

## Review

Intertextuality of *Deor*

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The *Deor* is a poem found in the *Exeter Book* and included in the Old English elegies. The main purpose of this contribution is to highlight the possible intertextual links of the poem. After an outline of the old English elegies and a brief review of the most significant passages from the elegies, this short poem will be analyzed stanza by stanza. An attempt will be made to demonstrate that the various interpretations of the text depend on particular keywords that require that the readers to share the same time and space coordinates as the author. The personal names are the most important clues for interpretation. The problem is that they have been emended differently according to the editors and that the reader is supposed to know the referent hinted by those particular names.

**Key words:** Old English elegies, Exeter Book, *Deor*, intertextuality.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE OLD ENGLISH ELEGIES

It must be underlined that the term 'elegy' applying to old English (hereafter OE) poetry could be misleading since one would expect the meter of such poetry to be the same as the Greek and Latin Elegies, in which their elegiac distich (Pinotti, 2002) points out that in the fourth century AD, Diomedes Grammaticus defined the elegy solely on the basis of its meter. In his *Ars Grammatica* the word 'elegy' was applied to *carmen compositum hexametro versu pentametroque alternis in vicem positi*. Later, this unbalanced meter was outlined by Ovid, who talked about *versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum, /post etiam inclusa est voti sentential compos* (irregular verses expressed first the lament, then the feelings for a satisfied vow (My translation). In *Amores* Ovid cunningly personified the elegy into a lame woman who has a foot longer than the other) implied the coupling of a hexameter with a pentameter. This particular meter was the distinctive trait of the elegiac poetry in the classical sense.

Concerning OE literature, the expression 'elegy' is not to be employed *stricto sensu* to the poetry produced in that period because there are no metrical grips to frame it. For this reason, the OE elegies should be classified according to different criteria; examples are tone, themes and setting.

It is worthwhile to anticipate that the most often quoted

definition of Old English elegy is Greenfield's (1965): "a relatively short reflective or dramatic poem embodying a contrastive pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation, and expressing an attitude towards that experience". The author wholeheartedly agrees with this statement. Scholars have labelled OE elegies in the following texts recorded in the *Exeter Book*: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Resignation*, *The Husband's Message* and *The Ruin* (Notice that the titles of these poems vary according to the different editors of the MS. These poems are taken from Klinck (1992). Unless otherwise indicated, her edition will be the source of all references to the OE elegies and to the *Exeter Book*). For the reader's convenience, these texts will succinctly be reviewed. Their plot will just be summarized, thus not considering the vast amount of criticism about each poem.

*The Wanderer* is a monologue spoken by a solitary man who grieves for being alone. As he evaluates his previous de light against his present wretched condition, he also realizes that in this world everything is transient. Then, it follows the depiction of the wise man: he should not be greedy but patient, he should comprehend that everyone has to endure sorrow in this world. Thus, the

wise man concludes that man should seek comfort in God.

The same concepts appear in *The Seafarer*, another lonely man that having experienced the paths of exile on a boat over the tossing waves, deprived of his kinsmen, compares life on land against life at sea. He concludes that we must seek delight in God, who rules the world and weaves everyone's Fate, and that earthly pleasure is not eternal. The meaning of the poem is that the man who lives humbly will be blessed.

In the *Riming Poem*, there is a contrast between material joy of the past and present misery and a gnomic conclusion that we should protect ourselves against the sins and seek for God's mercy rather than material riches.

*Deor* could roughly be recapitulated as the lament of a minstrel for having lost his occupation at the court, thus finding himself alone. He reviews the woeful experience of several famous individuals before relating his own. The poem contains a consolatory refrain, the meaning of which is that endurance will eventually pass over. The speaker mentions a lord who rules the world and dispenses everyone his own fate. In this poem too, the contrast between pleasures in the past and sorrows in the present is palpable.

The theme of exile is central in *Wulf and Eadwacer* where the speaker, most likely a woman, grieves for the departure of her son or her lover. The motif of separation is also very poignant in this text.

*The Wife's Lament* might be interpreted as a woman's outcry over the departure of her lord or husband. She narrates that the lord's kinsmen had conspired to part the couple and that her husband therefore commanded her to take up dwelling in the grove. After the commentary on her own plight, the speaker generalizes that her state should be the same as everyone else awaiting the beloved one.

The speaker of *Resignation* asks for a sign on how to serve God and hopes to be accepted by Him although he has committed many sins. The speaker warns that man cannot defy Fate; therefore, the better thing to do is to endure it. He understands that hardship in this world serves as the *viaticum* for life after death.

*The Husband's Message* is about a message of loyalty, which has been sent by a man to his woman through an envoy. Having been driven away from his land by a feud, the man commanded the messenger to instruct the wife that she leaves and joins his lord. There follows the message itself, composed of five runes. The woman seems heartened by the closing lines, which express that her husband is still living and wishes to fulfil the oath of loyalty that they had sworn long ago.

*The Ruin* is the description of a ruined place with an alternating pattern of past and present. The most striking characteristic of the poem is the complete anonymity of the speaker. Like a camera, he reports impersonally and precisely what he sees in the present and what he thinks

the place should have been like in the past. The ruined city might symbolize the frailty of human undertakings as well as the mutability of earthly joy.

In addition, two passages from *Beowulf* (Krapp and Dobbie, 1931-1942) known as "The lament of the Last Survivor" and "The lament of the Bereaved Father" (lines 2247-2266 and 2444-2262a, respectively), along with the "Lament of Guðlac's disciple" in *Guðlac* (Krapp and Dobbie, 1936) (1348-1379) are also regarded as elegies because of their similarity in themes and tone. Since it is beyond the present design to carry out the analysis of these three passages, there are summarized briefly thus suggesting the reader to refer to the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (Ibid)* (henceforth *ASPR*). The first passage deals with an expression of grief uttered by a warrior over the loss of his tribe. He laments over the bygone happiness of the hall, but mostly over his present loneliness. In the second passage, a father bemoans his son's death. His distress is not provoked by the son's death, but rather by the resulting solitude, which is portrayed by the father, who stands alone in the hall. Finally, the third fragment conveys the disciple's loneliness and grief caused by the death of his lord.

As seen earlier, the criteria that mark the OE elegies are not to be sought in their meter, but rather in their archetypal motifs and elegiac mood. Yet, Klinck (1984) argues that the OE elegies constitute a proper genre by virtue of both universal motifs and form. She cogently contends that the form singles out this genre. According to her, the form of the OE elegies "manifests itself in a use of some of the following devices: monologue, conventional introduction of the speaker, gnomic conclusion, repetition of key phrases, repetition of entire lines, and, occasionally, rhyme". To her account of the form, it would be recall that the themes found in all the OE elegies are: the lament over the loss of the beloved person, the loneliness of the speaker for being an exile, the anonymous identity of the speaker, the deliberation on the ephemeral nature of earthly delight, the contrast between the pleasure of the past and the poignancy of the present, and the *ubi sunt* motifs.

These characteristics are shared by all the elegies. More specifically, Klinck (1984) sees that there are sub-categories among them: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem* and *Resignation* are related to homiletic literature because of their gnomic conclusion, whereas *Deor* could be linked to heroic legend; *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament* along with *The Husband's Message* are regarded as love poems, and finally, *The Ruin* is the genuine description of a place.

On the assumption that the principal motif of the elegies is the lament, the author agrees with Timmer (1942) who states, "An elegy that does not lament is not an elegy at all". Indeed, it is observed that the lament is the paramount feature of all the elegies hitherto mentioned. Moreover, the elegies share almost the same thematic structure, that is, the division into two sections

of *lamentatio* and *consolatio*. The lament is spoken in first person, whereas the consolation is impersonal and generic, often yielding gnomic statements.

However, the lament expressed in *Deor* is less explicit and more generic. The speaker first reports other people's sufferings, and then presents the picture of a grief-stricken man:

*Siteð sorgcearig      sælum bidæled,  
on sefan sweorced,    sylfum þinceð  
þæt sy endeleas      earfoða deal.*

[He sits mournful, bereaved of happiness; dark in spirit, he thinks about himself, that his portion of hardship is endless].

According to the author's point of view, the elegies chiefly lament the human condition of being an exile, that is, separated from God, alone in this earth. The themes of exile and separation run through the lines of almost all elegies. Zimmermann (1995) confirms that exile was considered the greatest affliction by the Anglo-Saxons. Moreover, as laid down by the Germanic law (Scovazzi, 1957), anyone responsible for serious offences such as murder or rape was sent into exile. The state of exile had juridical reverberations as well as social consequences, as the family of the exile was put to shame. That being excluded from the *comitatus* was a poignant agony emerges from almost all the elegies, which lament the separation from the dearly loved one, from the lord, from human society in general, but also from the cheerfulness of the past. Greenfield (1955) observes that the exile laments both physical and spiritual deprivation, that is, gold and land, and joy and comfort respectively. The speaker of the elegies is indeed a solitary being, as displayed by the first person pronoun, which might nonetheless be interpreted as a generic 'I'.

Set aside in *The Ruin*, the first person pronoun used in all the elegies does not need further documentation. Solitude and segregation from companionship appear to be the harshest consequences of exile. Another consequence of the exile is separation from companionship, from the native land, from family and from the world in general. This idea brings to mind one of Greenfield's (1955) physical and abstract deprivations. The theme of separation permeates all the elegies, and seems to arouse nostalgia and longing for an irretrievable past.

In his loneliness, the exile often recalls the joyful times thus realizing his plight of being physically separated or deprived of those pleasures. Separation is indeed linked to the motif of *ubi sunt*. This motif conveys the melancholic regret for the departed joy and is patently echoed in the set of questions in *The Wanderer*: *Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? Hwær cwom mappungifa? Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas? 'Where is the horse? Where is the retainer? Where is the treasure-giver? Where are the feast-seats? Where are the dreams of the hall?'* These

rhetoric questions emphasize the things that are missing to the speaker. Surely, he is not just asking specific questions, but he is bewailing that good times have gone, and emphasizes his lament through repetition. The *ubi sunt* motif is less explicit in the other elegies.

Separation emerges from the symbolic division between past and present, land and sea, but also from physical distance. A careful look at the vocabulary employed in the poems will reveal numerous verbs of separation, adjectives of space distance as well as the use of the privative suffix *-leas*. Accordingly, a further distinctive trait of the elegies is the meditation that all earthly delight is fleeting. This is the reason why everyone should earn spiritual values that build their way to heaven.

In conclusion, the OE elegies share the following features: lament, theme of exile and separation, reflections on the transient nature of earthly joy and life. These features have led Timmer (1942) to the conclusion that although there is no attested genre in OE poetry, we can perceive an elegiac mood. Given that there are no metrical criteria, we should not classify the OE elegies as texts that belong to a specific genre. Rather, we should classify them as poems that share the aforementioned traits.

### Intertextuality in the *Deor*

In the reception of a text, the reader sees its macrostructure, that is, the main idea on which the text depends and connects with other ideas. The macrostructure can also be defined as the large-scale exposure of the contents of a text as a whole, or as the theme that gradually develops in the particular meanings that appear throughout the text.

In the communication between sender and receiver, the latter (in this particular instance the reader) does not play a passive role at all, but is called to discover the meaning of the text. To decode the contents of a text, the reader is performing, knowingly or not, an intra-lingual translation: s/he attributes a personal meaning to each word. In Saussurian terms, s/he arbitrarily shapes the meaning. To do this, s/he needs to establish the proper connections between the text and his/her epistemology. We could distinguish between two extreme positions that indicate the epistemic relationship between author, reader and text. According to the first, the meaning of the text rests exclusively in the subjectivity of the author. Since communication is the exchange of messages by two or more parties, in this case there is no communication because the text does not have any recipient unless the author himself, thus reducing to a mere transcript of his/her thought. The second perspective considers the subjectivity of the reader as the source of meaning, thus causing an extreme relativism. Steiner (1975) observes that the subjectivity of the reader assumes a certain weight in the process of decoding the

message. However, his position is strongly reader-oriented:

Private connotations, private habits of stress, of elision or paraphrase make up a fundamental component of speech. Their weight and semantic field are essentially individual. Meaning is at all times the potential sum total of individual adaptations. There can be no definitive lexicon or logical grammar of ordinary language or even of parts of it because different human beings, even in simple cases of reference and 'naming' will always relate different associations to a given word. These differences are the life of normal speech. [...] We make do with the worn counters minted long since by our particular linguistic and social inheritance.

We could find a harmony between the two positions and try to find those keywords that may streamline the interpretation of the text. In fact, once recognized the macrostructure of the text and its type, readers can both infer the author's purposes and their own expectations. Certain types of text are subject to different levels of interpretation, example is literary text. On the contrary, technical texts must not be ambiguous; therefore, they admit only one interpretation.

Coherence is an important feature given by the connection of the contents in the text (The author is going to refer to the parameters that make up all texts, according to De Beaugrande and Dressler (1984), and then confine himself to the parameter of intertextuality), namely by the continuity of sense within one's knowledge. Meaning is the degree of terms to convey knowledge, while sense is the knowledge that is transmitted. Coherence is defined by the continuity of sense throughout the text. We should distinguish the coherence *a parte obiecti*, which is a property of the text, from the coherence *a parte subiecti*, which involves the cognitive process of the reader in relation to the text and is therefore entirely subjective. The text triggers a process of representational redescription (Karmiloff-Smith, 1995). In few words, the text activates concepts that are stored in our memory. The way of activating connections between word and concept varies from person to person. For example, the sentence *Peter has arrived*, immediately evokes the image, or rather refers to the concept of *Peter*. The latter, however, could be stored in several ways in the reader's mind: he may be retrieved from the visual memory (it is a person with mustache), or from the olfactory one (he uses a certain perfume), but also from the auditory memory (he has a particular tone of voice). Clearly, the shared knowledge of the interlocutors is taken for granted. Therefore, it is the way to establish connections between concepts to be subjective, rather than the text itself.

The author can exploit many devices to achieve a particular purpose. Rhetoric speech is a striking example.

In reference to the *Deor*, the author uses, as we shall see below, a refrain that emphasizes the core message s/he wants to transmit. The poem in question is an instance of regulative text, that is, a text that purposely biases the reader's behavior.

Informativity is the extent to which the elements of text are expected or unexpected, known or unknown to the reader. The more texts convey new knowledge, the higher is their informativity. This parameter depends on shared knowledge. In fact, the author of a text may assume that certain references or allusions are understandable to readers. Accordingly, s/he may decide not to emphasize, not to paraphrase, not to quote. Time, space and cultural discrepancies make the *Deor* so obscure today. For example, in the text there are explicit references to characters: *Welund*, *Beaðhild*, *Niðhad*, *Mæðhild* (or *Hilde*?) *Geates*, *Ðeoðric Eormanric*. Each character is liable of numerous interpretations. The text was surely addressed to an old English audience. In fact, the deictic *we* in the first hemistich in lines 2 and 21 places the text in precise time-space coordinates.

Situationality involves those factors that make a text relevant to a certain communication situation. In a text aimed at a non-specialist audience, the author should avoid using technical terms, scientific references, foreign words, and archaisms otherwise the text will not be appropriate to the situation. According to the theory of linguistic adaptation put forward by Verschueren (1987), the speaker makes certain linguistic choices, dictated by the need to harmonize form and content to the effect that s/he wants to obtain with that type of message.

Intertextuality indicates the links between the text and other texts, the connection between creation-reception of a text and the knowledge of other texts that the participants in the communication may share or not. With regard to the *Deor*, the greatest difficulties of understanding and interpretation are due to its intertextuality. This is indeed a dense network whose implicit or explicit connections are connected with the socio-cultural context in which the text was produced. The *Deor* is particularly dense of connections, almost all dark to us because we belong to another age and especially to another culture. It is this opacity and indefiniteness that give charm to the *Deor*. It must be pointed out that the text was certainly less dark at the time of composition. Mythological, historical and cultural references woven in the text were certainly well known to the public of nearly a thousand years ago. In terms of text linguistics, today this text shows a third degree of informativity. This statement means that the concepts expressed by the author create discrepancies with the knowledge of the contemporary reader, since they do not correspond to his/her knowledge, the text being transposed into another time and cultural context.

In conclusion, if a text type is liable to different reading levels, these vary from reader to reader, from period to period, but also from culture to culture. The author may

choose to produce a text liable of just one or more reading levels. The reader's task is to find those ways that lead to the construction of the meaning of the text that the author intended to convey. Eco (1979) explains this concept with a metaphor, arguing that the author is Tom Thumb who scatters some clue in the text to direct the reader to the achievement of the meaning.

*Deor* appears in the folio 100r-100v of the MS. It is a poem of 42 alliterating verses that shares certain characteristics with the Germanic poetry such as alliteration of the key elements of the verse and the use of sophisticated language, demonstrated by the various kenningar (A kenning is a trope to be found between a metaphor and a metonymy. Its classification is object of debate. See, among others, Koch (1984). However, the poem differs from skaldic poetry because it does not show any isosyllabic trend, as it does not report historical or epic tales and, above all, it is not encomiastic. This poem also shies away from the classical Greek and Latin elegies, for it is likely to express a consolation rather than a lament.

Although, the metrical trend of Latin verse is Sievers A, the one in the *Deor* is Sievers B, which implies iambic pattern. In addition, the refrain does not have prosodic purpose; it rather expresses the author's intention to plunge the reader into the present time and to reiterate the main message of the text: consolation. The refrain reads indeed *þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæg* [that passed over; so may this].

For reasons of space and design, this section is concerned with only the possible intertextual links of the poem. Therefore, this work shall not deal with all the interpretations of the poem and its various editions. Nor shall it analyze other critical editions or related problems such as dating, collocation of the MS, division into stanzas or paleographical issues.

The intertextuality of the first stanza (1 to 7) can be found at both lexical and semantic level. As for the lexical level, there is an explicit reference to two epic characters, namely *Welund* and *Niðhad*. The related hypotext is the *Völundarkviða*, a poem found in the *Poetic Edda*. The poem is about a famous blacksmith called *Völundr*, whose story could be roughly summarized as follows: *Völundr* is imprisoned by King *Niðuðr* who forced the blacksmith to work for him and severed his hamstrings behind the knees. In revenge, the blacksmith kills the king's sons and ravished his daughter *Böðvildr*. In this way the blacksmith's progeny will never be extinguished because the king will not dare to kill her daughter. Thus, *Völundr*'s revenge consists in having outwitted the king. In fact, the climax of the story is when *Völundr* tells the king all the details of his revenge.

There is also an intersemiotic translation of this tale. The story about *Welund* is also carved in the Frank casket (for a deep description of the Frank casket readers may refer, among others, to Elliot (1989), dated near the eighth century.

The intertextuality at the semantic level involves the

kenning for 'sword', expressed by the term *wurman*, which literally means snakes. The explanation of the term requires the knowledge of the hypotext. In fact, if the reader does not know that the blacksmith *Welund* used to decorate the swords he forged with images of snakes, the value of the kenning is lost and the power of rhetoric unexploited. The word *wræc* bears also intertextuality due to its polysemy. Its double meaning is 'suffering' but also 'exile'. The latter meaning is a more explicit link with the theme of exile, which is a classical feature of the Anglo-Saxon elegies.

One more intertextual reference could be found in the content of the refrain. Indeed, it recalls the stoic morality set forth by Boethius in his work titled *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, which was translated at the court of King Alfred in the ninth century (Markland, 1968). Stoicism is a philosophical movement that forcibly claims that a divine plan governs the world. Everything that happens is the work of Providence, so everyone must accept their fate, even if they do not understand the reason of sorrows. Stoicism mostly deals with the transience of life, and also explains that the sorrow may turn into joy and vice versa.

Since the second stanza (8 to 13) is connected to the first, it is linked to the same hypotext. As we have seen *Beadohilde* is the daughter of *Niðhad*. As she realizes that she is pregnant, her suffering comes from her pregnancy rather than from her brothers' death. Readers may also notice that in this stanza the suffering is spiritual while in the first stanza is physical.

The famous third stanza (14 to 17) is the most problematic one; indeed it gave rise to many interpretations according to the references for the following words: *Mæðhild*, *Mæð*, *Hild*, *monge*, *Geates* and *frige*. The identity of both *Mæðhild* and *Geate* is particularly difficult. The literature is divided between those who emend *Mæðhild* and those who emend *mæð hild*. According to the first emendation, the mysterious character is to be found in two Scandinavian ballads discovered by Malone (1966), one Norwegian called *Norske Folkeviser* and the other Icelandic, found in the anthology titled *Íslensk Fornkvæði*. The first version is about a young lady named *Magnild*, wife of *Gaute*. The husband sees his wife in tears and asks for an explanation. She says that she is crying because she knows that she is going to die in the River *Vending* and although he wants to build a bridge, no one can escape the Fate. In fact, *Magnild* falls into the water but *Gaute* starts playing his harp and thanks to the melody his wife emerges unharmed. The second version is almost similar to the first; the protagonists are *Magnhild* and *Gauti*, but the final changes because *Gauti* destroys the harp and builds a new one using the hair of his beloved as strings.

Critics who accept this interpretation also share the hypothesis of a dittography in verse 14b, put forward by Malone (1966): The scribe would have copied *monge gefrugnon* [many of us have heard about it], rather than *mone gefrugnon* [we have heard about the complaints,

groans], thus anticipating the particle 'g' of the next word. The complaints are clearly those of Mæðhild, who mourns her looming death.

Those who emend mæð hild refer to the story by Snorri Sturluson in Edda Chapter 57: *Skáldskaparmál*, which tells about the King Hogni and his daughter Hilda. She is kidnapped by King Hedin. Once King Hogni has found his daughter, she offers him a necklace by Hedin as a peacemaker. She says instead that Hedin is ready to fight thus fomenting the duel. Then, she comes back to Hedin and tells him that his father Hogni is also ready to fight. The battle breaks out and during the night Hild awakens the corpses. Hence, the battle of Hjathning continues forever. Another version of this story was forwarded by Saxo Grammaticus. He relates the love between the prince and Hedin and Hilda, King Hogni's daughter. Gossips incriminate Hedin to have possessed Hilda before the marriage. This triggers the fight between Hogni and Hedin. Hogni overcomes Hedin, who has to leave. After seven years, the two collide again. It is said that Hilda would contract the spirits to renew the war so that she can meet Hedin again. According to this Snorri Sturluson story, the third stanza shall be paraphrased as follows:

We þæt mæð hilde    monge gefrugnon  
wurdon grundlease    Geates frige,  
þæt hi seo sorglufu    slæp ealle binom

[We have heard about the harvest of Hild the soldiers of the Jutes were without a land, and that her sorrow deprived her from sleep].

The metaphor of the harvest refers to the story of Hild, who collected the bodies of the soldiers as if they were hay. In fact, when the hay is harvested, it is removed from the ground, which in this case stands for the nation's soldiers.

The fourth stanza (18-20) tells about ðeoðric, another hazy character because he has two possible referents: King Theodoric of the Goths or the king of the Franks. The only certainty is that they both belong to history rather than mythology. However, the two interpretations do not seriously undermine the sense of the stanza, which is to emphasize the oppression of their thanes. We may notice that from this stanza the suffering becomes universal rather than individual and that there is a shift from mythology into history.

In the fifth stanza (21 to 27) Eormanric is described as a cruel king. In this stanza too, the author wants to focus on the pain of his thanes rather than on description of this ruthless tyrant. The deictic 'we' (21a) highlights the relationship between author and audience or the reader of that time. The recipient of the text is directly called into question in the text. The author takes for granted that audience knows Eormanric, since he uses this king as a living proof for his argument. He refers to him to validate his message. The same procedure is used today by the

language of advertising. This kind of language shows indeed an extensive employment of references to celebrities.

The contents of the sixth stanza (28-34) can be a reference to the stoic morality expressed by the refrain and seem indeed the paraphrase of the refrain itself. In fact, the author addresses those who are afflicted with pain and torment. He mentions the presence of a wise man (*witig dryhten* 32a) who grants 'to certain a portion of joy and to others a portion of pain' but often turns (*wendeþ geneahhe* 32b) joy into pain and vice versa. The intertextual reference can be either to the Christian God or to the Anglo-Saxon king who would give his minstrels enormous benefits or suffering, for instance, in case he sends them away from the court.

The intertextuality of the last stanza (35 to 42) could be found at the level of form. The author expresses a genuine lament for being ousted by another minstrel skillful at singing (*leoðcræftig* 40a). Notice that line 37, which expresses the lament, shows the metrical pattern of the classic elegy and the alliteration of the key elements: two items alliterate in the first hemistich and one in the second. The most elegiac line runs: *dryhtne dyre / me wæs Deor noma* (37). Another element of the classic elegy is the metric type Sievers A, that is, a trochaic pattern. The poet underscores the present time by the first-person personal pronoun. Thus, the author went from the ahistorical time of mythology narrated in the past tense, to the present time of reality, where reference time and utterance time coincide.

The author used in this stanza the embrayage, a rhetorical device that occurs in regulatory texts (Benveniste, 1971). It implies the total overlap between the subject of the statement and the subject of utterance. The author speaks indeed in the first person (*þæt ic bi me sylfum / secgan wille* 35) in order to express both subjectivity and commitment to the truth of the utterance. This device is used in political speech.

One last remark on the intertextuality of the last stanza is that the referent of the refrain remains ambiguous. In the poem, the deictic *þisses* (this) in the refrain could link the story narrated in the stanza to the next stanza. Since no story follows the last stanza, who is the referent of deictic 'this'? It could be the reader who identifies him/herself with what has just been read, or the author who complains about the present situation. Or shall we link the refrain to the protagonists of *Wulf and Eadwacer*, the next poem in the MS? All these three hypotheses might be true. Readers are called for their own interpretation.

Anderson (1983) hypothesizes further intertextual links within the *Exeter Book*. His claim rests on the different size of the letters at the beginning of some verses and on serifed crosses that appear in the left margin of the manuscript:

In case his readers still might not see how the letters work, the scribe has entered one more

strange and conspicuous graphic clue. In the left margin of *Deor*, opposite the modestly decorated initials of the heathen stories of Hild, Theodoric, and Eormanric, he has drawn small bold serified crosses, which imply a further riddle of some sort. Whether they are supposed to match what might be three small crosses in both the initial *H* of *The Soul's Address* and the initial *W* of *Deor* one cannot tell. Nor can one be sure of how three crosses would fit in three pagan legends, besides marking the three poems of the riddlic sequence. Coincidentally or not, the Hild, Theodoric and Eormanric stanzas feature the three major themes of abduction, exile, and sorrow that shape the whole scheme. Or perhaps the scribe's crosses mark the three kind of poetry—didactic, heroic, and elegiac—of which the unlikely threefold riddle was joined.

### Conclusion

This work attempts to highlight that intertextuality operates both in the form and content of the text. As for the formal level, we have seen for example that the content of the classic elegy, that is, the lament, unfolds in a particular metrical pattern. It all depends on the identification of text types and their purpose. In fact, once recognized the type of text, readers expect a particular form and a given function. For example, it would be bizarre to find contracts or legal documents in verse, and likewise to find the street sign 'STOP' that expresses the order to stop through a 10-line sentence.

Intertextuality at the level of content is given by allusions to other texts or characters, by the use of rhetorical figures that can be understood only through shared knowledge between author and reader. In the mind of the latter, implicit and explicit hints should enable certain connections. These connections are links between concepts that are in turn recoverable from the knowledge and culture of the interlocutors. This is the reason for the difficulties of interpretation of old texts and contemporary ones belonging to another culture. And it is precisely because of its anachronistic nature and of the socio-cultural differences that the *Deor* seems so opaque nowadays.

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