hume figures that "any reader can deduce from incidental comments [in Old English poetry about the hall idea-complex] that the hall was pictured, for poetic purposes, as a circle of light and peace enclosed by darkness, discomfort, and danger."[117] By embracing such vocabulary as *hus*, *solere*, *willsele*, and *hof* to label a nest made of *torhte frætwe*, *The Phoenix* invites a comparison between the bird's nest and a hall like Heorot and risks a theological incoherency the hall idea-complex may introduce to a religious poem. However, the poet resolves this incoherency by treating the hall idea-complex in much the same way it treats the exile motif: by redirecting the secular anxiety associated with it towards a positive religious message using the same image cast in a different light.

In the Germanic tradition, the anxiety associated with the hall is generated by a fear of losing it; often accompanying the hall idea-complex is the "ruin" motif in which the "the destruction of the hall is used emblematically for the destruction of a society"—in this case, the heroic society and its central social unit, the *comitatus*.[118] The destruction is brought about by death and the relentless passage of time. Why this need not concern a Christian is fairly obvious, and if Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* is any indication, this unease would have been contrary to an ideal Anglo-Saxon brand of Christianity. In the story of King Edwin's conversion, one of the king's *suasores* compares the uncertainty of man's existence to a sparrow's experience flying through a warm hall:

117Hume 1974, p. 64.

118Hume 1976, p. 350. In fact, in her essay Hume aims to dismantle the concept of a "ruin motif," claiming that critical motives, a number of ready analogues and origins for the motif, and its evocative power have created a "motif" out of a relatively small number of passages that would feature it. However, she adds that "though there is no actual ruin motif as such, the peculiar poetic power of the passages involved derives from their connection to the value- and idea-complex associated with the hall" (Hume 1976, p. 341). The connection between the "motif"—whether it "exists" or not—and the hall idea-complex is its relevance to my discussion and it is simply easier to refer to it as a motif for my purposes.

> accenso quidem foco in medio, et calido effecto caenaculo, furentibus autem foris per omnia turbinibus hiemalium pluuiarum uel niuium, adueniens unus passerum domum citissime peruolauerit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit. Ipso quidem tempore, quo intus est, hiemis tempestate non tangitur, sed tamen paruissimo spatio serenitatis ad momentum excurso, mox de hieme in hiemem regrediens, tuis oculis elabitur. Ita haec uita hominum ad modicum apparet; quid autem sequatur, quidue praecesserit, prorsus ignoramus. Unde si haec noua doctrina certius aliquid attulit, merito esse sequenda uidetur. (II.xiii)
> [In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it.][119]

Therefore Christianity should succeed where the limited walls of the hall fail; it makes sense of the ice and tumult outside the hall and the unknown beyond man's days on earth. *Maxims I* ensures that *an sceal inbindan / forstes fetre felameahtig god* / *winter sceal geweorpan* [one alone, the God of powers manifold, shall unbind frost's fetters. He shall drive away the winter] (ll. 74b–76a).[120] So for a good Anglo-Saxon Christian, the dissolution of a hall should be no cause for anxiety. And yet in Anglo-Saxon poetry we observe distinct evidence for a very real dread (at least in a poetic setting) of time's inevitable annihilation of the hall and all that it represents.

The Ruin devotes all of its surviving 49 lines (the rest are perhaps fittingly lost due to fire damage) to the appalling and total loss of a formerly spectacular *enta geweorc* which “would be perceived not just as the marvellous work of those with superhuman powers, but also as the

119Bede II.xiii. Translation is Bede 1990(tr. Sherley-Price), p. 129-30.
120Bradley 1995, p. 348.

product of the pagan past."[121] From the opening two lines—*wrætlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebræcon; / burgstede burston, brosnað enta geweorc* [wondrous is that wall-stone, broken by fate; the city shattered, the work of giants crumbled] (ll. 1a–2b), a reverence for the mystery and majesty of bygone architecture mingles with the image of its abhorrent devastation until the speaker, as if overwhelmed, "turns with increasing frequency to a progressively more vital past, until, after line 32a, he ceases to mention present decay, and loses himself in admiration of the city as it once was."[122] The lines Klinck refers to reveal a familiar image:

> Hryre wong gecrong
> gebrocen to beorgum, þær iu beorn monig
> glædmod ond goldbeorht gleoma gefrætwed,
> wlonc ond wingal wighyrstum scan;
> seah on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas,
> on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan,
> on þas beorhtan burg bradan rices. (ll. 31b–37b)
> [The site is fallen into ruin, reduced to heaps, where once many a man blithe of mood and bright with gold, clothed in splendours, proud and flown with wine, gleamed in his war-trappings, and gazed upon treasure, on silver, on chased gems, on wealth, on property, on the precious stone and on the bright citadel of the broad kingdom.][123]

The glory and comfort of a pagan past are embodied in the noble image of a pagan *gefrætwed* gazing upon an ancient structure equally well-adorned—indeed principally defined by the magnificent treasure that decorates it.

Heorot awaits the devouring flames of ruin from the very moments its built, and its fate is threatened in almost the same breath as Hrothgar's distribution of rings and treasure, signaling that heroic gesture has no power to thwart time and fate. No sooner is the hall constructed and generosity of Hrothgar lauded than is Heorot's doom portended:

121Klinck 1992, p. 62.
122Klinck 1992, p. 63.
123Bradley 1995, p. 402.

> He beot ne aleh, beagas dælde,
> sinc æt symle. Sele hlifade,
> heah ond horngeap, heaðowylma bad,
> laðan liges. (ll. 80a—83a)
> [He remembered his boast; he gave out rings, / treasure at table. The hall towered / high and horn-gabled—it awaited hostile fires.]

The destruction of Heorot initiates a theme of ruined halls and their ominous social implications. We do do not directly witness the conflagration that consumes Heorot, but as if to take its place Beowulf's own hall *brynewylmum mealt* [had burned in the flames] (l. 2326b) and *þæt ðam godan* [Beowulf] *wæs* / *hreow on hreðre, hygesorga mæst* [to the good man that was / painful in spirit, greatest of sorrows] (ll. 2327b–2328b). The passage that follows is a striking demonstration of the connection between man's own mortality and the tendency of his halls to burn; Beowulf understands that he and his wooden shield, a *wigbord wrætlic* (l. 2339a) look forward to the same fiery doom his hall suffers: *wisse he gearwe* / *þæt him holtwudu helpan ne meahte,* / *lind wið lige* [he understood well / that wood from the forest would not help him / linden against flames] (ll. 2339b–2341a). The poet reiterates here the uselessness of treasure to man in his mortal struggle and perhaps introduces, by enabling a confusion of man and dragon via the pronoun *ðe*, a critique of the hoarding of riches:

> Sceolde lændaga
> æþeling ærgod ende gebidan,
> worulde lifes, ond se wyrm somod,
> þeah ðe hordwelan heolde lange. (ll. 2341b–2344b)
> [The long-good nobleman / had to endure the end of his loaned days, / this world's life—and so did the worm, / though he had held for so long his hoarded wealth.]

In their reciprocal annihilation, both the dragon and Beowulf will lose the same *hordwelan* that initially causes their fruitless conflict when the dragon *onfand / ðæt hæfde gumena sum*

goldes gefandod / heahgestreona [discovered that some man had disturbed his gold, his great wealth] (ll. 2300b–2302a) and determined he would *lige forgyldan / drincfæt dyre* [repay with fire / his precious drinking cup] (ll. 2305b–2306a). The conflict nor the hoard do either of the combatants any good, and after the battle's bloody conclusion, the remaining Geats *forleton eorla gestreon eorðan healdan, / gold on greote, þær hit nu gen lifað / eldum swa unnyt swa hit æror wæs* [let the earth hold the treasures of the earls,/ gold in the ground, where it yet remains, / just as useless to men as it was before] (ll. 3166a–3168b). Often where we find the "ruin" motif we also encounter treasure that is not only *eldum unnyt* as the *Beowulf* narrator understates, but even deleterious. Treasure is not only unable to prevent ruin and its own annihilation but prone to incite it. Because treasure is the social currency that holds the hall idea-complex together, its failing is a necessary condition of the idea-complex's dissolution, and if treasure causes the dissolution, then it signals the instability of the social structure that supports it. *The Phoenix* presents a treasure that, on some level, is no different. The secular poetry and the elegies are correct in that nothing can withstand the rapacious fire of time and fate, and the nest-hall and herb-treasure are consumed in the flames. Moreover, the essence of the treasure—the *frætwe*—is even a primary catalyst in the phoenix's immolation. However, because this particular treasure in *The Phoenix* is a symbol for God's mysterious Grace, it is all the more glorious when it emerges from those flames.

The moments before the immolation of the phoenix's nest are a striking contrast to the dreadful anticipation of a more typical ruin like Heorot's and likely serves to remind us what metaphorical elements compose the forthcoming holocaust. As the phoenix bird *siteð siþes fus* [settles down, eagerly anticipating his destiny] (l. 208a) the *swegles gim . . . ofer sceadu scineð*

ond gesceapu dreogeð [gem of the firmament . . . shines upon the gloom and fulfills its appointed task] (ll. 208b–210b).[124] The Sun *frætwum blican* [ornately glints] as it did before (l. 95b) when it routed the *deorce niht* [dark night] (l. 98b) and thus the *lond beoð gefrætwad* [land is embellished] (l. 116b) under its purifying radiance, just as it was when we first saw the sun rise over the phoenix's plateau. The Sun contributes its metaphorical treasure—its salvific qualities—to the theological implications of the phoenix's nest. Then it heats the herbs and the *wyrta wearmiað* [herbs grow warm] (l. 213a); the treasure of the Sun mingles with the treasure the phoenix contributes—his good works. As the *willsele stymeð / swetum swæccum* [chosen dwelling effuses with sweet fragrances] (ll. 213b–214a), this "ruin" would certainly be the most gentle and fragrant in all of Old English verse. This initial mildness only makes the violence of the forthcoming flames that much more shocking.

Because the poem has so far been mostly preoccupied with divine constancy and beauty, the cataclysmic burning of the phoenix may seem an antithetical shift and thus a moment of hellish collapse. Bedingfield notes that, in the authoritative writings and sermons of Gregory the Great and St. Augustine, "fire is fundamentally purifying and transformative, a key part in the transition between judgement and eternity,"[125] and indeed this is the primary function of fire in *The Phoenix*, but this fire looks almost like hellfire and the poet may here intend a sense of dread. After the sensually pleasing image of the warm, gently effusing herbs, the flame ignites and ensnares the phoenix and its nest:

> þonne on swole byrneð
> þurh fyres feng fugel mid neste.
> Bæl bið onæled. þonne brond þeceð

124Bradley 1995, p. 290.
125Bedingfield 2001, p. 661.

heorodreorges hus, hreoh onetteð,
fealo lig feormað ond fenix byrneð,
fyrngearum frod. þonne fyr þigeð
lænne lichoman; lif bið on siðe,
fæges feorhhord, þonne flæsc ond ban
adleg æleð. (ll. 214b—222a)
[Then in the heat the bird burns along with his nest in the grip of the fire. The pyre is kindled. Then flame engulfs the house of the bloodied creature; fierce, it races on; yellow flame devours and burns the phoenix, old with years long gone. Then fire devours the ephemeral body; the life, the spirit of the dying bird is on its way when the flame of the funeral pyre incinerates flesh and bone.][126]

This flame is certainly more fearsome than its Latin counterpart. The Anglo-Saxon poet clearly expanded on his source here; the *Carmen de ave phoenice* allots only three lines of relatively neutral language to the conflagration: *interea corpus genitali morte peremptum* / *aestuat et flammam parturit ipse calor*, / *aetherioque procul de lumine concipit ignem* [meanwhile her body, by birth-giving death destroyed, is aglow, the very heat producing flame and catching fire from the ethereal light afar] (ll. 95–97).[127] Moreover, Lactantius recognizes the heavenly origin and thus higher purpose (though it is not necessarily Christian) of these flames. We know from only a moment before that the Sun, and thus God, heats this nest to combustion (ll. 208b–211b), but for this brief space of time, God is not here, only a ruinous inferno.

The first word to suggest a negative understanding of these fires is *bæl* [fire]. Though the poet anticipates its judgment day context early in the poem (l. 47b), and the burning of the phoenix is certainly a precursor to judgment day, the poetic associations of *bael* suggest connotations of torture, pain, or violence as the word is often used of fire intended to injure. The heathen king of Babylon in *Daniel*, enraged at a trio of youths who refuse to worship the king's false idol, orders them burned *in bælblyse* [fire-blaze] (l. 231a). The torturous fires of Hell

126Bradley 1995, p. 290.
127The translation here is Duff's.

are *bæles cwealm* [slaughter of fire] (l. 1186b) in *Andreas* and *bælblæsan* [fire-blaze] (l. 676a) in *Guthlac*. Another chief use of *bael*, and, as *adleg* indicates, one certainly applicable to this passage in *The Phoenix*, is of funeral pyres. Of the ten times the word and some of its potential compounds appear in *Beowulf*, eight are in this context (the other two are of the dragon's baleful flames). Given the ruinous intensity of this *hreoh* flame (the funeral pyres in *Beowulf* are much tamer), I think it is fitting to allow for both possibilities; it is indeed a funeral pyre, but it is an unnaturally hostile one. The second point of interest is *heorodreorges*. Wentersdorf has explored the word across a range of poems and finds it bears a range of connotations: "'suffering physical pain, tormented; anguished, terrified, grief-stricken' . . . 'doomed to die [not necessarily of wounds], ill-fate; doomed to disaster or destruction' . . . 'portending death or disaster, ill-boding, inauspicious' (said of things)."[128] Wentersdorf, citing "the indications in the O.E. Poem regarding the positive frame of mind in which the phoenix faces death,"[129] concludes that "the context of *heorodreorig* in *The Phoenix* indicates that the interpretation to be given to the compound should not conflict with the clearly established mood of serene confidence, if not of joy, in the prospect of a blissful future"and thus assigns *The Phoenix*'s usage of *heorodreorig* the "doomed to die [not necessarily of wounds]."[130] However, Wentersdorf does not consider here that the *Phoenix* poet evokes the ruin motif. He does not observe that, for the first time in the poem, explicit ephemerality is introduced and mortality emphasized. The aging bird is *fyrngearum frod*, its *lichoman lænne*, its *lif bið on siðe*, and its *feorhhord fæges*; we know the bird lives forever but the poet makes great effort, in this moment, to suggest otherwise. I

128Wentersdorf 1973, pp. 33–34.
129Ibid, p. 36.
130Ibid, p. 37.

would therefore propose that *heorodreorig* contributes, along with the caustic avarice of the flames and the pathetic frailty of the phoenix, to a brief but vivid image of ruin. It pits the theological power of God's Grace against an ancient ancestral horror and thereby exhibits the mysterious power of God's treasure to withstand the archetypically dreadful calamity that lays waste to less resilient trinkets of mortals.

Indeed, it does not take long for God's treasure to reemerge from the embers. Such is the power of God that this proto-ruin only horrifies for a brief moment; it evokes the terror of a secular cultural fear that typically has such a powerful poetic presence only to swiftly cast it aside in the same line as the flames themselves:

> . . . þonne flæsc ond ban
> adleg æleð. **Hwæþre** him **eft** cymeð
> **æfter** fyrstmearce feorh **edniwe**,
> **siþþan** þa yslan **eft** onginnað
> **æfter** ligþræce lucan **togædre**,
> geclungne to cleowenne. (ll. 222b–226a)
> [. . . then the funeral pyre incinerates flesh and bone. **However**, **new** life comes **again** to him after some time; **afterward** the slain one endeavors **after** the fire-onset to lock **together**, to cling into a sphere.]

Hwæþre immediately introduces a concession to the violence we have just seen, and sets off a mirrored pattern of auxiliary language: [*hwæþre* . . . *eft* . . . *aefter* . . . *edniwe*] echoes in [*siþþan* . . . *eft* . . . *aefter* . . . *togædre*]. The repetition, harmony of structure, and sense of the words themselves create a unification following dissolution thereby lending a sense of rejuvenation and reanimation to the passage. It mimics the act of resurrection itself, emphasizing that the preceding catastrophe is hardly the end for the phoenix who, having been resurrected through divine providence, is now both what he was before and something else entirely—a radiant, verdant angel:

> þonne on sceade weaxeð,
> þæt he ærest bið swylce earnes brid,
> fæger fugeltimber; ðonne furþor gin
> wridað on wynnum, þæt he bið wæstmum gelic
> ealdum earne, and æfter þon
> feþrum gefrætwad, swylc he æt frymðe wæs,
> beorht geblowen. (ll. 234b–240a)
>
> [Then in the shade he grows so that he becomes at first like an eagle's bird, a fair young fowl; then he further still flourishes in bliss until he is alike in form to an old eagle, and after thence he is adorned with feathers, as he was at the beginning—brightly blossomed.]

Like the cherubim in *Elene*, he is adorned with feathers, but *gefrætwad* is not mere decoration here; the eternal fruits of Eden and the sanctifying radiance of the Sun have coalesced in this bird along with their theological implications. *Wæstmum*, though it literally means "in form," is a pun on the *wæstmas* of the phoenix's paradise, the first *frætwe* we see in the poem, so the phoenix is both like "the fruit" and "an old eagle in form."[131] Furthermore, *gelic* takes a dative object, so before we arrive at line 238, *wæstmum* can be understood as the object of *bið gelic* meaning that the growing phoenix "flourishes in bliss so that he is like the fruits." The brief ambiguity is likely a poetic flourish intended to suggest the phoenix bird has come into a permanency similar to that of the Edenic vegetation. In addition to *frætwe* and *waestm*, the verbs expressing the phoenix's growth in this passage echo some of those which describe the plateau and its fruits early in the poem. As the phoenix is *beorht geblowen* and *wridað on wynnum*, so too does *þæt torhte lond wridað under wolcnum, wynnum geblowen* [that bright land flourish under the clouds, blossomed with joys] (ll.28a, 27). Indeed, of the six times the poet uses the verb *geblowan*, this is the word's first metaphorical application.[132] So just like

131They are *fiðrum gefrætwad* in *Elene* (l. 742a).

132The other occurrences of *geblowan* are as follows: ll. 21a, 27b, 47a, 156b, 179a. The only time its used of something other than the Edenic grove is in l. 179a, for which the subject is the palm tree which is like a piece of Eden itself given that it *wunað ungewyrded, þenden woruld stondeð* [remains uninjured while while the world stands] (l. 181).

that inviolate plateau and its *frætwe* that *no woniath o . . . ne feallath . . . ac thaer wraetlice / on tham treowum symle telgan gehladene*, */ ofett edniwe in ealle tid* [never fade . . . nor fall . . . but there, wondrously, the new fruit loads on that tree always for all time] (ll. 72b–77b), so too will this bird, blessed with God's Grace, endure.

But, like those fruits, there is something distinctly *wrætlic* about the phoenix's immortality. The beauty, singularity, and craftsmanship of the previous *frætwe* have coalesced in the resurrected phoenix, which, as Calder observes, "the Old English poet has made . . . into a work of art, hardly born of the natural world at all"[133]:

> Is se fugel fæger forweard hiwe,
> bleobrygdum fag ymb þa breost foran.
> Is him þæt heafod hindan grene,
> wrætlice wrixled, wurman geblonden.
> þonne is se finta fægre gedæled,
> sum brun, sum basu, sum blacum splottum
> searolice beseted. Sindon þa fiþru
> hwit hindanweard, ond se hals grene
> nioþoweard ond ufeweard, ond þæt nebb lixeð
> swa glæs oþþe gim, geaflas scyne
> innan ond utan. Is seo eaggebyrd
> stearc ond hiwe stane gelicast,
> gladum gimme, þonne in goldfate
> smiþa orþoncum biseted weorþeð.
> Is ymb þone sweoran, swylce sunnan hring,
> beaga beorhtast brogden feðrum.
> Wrætlic is seo womb neoþan, wundrum fæger,
> scir ond scyne. Is se scyld ufan
> frætwum gefeged ofer þæs fugles bæc.
> Sindon þa scancan scyllum biweaxen,
> fealwe fotas. (ll. 291a–311a)
> [The bird is fair in hue at the front, colored with variegated colors about the front of his breast. His head is green in the back—wondrously variegated—and mixed with purple. Then the tail is handsomely variegated, partly burnished and partly purple, and partly set artistically with blinking spots. The feathers are white on the rear part and the throat, downward and upward, is green, and that beak

133Calder 1972, p. 174.

> gleams like glass or a gem—the jaws shine inside and out. The nature of the eye is stark and in appearance like a stone, a brilliant gem, when by the craftsmanship of the smith it becomes set in gold foil. About the neck, like a ring of the sun, the brightest ring is woven from feathers. The belly on the bottom is marvelous, wondrously fair, resplendent and shining. The shield above, over the bird's back, is fitted together with adornments. The shanks are grown with scales, the yellow feet.]

Hilary Fox has done excellent work tracing concrete connections between the details in this passage and Anglo-Saxon jewelry or its imitation in manuscripts. She draws a connection between *goldfate*, which suggests the setting of gems in a "thin gold plate or gold foil or leaf," to "the gold *cloison* used in early Anglo-Saxon gold-and-garnet jewelry" and the zoomorphic designs that often decorate them; she adds "these animals [etched on the *cloison*] occasionally have eyes formed of glass or semiprecious stones in settings of gold and silver, and examples of such designs can be found in pieces from across the corpus of Anglo-Saxon jewelry."[134] She adds that "the poet's use of *besettan* and *eaggebyrd* to describe the appearance of the phoenix's eye suggests . . . the composition, design, and structure of the eye: the eye, in its placement and disposition, is like the eye of a jeweled animal made by a master craftsman, who shapes the setting and then inserts a stone or gem into it."[135] Moreover, she figures that "the repetition of the participle *biseted* (< *besettan*, 'to set with jewels') in the company of the adverb *searolice* (l. 297) and the more explicity *smitha orthoncum* [machinery of smiths] (l. 304) emphasis the crafted quality of the phoenix beyond the metal- and jewel-like tones used in the description of its feathers and the eye."[136] I would stress the significance of *orthoncum* due to its rarity and apparent connotations. The word only appears in its various forms and compounds fourteen

134Fox 2012, pp. 3–4.
135Ibid, p. 5.
136Ibid, p. 5. Her source for the definition of *besettan* is the *Dictionary of Old English,* s.v. besettan.

times in the poetic corpus, and four of those appearances are in the Exeter Riddles, which, like their abnormally common use of *wraetlic*, speaks to a certain arcane mystery in the word's sense of craftsmanship.[137] However, while in *The Ruin* and *Maxims II*, the mystery of the *orþonc ærsceaft* [ingenious ancient building] or *orðanc enta geweorc* [ingenious work of giants] derives from their antiquity, the ingenuity of the crafted phoenix is divine.[138] And, unlike those old works of giants, which the erosive power of fate crumbles so completely in *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, the crafted body of the phoenix not only survives the fires of Judgment but thrives, emerging from them all the more beautiful.

The phoenix is artificial in the purest sense: it is a crafted image of God's Grace wrought through His mysterious and enduring *ars*. The fruits of Eden symbolizing permanence, the radiance of the sun symbolizing God's forgiveness, and the righteousness of good works are like his materials; they do not just superficially decorate a blessed soul in gems, but rather bind it together such that it is *frætwum gefeged* [fitted together with ornaments]. Treasure does not merely decorate theological concepts in *The Phoenix*. Rather, the various images of treasure are each dynamic and rich symbols for elements of God's mysterious Grace which come together in an equally rich symbol of not only God's Grace but His power to create a beautiful treasure as he did *in principio.*[139]

In explicating the allegory, the latter half of the poem also contributes the poetically developed *frætwe* symbol to the standard Christian treasure symbol. As the phoenix *gewiteð wongas secan, / his ealdne eard, of þisse eþeltyrf* [departs to seek the plains, his old land,

137*Riddle 21* l. 12a; *Riddle 42* l. 15a; *Riddle 70* l. 3a; *Riddle 78* l. 8a.
138*Orþonc ærsceaft*: *The Ruin* (l. 16). *Orðanc enta geweorc*: *Maxims II* (l. 2a).
139Genesis 1:1

away from this earth] (l. 320a–21b), he bears his *frætwe* both literally out of the mortal world and figuratively out of the allegory into the narrative texture of the poem. This transition is marked by a moment of distinct authorial awareness of the symbolic image. As the bird makes its journey, all the men of the earth *sceawiaþ scyppendes giefe / fægre on þam fugle, swa him æt fruman sette / sigora soðcyning sellicran gecynd, / frætwe fægerran ofer fugla cyn* [gaze upon the Creator's beauteous gifts in the bird, according as the true King of victories in the beginning ordained for him a rarer nature and fairer embellishments beyond the family of birds] (ll. 327a–331b).[140] After having recognized the *frætwe* of the bird that the "shaper" "set," the men of the earth wonder at its beauties and venerate it much the same way the poet has:

> ðonne wundriað weras ofer eorþan
> wlite ond wæstma, ond gewritum cyþað,
> mundum mearciað on marmstane,
> hwonne se dæg ond seo tid dryhtum geeawe
> frætwe flyhthwates. (ll. 331a–335a)
> [Then people throughout the earth wonder at his form and stature, and their writings proclaim it and they depict it by hand in marble, when the day and the hour reveal to the nations the ornate beauties of the swift-flighted bird][141]

The Anglo-Saxon poet adds *gewritum* to the Latin *Carmen de ave phoenice*; the source which *The Phoenix* still follows at this point claims that the men *protinus exsculpunt sacrato in marmore formam* [forthwith carve out its form in consecrated marble] (l. 153). *Gewritum* must be the poet's nod to his own written tribute to the symbol of the phoenix and, when observed in conjunction with the repetition of *frætwe*, a major persistent motif, and the recurrence of the *wæstma* pun, may emphasize the intentionality of these poetic devices. The self-

140Translation is Bradley 1995, p. 293.
141ibid, p. 293.

acknowledgment is particularly appropriate at the end of the allegory and the canonization of the *frætwe* image amongst the traditional Christian images of treasure.

The holy treasure the poet has had in mind all along is no doubt the treasure that stands in the City of God after the fires of Judgment day:

> *et fundamenta muri civitatis omni lapide pretioso ornata. Fundamentum primum, jaspis: secundum, sapphirus: tertium, calcedonius: quartum, smaragdus . . . Et duodecim portae, duodecim margaritae sunt, per singulas: et singulae portae erant ex singulis margaritis: et platea civitatis aurum mundum, tamquam vitrum perlucidum.* (Rev 21:19, 21:21)
> [And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper: the second, sapphire: the third, a chalcedony: the fourth, an emerald . . . And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each: and every several gate was of one several pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.]

The gems that *gefrætwe* the phoenix recall the gems that adorn the holy city, and the bird is made of gold and glass just like the city's streets. The *Phoenix* poet makes this connection explicit as the resurrected souls after Judgment day prepare to enter the heavenly city:

> Swa nu æfter deaðe þurh dryhtnes miht
> somod siþiaþ sawla mid lice,
> fægre gefrætwed, fugle gelicast,
> in eadwelum æþelum stencum,
> þær seo soþfæste sunne lihteð
> wlitig ofer weoredum in wuldres byrig. (ll. 583a–588b)
> [Now just so after death, through the Lord's might, souls together with body will journey—handsomely adorned, just like the bird, with noble perfumes—into abundant joys where the sun, steadfastly true, glistens radiant above the multitudes in the heavenly city].[142]

So the bird, *gefrætwed* in all its glorious ornaments, is a precursor to the ultimate image of salvation where all blessed souls will go but only if they *gefrætwað* themselves in good works and follow God so they might receive his Grace as he *frætwum blican*. Indeed, the phoenix's

142Bradley 1995, p. 299.

(and the poet's) capacity to lead by example, as an allegory often does, and the nature of his leadership highlights the already striking similarities between his glorious raiment and Aaron's vestments in Exodus made *ex auro, hyacintho, purpura, coccoque bis tincto, et bysso retorta* [of gold, violet, purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen] (Exod 39:8) as well as many gems (Exod 39:10–14). Regarding Aaron's priestly vestments, Bede remarks:

> Perhaps it is not unsuitable to say of scarlet, which shines with the appearance of fire, that it was also commanded to be made twice dyed because it is characteristic of fire to possess a double power, namely, of burning and of giving light. Surely it is fitting for one who presides to imitate the nature [of fire] when [administering] the world of saving doctrine.][143]

Indeed it is a fitting use of the phoenix's treasure—his *frætwe*—to imitate fire, for it was wrought in fire. But both the phoenix and the *Phoenix* poet have crafted out of a Christian fire something more beautiful, elaborate, and ordered than the chaotic fire which threatens worldly treasure. *Frætwe* in *The Phoenix*, its poet would argue, is more beautiful, elaborate, and ordered than the similarly labeled *frætwe* which adorn Hrothgar's hall.

143Bede 1994, p. 114.

Conclusion: The Three Apples

Thus I argue that, by challenging of conventional poetic conceptions of exile and treasure and offering alternative images of each, *The Phoenix* develops an Anglo-Saxon religious poem of strong and unique Christian coherence. Worldly exile is not the ultimate misfortune and treasure is not the ultimate symbol of community; there is no need to fear the former nor loss of the latter. There is one final image I would like to explore that unites the themes of exile and treasure in the poem and elevates their theological implications to a register of considerable gravity. This image is the apple; there are three in the poem, and each represents a possible fate of the human soul.

The first, typical of the optimism of the poem, is a sure sign of the blessed soul's capacity for rebirth. Following the conflagration that consumes the phoenix and the previously discussed passage that emphasizes renewal, *of þam aðe æples gelicnes / on þære ascan bið eft gemeted* [out of the pyre, among the ashes, the likeness of an apple is afterwards discovered] (ll. 230a–231b), out of which emerges a worm that grows into the resurrected phoenix.[144] Blake notes that "as early as Herodotus the ashes [left after phoenix burns] are said to have been moulded into a shape like a ball, but the comparison of this with an apple may well be due to the Old English poet," and Faraci confirms that "the Old English author is the only one, as far as I know, who mentions the word *apple* in describing the regeneration of the phoenix."[145] So the first apple, an apparent invention of the Anglo-Saxon poet, is technically the survivor of the flames; all the *frætwe* the phoenix brings to that funeral pyre is concentrated in that fruit before the resurrected phoenix displays it in radiance.

144Bradley 1995, p. 291.
145Blake 1990, pp. 76–77; Faraci 229.

The second apple introduces man's state of natural, and wretched, exile. After a short passage describing how *ece lif eadigra gehwylc / æfter sarwræce sylf geceoseð / þurh deorcne deað* [each of the blessed chooses for himself, through dark death, that everlasting life after painful exile] (ll. 381a–383a), the poet offers an image of the preeminent *sarwræce*—Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden—and describes their infamous transgression: *hi bu þegun æppel unrædum ofer est godes, / byrgdon forbodene* [they both partook of the apple against the permission of God and tasted the forbidden fruit] (ll. 402b–404a).[146] The second apple thus introduces the most pessimistic and ominous passage of the work as the poet describes the abject misery of banished Adam and Eve.

The final apple contains both possibilities and follows a passage of more ambiguous mood than the first two. Although the *deorca deað* (l. 499a) introduced by the disobedience of Adam and Eve will be *dryhtnes meahtum / eadgum geendad* [ended for the blessed through God's might] (ll. 499b–500a), every man will fear the violent nonetheless, and their *frætwe*—their treasure, ornaments, or whatever it is—will be tested by that flame:

> Weorþeð anra gehwylc
> forht on ferþþe, þonne fyr briceð
> læne londwelan, lig eal þigeð
> eorðan æhtgestreon, æpplede gold
> gifre forgripeð, grædig swelgeð
> londes frætwe. (ll. 503b–508a)
> [Each single man will grow fearful in spirit when fire destroys the dry land's ephemeral wealth and flame devours all the chattels of the earth, voraciously attacks the apple-shaped gold and greedily swallows the treasures of dry land.][147]

Though this is not the end of the poem, it is the end of a natural thematic trajectory. The idyllic

146Bradley 1995, p. 294.

147Ibid 1995, p. 297. His translation of *æpplede gold* reads "beaded gold," but the sense of the line is clear, and Faraci observes this reading as well (229).

world of the phoenix has been left behind and the fate of this *æpplede gold* is uncertain. Is it shaped like the apple that gives birth to the resurrected phoenix? Or is it the apple with which Eve damns humanity? The flames will test the nature of the *æpplede gold*, and scripture reminds: *uniuscuiusque opus manifestum erit; dies enim declarabit quia in igne revelabitur et uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probabit* [every man' s work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is] (1 Cor 3:13). *The Phoenix* is an optimistic poem with a positive message, but only for the *eadige*. Otherwise the poet would have not taken such care to correct the theologically incoherent secular Germanic values. He reminds: *wel biþ þam þe mot / in þa geomran tid gode lician* [it will be well for those who, in that mournful hour, may be favorable to God] (ll. 515b–517b), *etenim Deus noster ignis consumens est* [for our God is a consuming fire] (Heb 12:29) and He will test of what sort we are. In much the same way, this poem is tested. By modifying secular Germanic poetic elements so that they are theologically coherent, the *Phoenix* poet has created a work of art that can not only survive the fire of judgment, but is all the more beautiful for having done so.

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