The Well and the Tree

World and Time
in Early Germanic
Culture

.

Paul C. Bauschatz

Contents

Acknowledgments

THE research for this book was essentially completed in 1977. Works that have appeared since that date or which came to my notice after that date are not cited (or are cited only passingly) in the text or in the bibliography. Thus, I have not been able to make as full use of R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford's Final Report to the British Museum on the Sutton-Hoo ship burial as I would have liked (the first volume, which I saw briefly before this work went into its final form, appeared in 1975 and is cited in some places in the text where it contains information not available in earlier preliminary reports; the second volume, which appeared in 1978, is not cited at all). Nor have I been able to use T. L. Markey's comprehensive *Germanic and its dialects*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins). Volume 3, *Bibliography and indices* (prepared by T. L. Markey, R. L. Keys, and P. T. Roberge, 1977), came into my hands only after my own research on the Germanic languages had been completed; volumes 1 and 2 are still not in print at this writing. Recently, a variety of popular and scholarly works on Viking civilization have appeared. All of this bodes well for a renewed interest in early Germanic culture generally.

Some of the material in the following essays has appeared elsewhere. Essay 1, 'Urth's Well', appeared in slightly different form in vol. 3 of *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* (1975); it is reprinted here with the permission of the editor. The material definitive of the Germanic *symbel*, which appears here in Essays 2 and 3, was first presented at the Third International Conference of Nordic and General Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin in 1976 and was subsequently published in the Proceedings of the Conference (*The Nordic Languages and Modern Linguistics*, 3 [Austin:

University of Texas Press, 1978]). It is reprinted here with the permission of the publisher. The material in Essay 3 analyzing the use and meaning of OE *þā* and *þæt* was given first as a talk at the Eleventh Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo in 1976. It subsequently appeared in print as 'Old English Conjunction: Some Semantic Considerations', in *In Geardagum II: Essays on Old and Middle English Language and Literature* (Denver: The Society for New Language Study, 1978). It is reprinted here with the permission of the society. Finally, the material comparing Christian and Germanic time was first given orally at the Ninth Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo in 1974.

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I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of my teacher at Columbia University, Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie.

A Foreword

THE following essays have in common a concern with early Germanic culture. Although they deal severally with various manifestations of this culture, a central thesis runs through all of them. Most simply put, it is that Germanic culture was dominated by its conception of its own past. This is neither surprising nor new. The essays aim, however, not at elaborating the obvious fact of domination by the past but at examining how and in what form the Germanic conception of the past shaped events. Everywhere they emphasize not the events, actions, or constructs of the culture but those aspects of events, actions, and constructs that render them understandable and meaningful. Ultimately, this emphasis tries to articulate some significant aspects of the conceptual system that shapes action and event and underlies all human creation. To comprehend, even to a small degree, their conceptual system makes it possible for us to see more clearly how the Germanic peoples themselves experienced their world, how they thought and structured their existence, how they shaped their own reality.

In all human cultures, action and perception are mutually coherent; everything relates to everything else. Such perception is not—cannot be—fully conscious. Human conceiving and perceiving cannot be fully explained because human explanation is, as we still now live it, linguistic, and language itself is a conceptual structure, an essential but partial aspect of the larger system of conceiving and perceiving that predicates all human action. Our task in understanding any conceptual system—our own or that of any other culture—involves a kind of two-step operation of description and explanation.[1] First, we must be able to observe the activity

of those who participate within the reality of the system. Such observation will allow us to describe (or list or present) the kinds of events and activities that readily occur within the culture. Indeed, much of what follows here is just this kind of detailed laying out of events peculiar to early Germanic culture. Second, our understanding of the events we observe deepens only as we are able to explain them—not to explain them away or to explain them partially within the conceptual structure of our own culture but to explain them as fully as we can—so that we are able to see how, within their own configuring system, they articulate meaningful structures of coherence for those who perform such events. If any one thing emerges from the following essays, it is a more tangible (for us) understanding of *how*, in exactly what way and in exactly what shape, relationships of coherence emerge within the conceptual reality of the early Germanic peoples.

Fortunately, the essays that follow are not concerned with the futile task of full, explicit delineation of the conceptual reality of the early Germans. They are concerned, however, with some of the aspects of that culture that reveal it to be *unlike* our own, and fortunately for us, early Germanic experience seems quite different from the perceptions and conceptions of our own reality (at least to the extent to which we are able to begin to understand these).

> People of other cultures than our own not only act differently, but . . . they have a different basis for their behavior. They act upon different premises; they perceive reality differently, and codify it differently. In this codification, language is largely instrumental. It incorporates the premises of the culture, and codifies reality in such a way that it presents it as absolute to the members of each culture. Other aspects of behavior also express, if not as clearly, the specific phrasing of reality which each culture makes for itself. (Lee 1949:401)

Thus, those aspects of Germanic culture that strike us as odd or strange should begin to point directly to elements of their conceptual structure that differ radically from ours. Likewise, many aspects of early Germanic culture seem to some extent to differ importantly from the reality experienced by other similarly 'early' cultures, especially other Indo-European cultures of late prehistoric through early medieval times. In addition, then, we may

profitably concentrate our attention on these differences as well. Finally, with some patience and luck we can also begin tentatively to propose some explanation of the nature or shape of what is not observable. As a result, we might be able to document what it is that makes it possible for us to speak about and define a conceptual reality that is essentially 'Germanic'.

We must be careful when dealing with these 'differences'. Superficial distinctions frequently reveal underlying similarities and coherence of greater matter than the apparent differences. It is, for example, almost a cliché to refer to early Germanic people as gloomy, humorless, and fatalistic. It is true that Germanic myths and legends continually dwell on the subject of death, but then, many myths do this. Not surprisingly, death and its ultimate significance in the whole of human experience is a fact and problem with which no man can be unconcerned. If death is gloomy, then the Germanic peoples were gloomy; so, unfortunately, is everybody else. Germanic gloominess, if there can rightly be such a thing, is most acutely noticeable when we consider its relation to the structure of the Germanic cosmos. From a Christian, that is, a non-Germanic, point of view, death is a kind of opening out to salvation or damnation, a point in all time through which man necessarily goes to life or nonlife beyond. The experience of death transcends the vicissitudes of the world of sense impression. The reality beyond is eternal. In the Germanic figuration, there is something like this in the representation of the feasting of warriors in Valholl and in some of the descriptions of torment in Niflheim. There is an essential distinction, however. In the Germanic myths, all of these 'other' worlds do not transcend the tyranny of the insubstantial. The Germanic parallel to Doomsday, Ragnarǫk, the collapse of Yggdrasil, the world ash, which includes within its universal branches and roots all worlds, destroys not only man's world, Midgard, but Valholl and Niflheim and everything else. This lack of eternality is, from a Christian point of view, 'gloomy'—it is peculiarly un-Christian to conceive of heaven as not permanent. But the early Germanic people were not Christians, and apparently the eternality of salvation of the individual soul did not concern them much; at least, with respect to what we still have, they did not write much about it.

We could perhaps equate gloominess with humorlessness. In-

deed, a lack of humor is endemic to much of the Germanic experi-
ence. But we should again be careful: The early Germanic people
share their humorlessness with the early Christians. The 'joys' of
the blessed, as they seem to have been anticipated by early Chris-
tian converts, were not of this world. Their experience can be ex-
pressed as a kind of dour singleness of vision that finds fulfillment
in rejection of the sensual. Humor depends largely on a double-
ness or multiplicity of vision, which can somehow or other mean-
ingfully offer variety to human experience. As close as we get to
humor is a kind of rudimentary irony in which actions outside the
truth are scorned; it occurs frequently in early saints' lives where
the actions of pagan idolater tormenters of convinced saints are
ridiculed. The best the world has to offer is a grim martyrdom. We
suspect that there was little laughter in the catacombs—hymn
chanting, expressive acts of faith, yes, but no comedy.

The value of martyrdom is not unlike what we now have come
to call the heroic or warrior ideal, in which a good death caps the
good life; we also know that this attitude is fundamentally ex-
pressed in much Germanic literature. Both the Christian martyr
and the Germanic warrior apparently found such actions conso-
nant with their universal conceptions. Germanic irony, similar to
that of Christian saints, can be found in the actions of those who
flout the code of behavior of the warrior, but such action is not
funny; it is beneath contempt. These actions are 'fatalistic' in both
their immediate and their ultimate aspects. Behavioral codes of
this sort and prescriptions for martyrdom are alike fixed, deter-
mined, and undeviating. In all of these aspects, the early Germans
and early Christians were alike.

These apparent differences turn out to cover largely similar
conceptions: singleness of vision, commitment to courses of action
consonant with this vision, and an ultimate universal framework
that makes such immediate activity understandable, believable, and
laudable. There is within all this similarity one significant differ-
ence, however: Christian permanence, Germanic transience. To
the extent to which the Christian universe is fixed and closed, that
of the early Germanic peoples seems to be open and in flux. Here
perhaps *is* a point of difference, and its implications may help us to
discover other essentially Germanic aspects of the human condi-
tion. From this and other such points, we can begin to trace more
fully the nature of this experience; it is the aim of what follows, to

some extent, to follow just this trace and related traces of the Ger-
manic conception of life, its realities and its complexities.

The question with which the following analysis began is twofold:
First, since all Germanic languages have evolved a binary system of
tenses for their verbs, what can this tell us about the way the speak-
ers of these languages conceived of and experienced the actions
their verbs denote? Second, what other elements might be observ-
able that help to distinguish the Germanic peoples as a group from
the other Indo-European peoples with whom they earlier seem to
have shared a common cultural and linguistic heritage; further, to
what extent might these cultural and linguistic elements be seen to
be similar, or the same? The second question, at least, is not a new
one; it was central to much of the scholarly output of the nine-
teenth century.

Nineteenth-century studies of culture and language are bound
up with the emerging interest in that century in comparative reli-
gion, philology, and anthropology. That there were masses of ma-
terial relevant to the study of culture that had never before been
systematically collected and codified seems to have become clear
for the first time in the nineteenth century, although the idea dates
back at least to Vico. Nineteenth-century research bore fruit in
many significant ways, and we are still in its debt for the depth
of our own knowledge of the development of all aspects of Indo-
European culture. Nineteenth-century philology, however, al-
though it collected and documented folk belief, stories, and myths,
did little to clarify the interrelations among these. Instead of re-
vealing clear expressions of underlying unity, diverse elements
of the earlier cultures tended to become, as more and more were
examined, more and more disparate and complex. Unlike what
had happened in the historical, comparative study of languages,
which eventually produced a model of a single, underlying Indo-
European language as the various aspects of the existing Indic and
European languages were analyzed, the collections of myths and
folk tales tended to become merely large. Variants of stories, vari-
eties of expression of various godly attributes, tended to diversify.
In their attempts to represent the Germanic 'other world', for ex-
ample, scholars developed extremely complicated cosmographies
that attempted to link all of the various attributes found in the

sources, each attribute producing yet another distinct portion ten-
uously linked to the others, hopelessly incoherent and patchy. At-
tempts to link what had not appeared in the sources extended im-
perfectly the nineteenth century's own conceptions of universal
relations. Compendia grew volume by volume, attribute by at-
tribute, often resulting in eccentric, incomprehensible sprawl.

There gradually emerged, however, mainly from anthropolo-
gists' attempts to understand other cultures contemporaneous with
nineteenth-century European culture but 'primitive' with respect
to what was felt to be cultural evolution or sophistication, an aware-
ness that the cultural presuppositions of nineteenth-century Eu-
rope were not universally shared. Attempts to see myths as some-
what imperfect forms of narrative have given way to the idea that
myths are, in fact, not narratives at all. 'Myth . . . , in its living
primitive form, is not merely a story told but a reality lived. It is not
of the nature of fiction, such as we read to-day in a novel, but it is a
living reality' (Malinowski 1926 : 18). Not only daily life as it is being
lived but all aspects of human endeavor provide contexts in which
to see the operation of underlying mythic structures. Thus, it can
be found in both present and past. Contemporary analysis now
strives to uncover some coherent structure, some framework un-
derlying all of the various materials examined. We no longer wish
to codify the different versions of myths alone; rather, we try, as
Montagu observed of Cassirer's interest in mythical thought, to
concern ourselves with 'the processes of consciousness which lead
to the creation of myths' (1949 : 367).

It is, of course, Claude Lévi-Strauss who has made most promi-
nent in our own time the idea of myth as a cultural manifestation
of underlying structural impulses. Rather than interesting himself
in the process of consciousness, as Cassirer does, Lévi-Strauss ex-
amines what he calls the creative spirit (esprit) of the human mind.
It is the structure of this mind or spirit, as it is reflected in human
activity, that interests him:

> The vocabulary [i.e. outward manifestation] matters less than
> the structure. Whether the myth is re-created by the individual
> or borrowed from tradition, it derives from its sources—indi-
> vidual or collective (between which interpenetrations and ex-
> changes constantly occur)—only the stock of representations
> with which it operates. But the structure remains the same . . .

> If we add that these structures are . . . few in number, we shall
> understand why the world of symbolism is infinitely varied in
> content, but always limited in its laws. There are many lan-
> guages, but very few structural laws which are valid for all lan-
> guages. A compilation of known tales and myths would fill an
> imposing number of volumes. But they can be reduced to a
> small number of simple types if we abstract, from among the
> diversity of characters, a few elementary functions. (Lévi-
> Strauss 1967 : 199)

The term *structure* as used by Lévi-Strauss is a word designed
to send some people cheering to their feet, others screaming from
the room. Disagreements about its appropriateness revolve mainly
around his definition of structure in terms of binary opposition,
which he has assumed from structural linguistic theory and applied
to cultural phenomena in general.[2] Whether language, and by im-
plication all human activity, is in its structure binary is a moot
point; yet, whether we agree or disagree on this matter, much of
Lévi-Strauss's work merits our attention.

Lévi-Strauss has discovered like structures underlying not only
the tales, legends, and stories of a culturally unified people but also
many of their common cultural conventions. Nor is it merely 'so-
cial' conventions that may be so related. As Kluckhohn has noted,
religious language and rituals have a similar structural relation to
myth: 'Ritual is an obsessive repetitive activity—often a symbolic
dramatization of the fundamental "needs" of the society, whether
"economic", "biological", "social", or "sexual". Mythology is the ra-
tionalization of these same needs, whether they are all expressed in
overt ceremonial or not' (1942 : 78). Social and legal structure, for
example, seem to derive from the same structural 'needs'. The ex-
tensive work of Georges Dumézil and his followers on the relation-
ship of Indo-European myth and the culture's probable tripartite
social structure bears this out. The same basis underlies the art and
literature of a culture; indeed, this underlying conceptual structure
should inform any cultural artifact, any construct that has a dimen-
sion beyond the merely useful or ordinary: 'Myth, art, religion,
and language are all symbolic expressions of the creative spirit in
man; in them this spirit takes on objective, perceptible form, be-
coming conscious of itself through man's consciousness of it' (Neu-
mann 1964 : 369). The human mind symbolizes and abstracts from

experience, and it does this to a large degree in language. It seems highly unreasonable, at this stage of our understanding of the nature of human experience, to deny that the structure and order of human linguistic activity are closely related to other aspects of human experience. If the same conceptual system underlies all of them, then many of the surface manifestations of this system, which appear in many different varieties of human activity, both physical and linguistic, should begin upon analysis to reveal much of their underlying similarity and some of their underlying structure.

How might a contemporary analysis of the interrelationship of culture and language avoid the problems inherent in much nineteenth-century scholarship? Although it is probably impossible to avoid all of them, some of these, which have become most obvious over time, perhaps can be avoided. First, nineteenth-century investigators unwittingly read their own cultural prejudices into the materials they analyzed. We too understand earlier material through our own limited perceptions, and we view all of it from the outside. We must be careful in all attempts at 'translation', both in its linguistic nature and in its 'carrying across' of cultural categorizations and relations. A good deal of the material to be examined in the following essays deals, for example, with gods, dragons, fate, etc.— all cultural manifestations we now call 'supernatural', with all of its frightening and 'unreal' connotations. If, however, we use the word to describe an aspect of some distant culture, 'far from increasing our understanding of it, we are likely by the use of this word to misunderstand it. We have the concept of natural law, and the word "supernatural" conveys to us something outside the ordinary operation of cause and effect, but it may not at all have that sense for [the other culture]' (Evans-Pritchard 1965: 109–10). It seems clear that there was nothing supernatural in our sense about any of the monstrous characters who appear regularly in Germanic literature, and this should force us to rethink the 'nature' of this earlier world and the nature of events within it.

To this end, rather than focus on the way in which the Germanic world differs from our own, we should focus upon the way in which those elements of the Germanic world, differing from those of our world, are effectively integrated into the structure of events in that world. The monstrous part of the Germanic world—

the Giants of Germanic myth, Grendel and his Mother in *Beowulf*, the dead who walk among men—all have a role to play in the central concerns of Germanic perception. The powers they embody represent something of the explanatory force that natural or 'scientific' law expresses for us. How, when, and where such monsters act will give us some meaningful insights into the working structure of the Germanic cosmos. Likewise, we should be chary of premature judgment about the quality of the apparently (by our standards) 'destructive' nature of much of this 'monstrous' activity.

Another problem of earlier analyses resulted from an attempt to include, if not everything, at least too much. In what follows, rather than trying to include all aspects of Germanic thinking, acting, and perceiving, the essays work from only one myth, one point of view. Beginning with their concern with language, they try everywhere to articulate the binary opposition inherent in the Germanic tense system between past and present or, better, between past and nonpast events. This particular opposition of action presents events in a way that is significantly different from our own, and from other Indo-European peoples. This particular relation between tenses works itself out quite broadly in the culture. Most obviously, this occurs in representations of time and of action; less obvious, at first, are its related manifestations in other aspects of the culture, but it appears there, too, if we look not at the surfaces of temporal and spatial matters but at the underlying meaningful elements that make up the surfaces. As a result, ideas about drinking, gaming, exploration, speech making, and fertility become deeply and meaningfully linked. The most overt 'mythical' representation of all these underlying elements is found in the 'iconic' figure formed by the union of the world tree, Yggdrasil, and Urth's Well. Within this figure, the cosmos is expressed, and, within that, everything else we can learn about time, space, and action takes place.

The essays that follow examine as many of the elements inherent in this conceptual figure as their own governing point of departure allows. These elements are essentially 'mythic' in that they define and structure the Germanic cosmos. They are largely 'iconic'; in their manifest appearances in the culture, they embody or 'mirror' the semantic concepts they express (Crick 1976: 130). Thus, there is no effective or essential distinction between signifier and signified. The interrelations among these structural elements, at

once, present a 'shape' that can be perceived as well as a system of relations by which they may be understood.

The structural elements with which the essays deal have surfaced in the main in ways that are not unlike the ways in which distinctive linguistic features appear in phonological analyses of language. The sound structures of language, with which phonological analysis is concerned, are composed of those elements of human speech that allow for meaningful distinctions among the actual sounds used by the speakers of the language. The phonological system of a language is composed, then, not of sounds as such but of the meaningful elements that, in their rule-governed joining, create the actual speech sounds of the language. Because of such combinatory powers, the number of distinctive elements can be small: Two features can create four distinct 'sounds'; three features, eight distinct sounds; four different features, sixteen, etc. Thus, a variety of different sounds in a language, although they are composed of a relatively large number of phonetic features, can be shown to consist of a minimal number of distinctions among such features. For example. English [b], [d], and [g], the initial sounds of *big, dig,* and *gig,* respectively, although all different sounds, can be shown to be alike in *all* underlying phonetic elements except place of articulation in the mouth: All are voiced, stopped consonants. In English, [b] differentiates itself from [d] only because the bilabial articulation of [b] is perceived by English speakers to be 'distinct' from the apico-alveolar articulation of [d].'

When we come to examine cultural elements other than language, a similar kind of analysis can be helpful. The repetitions of events, acts, artifacts, narrative motifs, etc. become interesting not so much in themselves but because of the peculiar iconic or semantic elements they embody. They exhibit the kinds of reiteration that Lévi-Strauss (1967:199) has already noticed. The mythic figure, for example, that includes Yggdrasil and Urth's Well also includes a number of different trees and wells. As essay 1 elaborates, Yggdrasil is called by different names in different places. Our interest is not in giving full accounts of all of these but in examining those elements that are common to *all* representations. Then, and only then, we may begin to see how the remaining distinctions among these may operate to point up particularly important relations not obvious in the repetitions themselves. There are, for example, three wells at the base of Yggdrasil: Urth's Well, which is most ob-

viously the well of the 'past'; Mímir's Well, which is the well of wisdom, and Hvergelmir, the well that is 'serpent-infested' and that 'seethes'. All three wells suggest fluidity, accumulation, and containment among other elements. What their juncture uniquely signals in this case is a meaningful joining of 'wisdom' with a 'past' that, although exhibiting something of 'containment', still 'writhes' like a serpent and 'seethes'. Further analysis of other aspects of the culture shows additional significant joining of these same features. When the well and tree are joined, significant elements begin to appear as a result of that joining as well.

It is clear, too, from such analysis that not every element that appears in any configuration will be 'distinctive' in the sense outlined above. (This is also true for the kind of phonological analysis just described.) Some features are necessary to create the figure but have no special relevance beyond the surface construct itself. Thus, the wells beneath Yggdrasil contain 'water', but it is not the chemical composition or idea of water that is important. Rather, it is the idea of 'fluidity' inherent in liquid, of which water is the most common type, and its relation to 'flow' and 'movement' that is repeated and becomes distinctive. Other configurations may significantly replace water with blood or intoxicant; indeed, any item or action expressive of 'fluid motion' or 'liquid activity' will contain the same iconic quality. Likewise, with respect to the tree Yggdrasil, its kind (genus) is not a distinctive element. In some texts, it is merely 'a tree'; in others, it is specifically *askr* 'ash'; in some, it is apparently some kind of evergreen; in still others, it is of an 'unknown' kind. There are problems if we wish to see it as both a deciduous ash and as 'ever green'. All of this is ultimately of no significance. Only natural trees functioning iconically pose problems. Other semantic elements expressed by the figure of a 'tree' will provide the distinctions here. Comparison of representations allows for the resolution of such apparent contradictions.

The essays that make up the body of this work draw upon a variety of sources. The materials available for examination are of various kinds: first, there are the records and reports of men who, outside the culture, came into contact with the Germanic peoples; second, there are the physical remains of the Germanic peoples themselves, mainly grave goods. All these are examined in the two parts of the

second essay. Third, there are the Germanic linguistic records. These are extensive and allow for separate examination of some aspects of Germanic mythology in the first essay, of literature in the third essay, of the experience of time and space as this is reflected in language in the fourth essay, and of the structural nature of the Germanic languages in the fifth essay.

The value of these essays lies not so much in their variety but in their striving to synthesize it, to establish a perspective from which all the source material may be seen as integrally related.[1] The process of reemphasizing to integrate sometimes necessitates that the import of the sources differs, now more, now less, from that of the particular disciplines from which they derive. The essays work wherever possible with the most available and least controversial materials. They often use these in unexpected ways, however; occasionally, the relevance of a particular point will not be that which an author himself might have assigned it. Thus, the essays require, if their novel perspective is to be perceived, a reader who is generally unresistant to making the new associations the synthesis suggests. At the least, the considerate reader should find that these essays can broaden his or her understanding of the way in which the early Germanic peoples shaped their own experience; at best, they may be helpful in tying together what might seem to be disparate aspects of the way all men act and think.

Abbreviations

|			
Dan.	Danish	OFris.	Old Frisian
Ger.	(Modern) German	OHG	Old High German
Gk.	Greek	OInd.	Old Indian
Goth.	Gothic	ON	Old Norse
Icel.	Icelandic	OS	Old Saxon
IE	Indo-European	Osc.	Oscan
Lat.	Latin	OSlav.	Old Slavic
Lith.	Lithuanian	PIE	Primitive Indo-European
ME	Middle English	Pol.	Polish
MHG	Middle High German	Rus.	Russian
Mod.E	Modern English	Skt.	Sanskrit
Nor.	Norwegian	Swed.	Swedish
O	Old	Umbr.	Umbrian
OE	Old English	Ved.	Vedic

The Well and the Tree

Urth's Well

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I
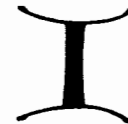
I

N *Vǫluspá* 19–20 we have what is probably the earliest mention of Urth's Well:

19 Asc veit ec standa,   heitir Yggdrasill,
    hár baðmr, ausinn   hvítaauri;
    þaðan koma dǫggvar,   þærs í dala falla,
    stendr æ yfir, grœnn,   Urðar brunni.

20 Þaðan koma meyiar,   margs vitandi,
    þriár, ór þeim sæ,   er und þolli stendr;
    Urð héto eina,   aðra Verðandi
    —scáro á scíði—,   Sculd ina þriðio;
    þær lǫg lǫgðo,   þær líf kuro
    alda bornom,   ørlǫg seggia.[1]

The usual English version follows the lines of Bellows (1926:9):

19 An ash I know,   Yggdrasil its name,
    With water white   is the great tree wet;
    Thence come the dews   that fall in the dales,
    Green by Urth's well   does it ever grow.

20 Thence come the maidens   mighty in wisdom,
    Three from the dwelling   down 'neath the tree;
    Urth is one named,   Verthandi the next,—
    On the wood they scored,—   and Skuld the third.
    Laws they made there,   and life allotted
    To the sons of men,   and set their fates,

or those of Hollander (1962:4):

19 An ash I know,   hight Yggdrasil,
    the mighty tree   moist with white dews;
    thence come the floods   that fall adown;
    evergreen o'ertops   Urth's well this tree.

20 Thence wise maidens   three betake them—
    under spreading boughs   their bower stands—
    [Urth one is hight,   the other, Verthandi,
    Skuld the third: they scores did cut,]
    they laws did make,   they lives did choose:
    for the children of men   they marked their fates.[2]

The context is amplified somewhat in the *Gylfaginning*:

þar stendr salr einn fagr undir askinum við brunninn, ok ór
þeim sal koma III meyjar, þær er svá heita: Urðr, Verðandi,
Skuld. Þessar meyjar skapa mönnum aldr; þær köllum vér
nornir. (*Gylfaginning* 15:32)[3]

A hall stands there, fair, under the ash by the well, and out of
that hall come three maids, who are called thus: Urdr, Ver-
dandi, Skuld; these maids determine the period of men's lives:
we call them Norns. (Brodeur 1929: 28–29)

And further:

Enn er þat sagt, at nornir þær, er byggva við Urðarbrunn, taka
hvern dag vatn í brunninum ok með aurinn þann, er liggr um
brunninn, ok ausa upp yfir askinn, til þess at eigi skulu limar
hans tréna eða fúna, en þat vatn er svá heilagt, at allir hlutir,
þeir er þar koma í brunninn, verða svá hvítir sem hinna sú, er
skjall heitir, er innan liggr við eggskurn. (*Gylfaginning* 16:34–
35)

It is further said that these Norns who dwell by the Well of
Urdr take water of the well every day, and with it that clay
which lies about the well, and sprinkle it over the Ash, to the
end that its limbs shall not wither nor rot; for that water is so
holy that all things which come there into the well become as
white as the film which lies within the egg-shell. (Brodeur
1929:30)

The passage is usually interpreted in the following way: The
world ash Yggdrasil is taken to contain within its branch and root

structure the worlds of the gods, giants, dwarves, and most impor-
tantly Midgard, the world of men. The activities of the three Norns
influence these worlds. Their act of watering the tree sustains it;
their actions influence, for good or ill, the lives and affairs of men.
They make laws, allot or choose lives, and mark or set fate for men.
The Norns' activity represents the working out of destiny; they
govern the past, present, and future of individual men and of all
mankind. The Norns are often equated with the classical fates (Gk.
Μοῖραι, Lat. *Parcae*), and the Well of Urth, therefore, becomes the
well of destiny. There is much in this interpretation that seems rea-
sonable and rings true; there are also some difficulties with it.

There is little doubt about the central importance of the world
tree as a symbol of a large part of the universe as conceived by early
Scandinavian people. Its position in both *Vǫluspá* and *Gylfaginning*
supports this. Its centrality is closely, although not directly, associ-
ated with men. It is always directly involved with the world of the
Æsir, the gods of whom Odin is chief and who are most influential
in the affairs of men. The name Yggdrasil itself derives from an
attribute of Odin, and the Æsir are responsible for, among other
things, the creation of Midgard and their own world-city Asgard
(*Gylfaginning* 8–9:20–23). The Æsir are integrally bound up with
Yggdrasil and Urth's Well:

Hvar er höfuðstaðrinn eða helgistaðr goðanna?—Hárr svarar:
Þat er at aski Yggdrasils, þar skulu goðin eiga dóma sína hvern
dag . . . Askrinn er allra trjá mestr ok beztr; limar hans drei-
fask um heim allan ok standa yfir himni; þrjár rœtr trésins
halda því upp ok standa afarbreitt; ein er með ásum, önnur
með hrímþursum, þar sem forðum var Ginnungagap; in
þriðja stendr yfir Niflheimi, ok undir þeiri rót er Hvergelmir,
en Níðhöggr gnagar neðan rótna. En undir þeiri rót, er til
hrímþursa horfir, þar er Mímisbrunnr, er spekð ok manvit er í
fólgit, ok heitir sá Mímir, er á brunninn . . . Þriðja rót asksins
stendr á himni, ok undir þeiri rót er brunnr sá, er mjök er
heilagr, er heitir Urðarbrunnr; þar eigu goðin dómstað sinn.
(*Gylfaginning* 15:30–31)

'Where is the chief abode or holy place of the gods?' Hárr an-
swered: 'That is at the Ash of Yggdrasill; there the gods must
give judgment every day . . . The Ash is greatest of all trees
and best: its limbs spread out over all the world and stand

above heaven. Three roots of the tree uphold it and stand exceeding broad: one is among the Æsir; another among the Rime-Giants, in that place where aforetime was the Yawning Void; the third stands over Niflheim, and under that root is Hvergelmir, and Nídhöggr gnaws the root from below. But under that root which turns toward the Rime-Giants is Mímir's Well, wherein wisdom and understanding are stored; and he is called Mímir, who keeps the well . . . The third root of the Ash stands in heaven; and under that root is the well which is very holy, that is called the Well of Urdr; there the gods hold their tribunal. (Brodeur 1929: 27–28)

One suspects that the judgments and tribunal of the gods and the ministrations of the Norns are very closely linked. They occur in the same place, and all of these activities touch the world of men.

In *Voluspá* 20, the Norns are said 'to make laws' (*lǫg leggja*), 'to choose life' (*líf kjósa*) for the sons of men, and 'to set or mark fate' (*ørlǫg segja*). With this can be included the probably interpolated action of 'scoring the wood'. Because it is common in Germanic poetry for like attributes to be connected in running text, it is likely that the various activities of the Norns clustered here are to be felt as related aspects of their overall, inclusive function. A careful look at the Norse phrasing is helpful. The Norse expression *líf kjósa* is as vague as the phrase 'to choose life' is in English. It is too restricting to see this as only the act of choosing death, the final limit of men's lives, as we are tempted to do. The initial limit, birth, is not excluded, nor are any of the events that occur during the daily course of life itself. The phrase *lǫg leggja* is the usual term in Old Norse for the act of making laws, but the literal meaning of the phrase suggests something else. *Leggja* is 'to lay', 'to place', or 'to do'. *Lǫg* (the plural of *lag*) is literally 'strata' or 'that which has been deposited or laid down'. *Lǫg leggja* is, then, to lay down that which is laid down or to lay down or implant strata. There is a strong feeling of the physical here (additionally picked up in the action of 'scoring wood'). Of course, *lǫg* occurs again in *ørlǫg segja*: 'to say or speak the *ør*-strata, the *ør*-things-laid-down, the *ør*-law'. The phrase is usually translated as 'to set fate', but fate is a non-Germanic word. If fate's meaning is to be limited to denoting 'that which has been spoken' or 'that which has been laid down', then it translates the context well; if not, it will cause problems. What exactly is it that the Norns

speak in saying the *ør*-log? The prefix *ør*- signifies something that is beyond or above the ordinary.[4] It suggests something of first or primary significance, but it does not indicate the scale upon which the significance is to be measured; hence, the rather vague 'above' or 'beyond' quality it imparts. The *ørlǫg* is, then, a 'primal law' (in importance), a 'highest law' (in elevation), an 'earliest law' (in time), a 'first law' (in any numerical sequence), and so forth. To take the more literal reading of *lǫg*, *ørlǫg* is 'the most significant things laid down', 'the earliest things accomplished'.[5]

In addition to the activities from *Voluspá* described above, *Gylfaginning* 16 adds the act of watering the world tree Yggdrasil to keep it 'evergreen'. This is essential to the continuing life of the tree. The Norns nurse and sustain it; as such, their activities have a positive and generative force. The holy water, through which the nurture is accomplished, comes from Urth's Well. The Norns represent a powerful, continuing, regenerative force in the universe. They regularly speak 'the primal law' or 'lay down the strata of what has been accomplished', and they regularly influence the lives of men. These seemingly disparate actions are all centrally included within the myth of the world tree and Urth's Well. The significant aspects of the myth lie in its repetitive, sustentative quality, and in its quality of physical control or influence, present in the idea of 'strata' in *lǫg* and in the activity of the watering of the tree. Perhaps the two are significantly joined in *Gylfaginning* 16, where the act of watering involves a mixing of 'clay' with the holy water, implying a kind of layer or strata. All of these qualities are repetitive and accretive, growing, as it were, layer by layer, act by act. Because the *ørlǫg* is spoken continually and layers of action are accomplished upon layers of action, the kind of universal ideal represented by the myth is one in which everything is growing and, in the process of its growth, connected directly with its origins. To speak the *ørlǫg* is, then, to take account of all that happens with respect to all that has happened already. The dangers in translating *ørlǫg* as 'fate' are now clearer. To us, man's fate or destiny is likely to suggest present knowledge of what is to be, of what we believe to be preordained to occur. The Norns, however, speak of what has been, of what is already known. Explicit mention of predestination or foreknowledge is absent from the passages given and from the Norse universal myth itself.

Ideas of predestination and foreknowledge are, of course,

regularly attached to the activities of the classical fates, and it is not surprising to find the Norns identified from quite early times with them. Both the Epinal and Erfurt glosses, Anglo-Saxon glosses of the eighth century, render Lat. *parcae* as *wyrdae* (Sweet 1885:86). *Wyrd* is the etymological equivalent in Old English of ON *Urth*, and the plural *wyrdae* suggests the idea of the Norns acting as a group (a term equivalent to the ON *nornir* does not occur in Old English). What did the eighth-century, Christian glosser believe the functions of the Parcae to have been? Isidore of Seville in his Etymologies (A.D. 622–23) discusses fate (*fatum*) and the Parcae:

> *Fatum* dicunt esse quicquid dii effantur. Fatum igitur dictum a fando, *i.e.*, loquendo. *Tria* autem *fata* finguntur in colo, in fuso, digitisque fila ex lana torquentibus, propter trina tempora: *praeteritum*, quod in fuso jam netum atque involutum est, *praesens*, quod inter digitos nentis trahitur, *futurum* in lana quae colo implicata est, et quod adhuc per digitos nentis ad fusum tanquam praesens ad praeteritum trajiciendum est . . . quas (parcas) tres esse voluerunt, unam quae vitam hominis ordiatur, alteram quae contexat, tertiam quae rumpat. (Grimm 1900:1.405)

Here are laid out two of the most commonly cited aspects of the goddesses of fate: the tripartite beginning, middle, and end of men's lives and the corresponding tripartite temporal scheme relating past to present to future. Whether the information transmitted by Isidore is his own invention or whether he is the spokesman for the common knowledge of his day is not the point. We know that his ideas subsequently either became or remained common. So imbued has modern man become with this attribution that it has been iterated with little question until quite recently. Grimm himself gave critical credence to the idea:

> In the three proper names [of the Norns—Urth, Verthandi, and Skuld] it is impossible to mistake the forms of verbal nouns or adjectives: *Urðr* is taken from the pret. pl. of verða (varð, urðum), to become, *Verðandi* is the pres. part. of the same word, and *Skuld* the past part. of skula, shall, the auxiliary by which the future tense is formed. Hence we have what was, what is, and what shall be, or the past, present and future,

very aptly designated, and a Fate presiding over each. (Grimm 1900:1.405)[6]

This idea of tripartite temporality occasionally surfaces in current commentary: 'In the *Vǫluspá* . . . the goddess of fate [Urth] is seen with two others, *Verðandi* (Present?) and *Skuld* (Future), probably late additions, laying down the course of men's lives' (Turville-Petre 1964:280).

There is little in the classical conception of either the Μοῖραι or the Parcae to suggest a temporal arch of past, present, and future. Our earliest records are of the Μοῖραι, who were at first a vague 'plural' in number and only later established themselves as the three spinners: Clotho (Κλωθώ, from a root that means 'twist' or 'spin'), Lachesis (Λάχεσις 'lot, distribution', cf. λάχος 'share, portion'), and Atropos (Ἄτροπος 'inflexible, unchangeable'). These names, interesting as they are, are relatively recent and not as informative as the generic name Μοῖραι.

> Μοῖρα and μόρος derive directly from μείρομαι of which εἵμαρται is the perfect passive, and εἵμαρτο the pluperfect passive form. Μείρομαι is a middle form which means 'to receive one's portion' (almost—'to receive as one's due'). This verb has a passive sense, 'to be divided from', only once [in Homer]. (Dietrich 1965:11)

The root *smer- 'think, remember, share' underlies μοῖρα, which often has the meaning of a simple 'portion, share' of something as well as the meaning of 'fate, doom' in Homer. The etymology is helpful but not entirely clear. 'If the concept of μοῖρα = "fate" was developed from μοῖρα = "share", what did this "share" consist of?' (Dietrich 1965:12). On the other hand, it is possible that the deity Μοῖρα existed before the idea of μοῖρα 'share' and thus presides over all actions of thinking, considering, etc. (Dietrich 1965:11–13).

When and if 'fate' became personified as 'share' or 'share' became abstracted to 'fate' is of no importance here. The nature of reality in either case is such that either possibility denotes the presence of a powerful force that stands at the intersection of this world and the world beyond it and governs the affairs of men as they relate to this larger reality.[7] The cultic representations of this force (as the μοῖραι) are chthonic in origin and from the beginning are

associated with death in inscriptions and hymns and also with vegetation (Dietrich 1965 : 76–77). They also appear relatively early as 'spinners of man's lot' (Bianchi 1953 : 205–20), and they are often pictured as being present at man's birth (Dietrich 1965 : 79–80).

The classical Parcae are the Roman developments of what were apparently ancient Italic deities of birth. At least two of their three Latin names (Nōna, Decima, Morta) suggest time or numbers, and their usual interpretation refers to times of pregnancy, with the result that one of these 'fates' will preside over an individual's birth: Nōna (from *nōnus* 'a ninth') for a mature birth, Decima 'a tenth' for a postmature birth, or Morta (from *mors* 'death') for a stillbirth.* The generic name Parcae possibly derives from *parere* 'to bear (children)'. Very early in the history of Italic culture, however, the ancestors of the Roman Parcae were equated with the Greek Μοῖραι. It is probably also about this time (late fourth, early third century B.C.) that Lat. *fatum, fata* 'that which is spoken' (from *fari* 'speak') are associated with the verbal roots underlying μοῖρα. 'The two oldest examples we have which connect the verb *fari* with the idea of destiny occur in the *Odisia* of Livius Andronicus and the *Annales* of Ennius [both third century B.C.]. The former, who writes Latin but thinks Greek, equates . . . the Parcae, one of whom he names, with the Moirai . . . : *quando dies adueniet, quem profata Morta est'* (Dumézil 1970 : 500). In addition, from about the same period, three *cippi* bearing the inscriptions *neuna fata, neuna dono, parca maurtia dono* have been discovered near ancient Lavinium. The names Nōna and Morta, although in diphthongized form, are recognizable. 'The epithet *Fata* seems to indicate that already at this time, in Lavinium, these characters were linked with destiny' (Dumézil 1970 : 500–1). The development of the Parcae into deities of destiny is thus clearly traceable to Greek influences in Italic culture.

The Norns have many features in common with both the Μοῖραι and the Parcae. All exist in their final formalizations as groups of three, although the implications are that they began either with a vague plurality (for example, individual births with the Parcae) or with a single abstraction (sharing, judging), which multiplied itself through a plurality of personifications. Thus, we find occurring together the concepts (*Wyrd, Μοῖρα*) and their personifications (*uyrdae, μοῖραι*). The abstractions and occurrences evolved with each group are vital to the affairs of men: birth, giving

life, presiding at birth, choosing life, etc. All connote fertility and (at least with respect to the Norns and Μοῖραι) vegetation. Ultimately, all are connected to the idea of death as (it seems) a part of life. Both the classical and the Germanic concepts derive from the idea of parceling out, sharing, apportioning; both concepts place man in a relatively passive role. Lawmaking and 'laying down strata', so important among the activities of the Norns, are suggested by the inflexible firmness of the name Atropos.

There are, however, fundamental differences among the classical and Germanic groups. The Parcae, although their origins are unknown, seem to have been 'personal' deities over the affairs of individual men. The Norns and Μοῖραι (and finally the Parcae as they become influenced by Greek thinking) control not only individual occurrences but the whole course of human events. The nature of the control in each group is different. Jaeger, commenting on the poetry of Solon, makes clear the nature of the control of Μοῖρα: '"the seer himself cannot avert misfortune even if he sees it impending" . . . the central thought . . . stands out clearly: Moira, Fate, makes all human effort fundamentally insecure, however earnest and logical it may seem to be; and *this* Moira cannot be averted by foreknowledge, although . . . misery caused by the agent can be averted' (1945 : 145). Μοῖρα thus stands before all events that occur on earth. *Wyrd* (the generic term for the activity and control associated with the Norns) also stands apart from the affairs of men, but it does not stand in the position of foreknowledge, so clearly that of μοῖρα. Μοῖρα (and the Μοῖραι) stands *before* the events of this world and governs the working out of the present into the future (or, better, the working *in* of the future into the present). *Wyrd* (and the Norns) governs the working out of the past into the present (or, more accurately, the working *in* of the present *into* the past).

Neither the Μοῖραι nor the Parcae nor the Norns were basically or primarily concerned with determining the temporal continuity of past, present, and future. If such a function did eventually accrue to the fundamental concerns of the Norns and Parcae, and apparently it did or Isidore would not have felt compelled to say so, it evolved later, in postclassical, post-early-Germanic times. But what of Grimm's assertion, already given above, that in the Norns' names 'we have what was, what is, and what shall be, or the past, present and future'? If this is so, then there is very good evidence in the Germanic system to suggest temporality as another aspect of

the functions of the Norns. Grimm is correct in relating the names to the verbs *verða* and *skula*. *Verthandi* is transparently the present participle of the former, and *Skuld* corresponds easily with the past participle of the latter. The name *Urth* is not so easily pinpointed. *Verða*, a third-conjugation strong verb, produces the stem *urth-* in both its preterite plural (as Grimm asserts) and in its past participle. For Grimm, the preterite plural form seemed the most likely source because he saw the three names standing in a past-present-future relationship; *Urth* supplied the past time from the preterite, *Verthandi* supplied present time in the present participle, and *Skuld*—even though it is a past participle—provided the future time, for Grimm finds 'skula, shall, [to be] the auxiliary by which the future tense is formed'. Here Grimm's argument is weak. *Skula* or *skulu*, although it often implies what we would call 'future time', is not by any means the auxiliary of the future tense in Old Norse. It carries a far greater force of obligation or necessity; 'what *shall* be' in Old Norse is 'what is, of necessity'. *Skulu* occurs most frequently in contexts that express a generalized, universal present, that is, in general statements about what happens continually:

Kǫrmt oc Ǫrmt   oc Kerlaugar tvær,
    þær scal Þórr vaða,
hverian dag,   er hann dœma ferr
    at asci Yggdrasils,
þvíat ásbrú   brenn ǫll loga,
    heilog vǫtn hlóa.

(*Grímnismál* 29:63)

Kǫrmt and Ormt   and the Kerlaugs twain,
    Thór does wade through
every day,   to doom when he fares
    'neath the ash Yggdrasil;
for the bridge of the gods   is ablaze with flames—
    hot are the holy waters.

(Hollander 1962:59)

Often it is used in epigrammatic statements to express defining or necessary truths:

Ósnotr maðr   þicciz alt vita,
    ef hann á sér í vá vero;

hitki hann veit,   hvat hann scal við qveða,
    ef hans freista firar.

(*Hávamál* 26:21)

The unwise man   weens he knows all,
    if from harm he is far at home;
but knows not ever   what answer to make
    when others ask him aught.

(Hollander 1962:18)[9]

A close examination of *Vǫluspá*, *Hávamál*, and *Grímnismál* reveals no occurrences of *skulu* primarily expressing 'future' time, although some occurrences, by our conceptions, imply this. All occurrences, however, express constraint, obligation, necessary continual action, and so forth.[10] Such obligations imply a continuous 'present', which logically extends into the 'future' in some cases, but *skulu* does not directly denote such temporal conditions.

If not time sequences, then what do the names of the three Norns signify? Davidson (1964:26) glosses them as Fate (*Urðr*), Being (*Verðandi*), and Necessity (*Skuld*). As Gehl (1939:96–105) has pointed out, *Skuld* surely has to do with necessity, but the glosses 'Being' and 'Fate' for *Verthandi* and *Urth* do not express their basic similarity to each other and to their parent, the verb *verða* (OE *weorþan*, OFris. *wertha*, OS *werðan*, OHG *werdan*, Goth. *wairþan*). The verb obviously was common in all early Germanic languages and remains so in most of their modern descendants. The significant exception is English where, except for such an uncommon and obsolescent expression as 'woe worth the day', it has disappeared.[11] *Verða* derives from the IE root **u̯ert-*, which denotes the kind of motion common to 'turn, spin, rotate'. The IE languages utilize it widely, for example in OInd. *vártate* 'revolve', Lat. *vertere* 'to turn', and in the Slavic root **v'ert-* 'circular motion', common in various combinations in most Slavic languages: OSlav. *vratiti*, Rus. *v'ert'et'* 'to turn', Pol. *wiercić* 'to bore, drill', etc. The idea basic to *verða* contains this element of 'turning' and probably represents some kind of change of location or reorientation in space. Its meaning develops logically from 'turn (from one place or position to another)' > 'turn (in to)' > 'become'. The phenomenon is not unique to this verb or to the Germanic languages. 'Der Bedeutungswandel "drehen > geschehen, sich ereignen" ist auch sonst

belegbar. Englisch *to turn* "drehen" und spanisch *volverse* "sich drehen" bedeuten auch "geschehen"; auch altindisch *vártate* "dreht sich" nimmt gelegentlich die abstrakte Bedeutung "geschieht" an (vgl. lat. *bene vertere, honori verti . . .*); ungarisch *elöfordulni* "vorkommen" bedeutet wörtlich "sich nach vorne drehen"' (Mittner 1955:91).

Additionally, the motion of 'turning' or 'changing position' found in **uert-* implies revolution or motion about an axis. Such motion suggests a return to an original beginning point (as in a revolving door), or at least an approximation toward such an origin (as in a screwlike motion). Thus, one thing turning into something else will retain part or all of itself or return at least partially to its original configuration. This antithetical nature of change and retention is found in the meaning of *verða* and the words related to it in the Germanic languages. When *Verthandi* and *Urth* are semantically related, *Verthandi* becomes that which is in process of 'turning' or 'becoming', and *Urth* would be that which has 'turned' or 'become'. It seems reasonable that the root of *Urth* is also a past-participial form, as the names of the other two Norns are based on participles. Conceptually, it seems likely that all three would have participial frames if their actions are to be taken as a related group. The participial frames would provide a uniting semantic element, possibly something like 'process' and 'completion', without the additional constraints obtaining in verb forms marked by tense, voice, mood, etc.[12]

If we divide the influence of the Norns among the three, their names suggest that they define what we normally think of as the total range of verbal action: Urth reflects actions made manifest, brought to a full, clear, observable, fruition; they have 'become'; they are accomplished. Verthandi clearly reflects the actually occurring process of all that Urth eventually expresses. The two Norns are closely linked, with the influence of Verthandi flowing directly to Urth. As actions pass from Verthandi to Urth, they move from 'becoming' to 'become'. As Skuld is involved with necessary or obligatory action, she stands slightly apart from the other two Norns. She seems to make reference to actions felt as somehow obliged or known to occur; that is, the necessity of their 'becoming' is so strongly felt or clearly known that they present themselves as available to be incorporated into the realms of Verthandi and Urth.

If all possible acts in the created universe, whether they be acts

of men or of gods, are seen as lying within the realm of influence of the Norns, because it is they who sustain the world tree, then all of these acts must lie within the boundaries of those actions that of necessity occur, those that are occurring, and those that have occurred. This three-way division still allows for reduction to a future-present-past time scheme, with the 'future' standing with Skuld, the Norn of necessity. Such a reduction will lead us directly to the notion of a Germanic cosmology dominated by a 'future' that is somehow necessary, predetermined, and foredestined. Yet there is very little anywhere in the remains of Germanic culture known to us that suggests that this is true. If this were true, one would expect a rather heavy emphasis upon the activities of Skuld, as her supposed relation to the future would imply. We would expect much the same emphasis that, for example, medieval Christian Europe placed on the activities of Dame Fortune and her wheel with its influence on the immediate future in the affairs of men. To the contrary, such emphasis does not occur with Skuld. Apart from the quotation in *Vǫluspá* 20, in which she is merely named, and a second mention in *Vǫluspá* 30, where she is associated with the Valkyries, she is not further mentioned in Norse mythology.[13] The infrequency of references to Skuld is surpassed by those to Verthandi. Apart from her mention in *Vǫluspá* 20 (and its corresponding expansion in the Prose Edda), there is no further reference to her anywhere. Not so with Urth. She is referred to again and again. In addition, if we take into account that she lends her name to the common noun that expresses in general the activities of all of the Norns (OE *wyrd*, OS *wurd*, OHG *wurt*, etc.), she assumes a central importance in much Germanic literature and for early Germanic culture itself. It is from her well that the Norns draw the water that nourishes Yggdrasil. If any one Norn has predominant importance, it is Urth.

This importance of Urth among the Norns is not an original or a new idea. Most commentators on Germanic religion and mythology mention her in one way or another. There are, of course, disagreements about her significance to the cosmological system. She is most frequently referred to as the Norn of the past, and there is much to recommend this, as long as we keep in mind that the past is not one third of a past-present-future trinity. The Germanic past is more accurately a realm of experience including all of the accomplished actions of all beings, men, gods, etc. It is ever growing, and

it has a direct, nurturing, sustentative effect upon the world, which men experience as life, just as the water from Urth's Well nurtures Yggdrasil. The relationship implies a continual, supportive intrusion of past upon present existence. Events, conditions, and predicaments of present life are, therefore, influenced by the realm of Urth. It is no surprise to find that *wyrd* is used to gloss not only Lat. *Parcae 'wyrdae', fortuna* and *fatum 'wyrd'*, but also *fors, sortem, condicionem 'wyrd'* (Sweet 1885:566). Urth is concerned not only with events of the past but with the disposition of events in the world of men. This interaction of past and present events led some recent commentators to see the realm of Urth as representing either the passage of time or the course of events.[11] Neither of these seems wrong, but both require careful attention if they are to be understood fully. There is no guarantee that the passage of time was felt by the early Germanic mind to be anything like what we feel it to be today; as a matter of fact, most of what has been said above points quite strongly to the likelihood that it certainly was not. The course of events over which Urth presides is more than an agglomeration of actions gone by; Urth unfolds the pattern and sequence of all events as they build up and out into the present world; she illustrates the fundamental importance of the *ørlǫg*, the 'primal' events laid down in earliest times, whose pattern dominates and structures events now occurring in the world of men.

The importance of Urth is further enhanced by an examination of her major symbolic attribute in the myth, the well: *Urðarbrunnr* (or, in its other form, *Urðar-bruðr*), the *brunn* of Urth. As with Urth herself, there is some difficulty for speakers of modern Germanic languages, especially English, in grasping the exact nature of this *brunn*. Modern English lacks all etymological descendants of this word, except in such metathesized dialectal forms as *bourne* or *burn* 'stream, rill'. The word is retained in different forms in the other Germanic languages with a rather wide range of meanings. The usual English translation, 'well', only approximates the Norse original, and it does not do so entirely satisfactorily.

In Icelandic, *brunnr* refers most often to a spring or well, especially to a centrally located source. It is 'common to all, high and low, hence the proverbs, (allir) eiga sama til brunns að bera, i.e. (*all*) *have the same needs, wants, wishes*, or the like; allt ber að sama brunni, *all turn to the same well, all bear the same way. . .* the word may also be used of *running water*, though this is not usual in Icel[andic], where

distinction is made between brunnr and lækr ["brook, rivulet"]' (Cleasby et al. 1957:83). The various shades of meaning found in Icelandic texts are repeated regularly in other Scandinavian languages. Norwegian has *brønn* (Bokmål) or *brunn* (Nynorsk), both meaning generally 'well'. The various reflexes of *brunn-* in these dialects often refer, however, to what in English would more readily be called a cistern. Versions of *cistern* occur in the Scandinavian languages too, but they are recent borrowings and seem to refer exclusively to manufactured water-storage tanks. A *brunn-*, therefore, would refer to a water source, felt to be somehow 'natural', which has as a feature of its form a hollow shaftlike structure, sometimes rather deep, sometimes relatively shallow. The structure seems to be sunk into or to be naturally part of the earth. *Brønd* in Danish, for example, refers either to the shaftlike well we know or to a collection pool. In Swedish, *brunn* is used most frequently in contexts of mineral springs, referring not only to the wells themselves but to the mineral waters taken from them.

To experience the meaning of *brunn-* as fully as possible, we shall have to think not only of a well but of the other attributes of water sources that the word includes. If we begin by thinking of a well or spring, it is clear that both represent certain basic ideas: the water source, some kind of enclosure that fixes it as a point in space, and the presence of an active process that results in the accumulation of water. These days, most of us are urban-bound, and we see water as coming almost exclusively out of a tap. From books, we visualize a spring as a small jet or rill of water springing up from some shady, mossy rock—a cold, small geyser. Springs rise almost exclusively in marshy land, however, usually lowlands. The source of the spring is usually quite hard to locate. Once it is found, it is isolated from the marsh by sinking shaftlike walls, most frequently wooden or rock, around it. The water then can rise clearly within it, free from contamination from its surroundings. Of course, a well does much the same thing at a deeper level. This ability to collect pure water of apparently unknown origin must have once seemed not only mysterious but supernatural. To find a well now filling, now lowering, or a spring running clear in a muddy marsh must have suggested some kind of influence originating beyond the knowledge of mere men. The idea of the *brunn-* came then to include the enclosure, the water within it, and the powerful, active force that allows it to fill. The differing developments of the re-

flexes of the word in modern languages show a separation of these earlier joined attributes. The Swedish reference to the health-giving water of mineral springs seems to suggest an enforcement of the magical influence found in the mysterious force that fills the well at the expense of the aspect of the word that specified enclosure or spatial fixity. In Danish, its use to refer to a collection pool suggests stress on the construction itself at the expense of the more mysterious, active, source-providing aspect. All of the modern uses, however, seem to be extensions of one or more of the water aspects of the word as it occurred in early Icelandic.

Data from other Germanic language confirm these findings. In Dutch, *bron* translates, depending upon context, as 'source, spring, well, fountainhead, fountain', as we might anticipate. Modern German uses the term *Brunnen* similarly. Grimm divides his entry *Brunne* into two: First, he comments about the water, which is 'aus dem erdboden quellende, vordringende, sprudelnde wasser, unterschieden von dem fortrinnenden *bach* und *flusz*' (Grimm and Grimm 1860:433). Such water retains the 'active', 'locational' aspects of the Icelandic meaning. Grimm's second reference is to the container: 'die gehegte, eingefaszte, ummauerte, zugedeckte quelle, oft auch die gegrabne, ausgehauene . . . sein wasser springt durch röhren (*springbrunne*) oder wird im eimer aus der tiefe gezogen' (Grimm and Grimm 1860:433–34). German uses *Brunnen*, as does Swedish, to refer to mineral water: *Brunnen drinken* 'take mineral or medicinal water'. *Brunnen* is a usual term for a water cistern or collecting pool or the dishlike, water-filled base of a fountain (or the fountain as a whole). It is also used to refer to a mine shaft or water pump. Even the expression *der Brunnen des Abgrunds* 'bottomless pit or shaft' partakes of at least one of the original aspects of *brunn-*. All of these uses share aspects found in the Scandinavian languages: the source; the special, magical, active quality; the locational aspect; the shaftlike container.

Only English lacks any good evidence to support the argument. The word occurred in OE *burna* or *burne*, which seems to have carried something of the idea of 'spring' because it is used to render Lat. *fons* in the Old English translation of the Vulgate.[15] What is more interesting, though, is the use of OE *burne* to translate Lat. *latex* in the Corpus Gloss (Sweet 1885:73). *Latex* is an unusual word meaning a kind of liquid or fluid (usually water) in 'poetic' contexts. If *latex* refers to some kind of special water of

extraordinary quality, then perhaps *burne* with its special, active quality readily suggested itself to the Anglo-Saxon glosser as a likely translation. The use of *burn* (or later *bourne*) to represent a small stream first occurs around the year 1000 and seems to be an extension of the active, *vordringende* aspect of the word at the expense of the locational aspect. Beyond this it is not possible to say much. English does not retain the word.

If the *Urtharbrunnr* is a well of the kind described above, we should not be surprised to find it representing not merely a water source but one in which there is water of special, active quality. In the Prose Edda, *Gylfaginning* 16 makes it clear that the well is holy and that it has a purifying quality: 'All things which come there into the well become as white as the film which lies within the egg-shell' (Brodeur 1929:30). In addition, the water has the power necessary to nurture and sustain Yggdrasil, the world tree. We must remember that the well belongs to Urth. The special quality the water exhibits seems most clearly attributable to her. Her name represents and includes all known or accomplished actions, all that has occurred. This conception of the well makes it the well of the past, and it supports directly the important sustentative influence that the past has over all of present existence. Just as the water of the well brings its power to the world tree, just so the past actively brings its force to bear upon the affairs of the world. All present existence is contingent upon the continual control and support of an active, nutritive past.

The combination of elements inhering in the concept of Urth's Well and its interrelation with Yggdrasil presents a powerful, symbolic configuration expressive of the nature of the universe and its effects upon the lives of men. From the concept of the well comes the idea of the live and active water, the nurture the Norns bring to support Yggdrasil. This nurture manifests itself as dew in the myth:

> hár baðmr, ausinn   hvítaauri;
> þaðan koma dǫggvar,   þærs í dala falla . . .
>
> *(Vǫluspá* 19:5)

> With water white   is the great tree wet;
> Thence come the dews   that fall in the dales . . .
>
> (Bellows 1926:9)

The nature of the dew is further explained in *Gylfaginning* 16 (35), where the text above is quoted in slightly altered form:

Ask veit ek ausinn,
heitir Yggdrasill,
hárr baðmr heilagr,
hvíta-auri;
þaðan koma döggvar,
es í dala falla;
stendr æ yfir grœnn
Urðarbrunni.
Sú dögg, er þaðan af fellr á jörðina, þat kalla menn hunang-
fall, ok þar af fœðask býflugur.

I know an Ash standing   called Yggdrasill.
A high tree sprinkled   with snow-white clay;
Thence come the dews   in the dale that fall—
It stands ever green   above Urdr's Well.

That dew which falls from it onto the earth is called by men
honey-dew, and thereon are bees nourished. (Brodeur 1929:
30)

The 'falling' of the dew reunites the waters from the tree with those of the well, into which the roots of the tree extend. The cyclic nature of this process with the well as both source and goal, beginning and ending of the nutritive process. combines all of the structural semantic elements of *brunn*, representing both an active, natural, welling source and a collecting, storing source. The myth presents a continuous cycle of activity.

The well is named for Urth; her name represents the 'past'. This past includes the actions of all beings who exist within the enclosing branches of Yggdrasil: men, gods, giants, elves, etc. Like the water, these actions find their way back into the collecting source; as this happens, all actions become known, fixed, accomplished. In one sense, it is such actions that form the layers or strata that are daily laid in the well by the speaking of the *ørløg*. The coming into the well is orderly and ordered; events are clearly related to each other, and there is pattern and structure in their storage. This pattern of events is everchanging, evergrowing, and daily, as the *ørløg* is said, new events, new actions come into the well. The process of occurrence of events and the continual accu-

mulation of more and more of them into the pattern of the past present a system of growth that is never finished. As the Norns daily bring their nurture to the tree, they express the power of this sequence or pattern of the past up and out into and upon the world of men; as these 'past' events sustain and feed the tree, they bring into being the events of the here and now; as 'present-day' events occur, they fall from the tree back into the well and join themselves into the ever-increasing complexities of the past, restructuring it, reinterpreting it, continually expressing more and more about the interrelations of all actions.

This continual growing, changing, and interrelating of events and the laying of strata one upon another suggest the act of weaving, an element often attributed the Norns. Seeing the Norns as weavers is largely consonant with most of what has already been suggested. The active up- and outward-reaching movement of events of the past as they involve and shape the present stands in an orthogonal relationship with the idea of the strata or layers laid down within the well itself. This level-versus-perpendicular order clearly suggests the warp and woof of a loom with the daily saying of the *ørløg* moving among the actions like a shuttle whose weaving unfolds the pattern of events. This 'web' of events is a well-known concept.[16] The etymological source of Urth's name. the verb *verða* 'to turn', is not only the source of Ger. *werden* but MHG *wirtel* 'distaff wheel, spindle' as well. Other terms associated semantically with the power wielded by *wyrd* (e.g. lot, fortune, destiny, Ger. *Schicksal*—itself containing a root signifying a 'layering' or 'ordering' not unlike that of the *ørløg*) also suggest spinning or weaving. 'Man hat altsächsisch *ôdan*, altnordisch *auðinn* "beschieden, vom Schicksal gewährt" herangezogen, die etymologisch mit litauisch *áudmi* "ich webe" zusammenhängen' (Mittner 1955:90).[17] The activity of spinning or weaving presents in a concise figure several of the most significant attributes of the Norns. It is, however, a somewhat semantically restricted concept, as it does not explicitly represent the well or its nutritive function.

It is the relation of Urth's Well to Yggdrasil that is of overriding significance for this particular myth. There is a clearly figured iconography to this interrelation. Modern man can possibly experience this, at least partially, much as he might visualize a gigantic potted plant whose root structure is hidden and encased within the structure of the containing well. From this, the trunk and wide-

spreading branches of the tree, upon which are located the various worlds of the myth, rise up and out. All of the power of the tree comes from beneath it, from the nutritive power found in its sustaining base, and the activity that occurs above this basal container ultimately falls or is enfolded back into the base. Perhaps the most significant point of such an iconographic relationship is the place at which the trunk meets the base, where the tree joins the earth. It is, of course, at this juncture that 'the gods hold their tribunal' (Brodeur 1929:28). The location represents the moment when the present (or where the nonpast) joins the past.[18]

The iconographic description ignores the element of multiplicity and repetition found in the sources. In *Gylfaginning* 15, quoted earlier, Yggdrasil has three separate roots extending into three separate wells: a root standing over Niflhel (Niflheim), which extends into the well Hvergelmir; a root among the Rime-Giants near a place once called the 'Yawning Void' (Ginnungagap), which extends into Mímir's Well; and the well associated with the Æsir, the holy Well of Urth, which stands in heaven. The tripartite series of wells and roots repeats the tripartite series of Norns, and it is likely that 'in this passage, as in some others, Snorri may be too systematic, and probably the three names all apply to one well, which was basically . . . the source of wisdom' (Turville-Petre 1964:279). The wells are not clearly distinguished from each other, and each one separately reproduces the same basic relationship with the tree; each of the additional wells enforces a particular aspect already inherent in Urth's Well. Mírmir's Well (Mímisbrunnr) is the well of wisdom; it appears significantly as the well in which Odin must pledge his eye to gain a drink and, by extension, wisdom. The well and the tree together are linked in these stories as sources of wisdom. The world tree is later called the tree of Mímir (Mimameith) in the somewhat later poem 'Fjǫlsvinnsmál':[19]

(Svipdag said:)

13   'Tell me, Fjolsvith,   for I fain would know;
     answer thou as I ask: ,
     how that ash is hight   which out doth spread
     its limbs over all the land?'

(Fjolsvith said:)

14   'Tis hight Mimameith,   but no man knoweth
     from what roots it doth rise;

by what it falleth   the fewest guess:
     nor fire nor iron will fell it.'

                (Hollander 1962:146)

The idea of wisdom is basic to everything that has been presented about the Well of Urth. The iconography locates wisdom in the well but imparts it to the tree through the reciprocal relationship between the two. A knowledge of the workings of Urth will lead one to wisdom, and the Eddas imply that such knowledge is not easily or lightly gained.

Little is known about the third well, Hvergelmir. Its name is usually rendered as Roaring Kettle or Seething Cauldron. The idea seems proper if we are to equate all three wells; one of the most striking aspects of Urth's Well is its powerful, magical quality, which allows the water to move upward and outward supplying sustenance and nurture to the world. Its ability to seethe, to move, to be in action seems to be reflected in this name. Another aspect of Hvergelmir relates it to Urth's Well. In *Grímnismál* 25–26 (62), certain activities of some of the many animals associated with the world tree involve Hvergelmir:[20]

25   Heiðrún heitir geit,   er stendr hǫllo á Heriafǫðrs
     oc bítr af Læraðs limom;
     scapker fylla   hon scal ins scíra miaðar,
     knáat sú veig vanaz.

26   Eicþyrnir heitir hiǫrtr,   er stendr á hǫllo Heriafǫðrs
     oc bítr af Læraðs limom;
     enn af hans hornom   drýpr í Hvergelmi,
     þaðan eigo vǫtn ǫll vega.

25   Heithrún, the goat   on the hall that stands,
     eateth off Læráth's limbs;
     the crocks she fills   with clearest mead,
     will that drink not e'er be drained.

26   Eikthyrnir, the hart   on the hall that stands,
     eateth off Læráth's limbs;
     drops from his horns   in Hvergelmir fall,
     thence wend all the waters their way.

                (Hollander 1962:58)

Here the world tree, called by the name Læráth, is said to include the mead-hall, Valholl; its mead is supplied by the goat Heithrún.[21] The stanzas suggest that the clear mead flows from the hall over the horns of the feeding hart in stanza 26 and finds its way eventually down into Hvergelmir. As has been suggested, the dews that fall from the branches of Yggdrasil find their way into the collecting basin of Urth's Well. The process is similar here. We are dealing either with two separate trees, Læráth and Yggdrasil, and two separate wells or with the same tree and well expressing different attributes in different situations.

It is perhaps easiest to see this multiplication of trees and wells as an essential manifestation of the underlying mythic impulse itself. There is good reason to do this. First, the fact of multiplication of structural elements seems to be fundamental to all mythic thinking. Lévi-Strauss has explained 'why myths, and more generally oral literature, are so much addicted to duplication, triplication, or quadruplication of the same sequence. If our hypotheses are accepted, the answer is obvious: the function of repetition is to render the structure of the myth apparent' (1967:226). Earlier, Olrik, writing in 1909, expounded what he called the 'law of repetition', governing the composition of all myths, songs, sagas, and legends. It gives dimension, significance, and intensity to the element repeated (1965:131–33). Olrik is particularly struck by threefold repetition of elements he calls the 'law of three', which 'extends like a broad swath cut through the world of folk tradition, through the centuries and millennia of human culture. The Semitic, and even more, the [Indo-European] culture, is subject to this dominant force' (1965:134).[22] Any repetition calls attention to aspects of a particular figure or act (or related series of acts) whose importance is to be heightened and focused. In the case here under examination, the threefold reiteration of the association of well and tree heightens the importance of this point of intersection between the two, its spatial location and its related temporal moment. The point expresses the confluence of this world with the larger realm beyond and of the here-and-now with the past. It also juxtaposes the contrary movement of the flow of present into past and the surging of the past upon the present; this is structurally enforced by the idea of the nutritive, active water that, on the one hand, collects in the well and, on the other, sustains the tree. The repeated struc-

tural emphasis identifies the intersection of well and tree as a central focal point in the myth.

There is an additional aspect of the well Hvergelmir that must be considered. It is within Hvergelmir that the serpent Níthhogg (Nídhöggr) gnaws the roots of Yggdrasil. The tree is eaten from above and below, as the mention of Heithrún and Eikthyrnir illustrates. The gnawing and biting of these animals seem to suggest that not all the activity associated with the well is sustentative and nutritive. Because, however, it is in the nature of Urth to work to bring all human activity within her purview, this can be accomplished in a variety of ways. One way involves the daily going forth, saying the primal law, and influencing the affairs of men. The continual eating away of the tree is another way in which essentially the same thing is carried out. The gnawing of the serpent not only represents literally an attempt to bring the tree down into the well but also suggests, through the coiling of the serpent, the layering and intertwining activity of Urth. The activity also suggests the weaving of threads in a web. It is really only the hegemony of the Æsir that is threatened by the fall of Yggdrasil.

The difficulties we encounter when we try to experience what was probably a rather positive cosmic figure derive from our own prejudicial associational connotations. Here, perhaps as much as anywhere, we should heed the warning of Evans-Pritchard (1965) that, without caution, we are most likely to map the semantic relations of our own conceptual structure inaccurately onto those of cultures different from our own. From our medieval Christian ancestors we have inherited a directional prejudice that connotes locations 'up' as positive and 'down' as negative. The manifold problems we face are associated with our negative feelings about the 'Fall', the Underworld ('down' in hell)—as opposed to our positive feelings about 'up': Ascension, Resurrection, Heaven ('up' to heaven), or just simple 'high spirits' (as opposed to feeling 'low'), etc. All this works against our understanding of the Germanic figure and makes it difficult for us to see it as anything but negative. We find it hard to use any of the central terms of the myth without negative prejudice: *down* into the well, *collapse*, *fall*, etc. *Decay* (a neutral, natural process) is likewise excessively negatively tinged. Yet, for the Germanic peoples, there seems to have been no directional, no up–down connotational prejudice. Rather, their concep-

tual process seems to have involved, as it is relevant to the figure of well and tree, an opposition of *stasis* or *inaction*, seen as negative, against *movement* or *action*, seen as positive. Thus, the whelming forward of the well and the shuddering fall of the tree are both movements, as are all of the other actions related to the tree: running, biting, gnawing, etc. The integration of well and tree and the perpetuating power that such an act of integration performs typify positive cosmic action generally. The final stanzas of *Vǫluspá* are strongly regenerative.[23]

The figure that comprises Yggdrasil and Urth's Well is found, in full form, only in Norse sources. This is not surprising; all Germanic mythology is Norse. Although there are incidental references to most of what is essential and central to this mythology in other Germanic dialects, it is only in the material committed to writing in the North Germanic dialects that we find anything like a full presentation. To what extent might these Scandinavian versions offer access to conceptual structures that were endemic to all Germanic peoples? No direct answer can be given to such a question, but there are strong implications in the evidence to be found elsewhere in the Germanic world to suggest that, in the case of the iconic relations inherent in the figure of the well and tree, the mythic elements so far examined were, indeed, widely shared. The essays that follow elaborate upon these shared elements in detail. Two general points will suffice here.

First, the well–tree configuration is shared by both the Celtic and the Germanic peoples. Mackenzie (1922:176–94) has found throughout the British Isles combinations of trees, wells, and animals (most frequently serpents) that seem to be symbols of cosmic energy and power. His earliest citations are unfortunately from the sixth century after Christ, after the Germanic invasion. The instances are most frequent in Celtic areas, however. Wells are found, for example, in association with trees and megaliths (probably symbolic trees) in Wales. 'Some 62 examples occur . . . where there is a well–megalith association, and a further 14 cases of wells near tumuli . . . Many stones that once stood near wells have disappeared . . . Wells associated with trees are not numerous in Wales, but some 30 examples have been noted, and there are probably more' (Jones 1954:15–18). The associated trees are usually yew, hazel, oak, or hawthorn. It seems unlikely that the widespread distribution of wells and trees in purely Celtic parts of the British Isles

would result from influence either from the invading Angles and Saxons or from the Norsemen, with whom the Welsh had little intercourse. The Celts and Germans seem separately to have brought the figure to the British Isles from the European continent, where the figure of a world tree was to be found not only among the northern Indo-Europeans but among Finno-Ugric peoples as well.[24] Thus, it is likely to have been common to all Germanic peoples prior to their dispersal north, east, and west.

Now, however, we are open to argument from another quarter: If the figure is so widespread, what can possibly make it Germanic? To discover its essentially Germanic characteristics, we must look not just at the iconic figure itself but at those semantic elements that make it up. Taking the tree–well configuration as it has been elaborated above, we might suggest fluidity, nurture, circumscribing yet partial containment, accumulation, and an evolving 'past' as the most clearly central elements in the Norse myth. It is surely not the idea of fluidity (as it is associated with the well) that is uniquely 'Germanic'. The idea is widely shared, and it seems to have a central significance among the Celtic as well as the Germanic peoples.[25] Nor does it seem that nurture is a uniquely Germanic element: 'through vegetation it is the whole of life, it is nature itself which is renewed . . . the forces of plant life are an epiphany of the life of the whole universe' (Eliade 1963:324–25). The nurture of nature and of the cosmos is implicit in the iconic figure of the tree, and 'we meet sacred trees, and vegetation rites and symbols in the history of every religion' (Eliade 1963:265).

It is, most fundamentally, the idea of circumscribing yet partial containment, as it has been laid out above, that provides the figure with its most Germanic quality. The idea is paradoxical: A free, active movement (but one that is structured and organized—'contained' and 'laid down' are the most organic terms) produces a universal generation not only 'fluid' and 'sustaining' but growing. Not only is the idea of growth natural ('nurture') and sustaining of the cosmic structure, it is also a literal, physical growing—an accumulation of more layers in the well, more water, more action. The figure of well and tree is sustaining not simply of its own structure, but in the process of growing *into* itself; it is in a constant state of self-enlarging transformation. Finally, the driving power through which the continual act of universal generation occurs is linked to the power of the past. Urth, whose well it is and whose name brings

the active power of all accomplished action to bear upon the cosmic self-regenerating activity, is, within the iconic figure, expressive of all that animates the realms of both tree and well.

If the influential power of the past upon the present reality of the 'now' of the worlds of the tree is a uniform feature of the conceptualizing structure of all Germanic peoples, then we would expect to find some uniform references to it widely disseminated throughout the whole of Germanic culture. This is what we do find. This influential power, etymologically related to and semantically linked to the function of Urth, is regularly expressed in the languages of all Germanic peoples by the concept of OE *wyrd* (OS *wurd*, OHG *wurt*, etc.). References to *wyrd* are, of course, rather elliptical in nature because men know its workings only indirectly. Its force comes from beyond our world, as the myth clearly indicates, and our intelligences are too limited to grasp its workings fully. Man is touched by *wyrd* when he becomes involved in matters whose nature and origins extend beyond existence on earth. Some aspects of life on earth are limited to earthly matters alone and are of no great significance: going to bed (generally), eating (generally), the daily routine of physical existence, etc. There are times, however, when apparently ordinary activities acquire special significance, and it seems likely that at these times daily life is touched and colored with elements beyond our limited perceptions. There are, in addition, aspects of existence that are by their very natures governed by events beyond our knowing: battle, honor (oaths), etc. When and how such influence comes upon us, we may never be certain. We can, however, at least partially prepare ourselves for such involvement. For all men, clearly, the most significant moment of existence comes at the instant of death, the point at which man joins existence beyond this world. The wise man prepares himself for this instant when his individual life and the power of *wyrd* will be in closest conjunction; he attempts to place his life most directly in the main current of the flow of *wyrd*. He must act in accordance with prescribed codes of conduct received from the past; by so doing, he will protect his reputation·and insure himself good fame. His actions will be governed by what he knows; therefore, the wise man seeks to discover all he can. The force of past events, which surges so meaningfully into present life, offers him some information about the nature of *wyrd* itself, but man, as he lives within the realm of the tree, fails in knowing the past fully. As he values him-

self, however, he will strive to learn. He will attempt to associate himself directly with all he knows to be good and wise.[26] By so doing, he will place himself in the most auspicious light so that he will die well; the moment of death is the moment of greatest significance in all of ordinary life.

The
Prevalence
of Urth

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II

Burials: Rites and Artifacts

THE practice of ship burial is widely recorded in Germanic literature, and there are extensive archaeological remains.[1] One of the most interesting and fullest accounts of a ship burial occurs in the description of the Viking Rūs along the Volga made by Ibn Faḍlān in the tenth century.[2] Among other things, Ibn Faḍlān describes the funeral rites of a tribal chieftain. The significant features of the account are as follows: Of the dead chieftain's slave girls, one volunteers to die with him. For the cremation of the dead man, a ship is drawn onto the river bank and supported by a wooden structure. The body of the dead man, which has been buried in a temporary grave, is decked out in fine clothing, including a brocade caftan with gold buttons, and is placed in the center of the ship, on which has been prepared a pavilion with a couch covered with some sort of fabric. This is arranged under the aegis of an old woman called 'the Angel of Death . . . It is she who has charge of the clothes-making and arranging all things, and it is she who kills the girl slave' (Smyser 1965:98). The man's arms, various foods, clothing, and sacrificed animals—horses, dogs, hens—are placed in the ship. While this occurs, the slave girl goes about to the tents of the remaining chieftains, 'and the master of each tent [has] sexual intercourse with her and [says], "Tell your lord I have done this out of love for him"' (Smyser 1965:99). On the afternoon of the funeral day, the girl performs a ritual upon a wooden frame that resembles a doorframe, over which she is elevated by men three times. The first elevation reveals to her a vision of her father and mother; on the second elevation, she sees her dead relatives; the third elevation reveals to her the dead chieftain himself. 'I see my master seated in Paradise and Paradise is beautiful and green; with him are men

and boy servants. He calls me. Take me to him' (Smyser 1965:99). She is then taken to the funeral ship, and she divests herself of her jewelry and rings. On the ship, she is given two cups of *nabīd*, a powerfully intoxicating drink. After being intoxicated by the drink, the girl enters the ship's pavilion with the Angel of Death. 'Then six men went into the pavilion and each had intercourse with the girl. Then they laid her at the side of her master; two held her feet and two her hands; the old woman known as the Angel of Death re-entered and looped a cord around her neck and gave the crossed ends to the two men for them to pull. Then she approached her with a broad-bladed dagger, which she plunged between her ribs repeatedly, and the men strangled her with the cord until she was dead' (Smyser 1965:100). After this, the closest relative of the dead man sets fire to the ship. An earth mound and wooden marker with the chieftain's name mark the site of the cremation.

Water, so much a part of the concept of the well and tree, plays no obvious part here; yet it is not entirely absent. The focus of the ritual *is* on a ship, solely a water-going craft, and the cremation occurs on the shore, in conjunction with water. The enclosing space, supplied by the ship, which the iconography of the well has also exhibited, is reinforced by the presence on the ship of the pavilion, an enclosure within an enclosure. The elements of water (liquid) and enclosure are repeated in the symbolism of the cups of *nabīd* drunk by the girl on the funeral ship. The cup presents in small the essential features of the well or cistern even more obviously than does the ship itself. The draft of intoxicant represents not only water but water of a powerful, magical quality.

'The Angel of Death does not have any clear parallel . . . elsewhere in Germanic lore, though the priestess—prophetess, the *vǫlva*, shadowed forth as early as Tacitus' *Germania* [seems to have a broader role in Germanic religion than that usually assigned her]' (Smyser 1965:109). It is clear that the Angel of Death acts as an agent of some 'other world', a realm of events beyond the participants in the funeral ritual. She is like the *vǫlva*, who knows much of the nature of the universe. She, too, suggests Hel, the daughter of Loki and the ruler of Niflheim, the abode of those who have not died upon the field of battle. But the association of death and universal knowledge is central to the whole figure of well and tree and the continual structuring of the cosmos over which Urth presides.

The activities of all these female figures are linked, and, because of that linkage, the activities of the Angel of Death closely resemble certain activities of Urth. She guides the events of the ritual leading to the slave girl's death, which she herself instigates. She prepares the pavilion on the ship; she officiates at the drinking of the cup of intoxicant. Her final act, killing the girl, is accomplished in two ways; with a broad-bladed dagger and with a strangling cord. The cord is perhaps significant; it occurs symbolically elsewhere. Tacitus, in describing the religious practice of the Semnones, mentions that they have in reverence a grove in which humans are sacrificed. The grove is highly sacred:

> nemo nisi vinculo ligatus ingreditur, ut minor et potestatem numinis prae se ferens. (*Germania* 39)

> No one may enter it unless he is bound with a cord, by which he acknowledges his own inferiority and the power of the deity. (Mattingly 1970:134)

This idea of circumscribing or binding turns up in a significantly placed scholium to the account of a pagan Scandinavian temple at Uppsala by Adam of Bremen in his *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen.*[1]

> Catena aurea templum circumdat pendens supra domus fastigia lateque rutilans advenientibus, eo quod ipsum delubrum in planitie situm montes in circuitu habet positos ad instar theatri. (Adam von Bremen IV, scholium 139 [135]:258)

> A golden chain goes round the temple. It hangs over the gable of the building and sends its glitter far off to those who approach, because the shrine stands on level ground with mountains all about it like a theater. (Tschan 1959:207)

The binding chain or cord possibly relates to the activity of Urth as weaver. In addition, it bears considerable similarity to writhing or intertwining serpents. With respect to design, such serpents provide perhaps the most important single motif of Germanic art.[4] The binding or involving cord suggests not only the serpents but the encompassing and enclosing nature of Urth's activities as her power reaches up and out of the well of the past and influences the affairs of this world.[5]

The element of fertility also figures in the funeral rite. There

are two separate sequences of multiple acts of sexual intercourse with the ritual victim: the first sequence with an unspecified number of village leaders who perform the act 'out of love' for the dead chieftain, and the second sequence performed by six men of unidentified rank within the pavilion on the ship in the presence of the dead man just before the girl's death by strangulation and stabbing. This fertility is at once significant and curious. It is clearly directed toward the realm beyond. But then, this *is* a funeral rite. The efficacy of the repeated acts of intercourse, whatever these are ultimately felt to be, is carried with the girl to paradise and to her master. At the end, she disappears from this world and joins him. In the rite, the fertilization and death occur before the climactic cremation when the sacrificial victim disappears into the realm beyond. She takes the fertility of this world with her. In the myth, the Well of Urth collects both the waters of the tree and the activities of this world, and this ritual death is associated with the influence of this world on the beyond; its fertility is directed toward life there.

Very little can be learned about the exact nature of 'paradise' from Ibn Faḍlān's account. The term itself must be interpreted with caution; it results from multiple translation. The term the Rūs themselves would have used is lost. This is not disastrously important as long as we do not think too much of the Christian connotations of paradise. It is described in the account as 'beautiful and green', adjectives reflecting fertility and generation. Green, particularly *æ . . . grœnn* 'ever green', is used to describe Yggdrasil. The girl victim, in her vision of paradise, speaks of seeing her father and mother, her dead relatives, and her master; that is, she sees those whom she has known in this world.[6] She speaks of nothing apart from what she has seen, or in all probability saw, in her own past, distant or near. No visions of the 'future' or 'events to come' are revealed. Apart from known past events, she sees paradise as a vision of beauty and greenness, suggesting power and fecundity. She is about to join herself to her own past, and because she is carrying the seed of human generation with her she will influence the past. Within the whole of the ritual there are evidences of influence of the power of the realm of the well upon events within the world of men: the Angel of Death herself, the symbolic acts, such as drinking and the killing of the slave girl, etc. On the other hand, the events performed within the burial ritual occur within the world of men. These will, however, affect the reality of the realm of

the well beyond. The ritual ultimately embodies the fact of interpenetration of acts within the realm of the well and in the world of men.

In addition to Ibn Faḍlān's account, there is a good deal of archaeological evidence about Germanic burials. The materials are vast but unfortunately largely inconclusive. It is nearly impossible, for example, to use the actual remains of Germanic graves to verify the details of Ibn Faḍlān's observations. The variations in burial practices throughout the Germanic world are great:

> Far from presenting a uniform impression of the Viking idea of the after-life, [Viking graves] reveal a great complexity and variety of practice and belief. Both burial and cremation occur; burial occurred sometimes in large wooden chambers, sometimes in modest coffins; in a big longship or in a little boat, or sometimes in a symbolical boat made of stones or in a carriage. There are graves under huge mounds, and graves under ordinary flat fields, the grave-goods are sometimes rich, sometimes poor, and sometimes completely absent. (Brøndsted 1965:289)

The situation is not entirely discouraging; some aspects of Ibn Faḍlān's account recur elsewhere with regularity; other aspects do not. The cremation that provides the climactic moment in the burial of the Rūs chieftain, for example, is not an essential part of all Germanic burial rituals. It was not practiced consistently by other Viking tribes, and it is not attested with regularity in burials from the British Isles or continental Europe either.[7] In general, the Germans had no special feeling for cremation. This is not surprising; the idea of fire or cremation is not one of the essential structural elements in the mythic figure of Yggdrasil and Urth's Well. On the other hand, the idea of the vehicle, especially the ship with its enclosure-defining walls, does relate directly to the iconography of the myth. Vehicle burial—or rites involving such a vehicle—is extremely common. The ship burial with its implied reference to water—also a structural element of the myth—is found throughout the northern Germanic world with a good deal of regularity: in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the British Isles.

Grave goods attest to an apparently widely distributed, if not universal, practice of Germanic burial. These show great similarities among the artifacts, clothing, and arms buried and provide

links among burials widely dispersed throughout the Germanic world. Curiously, Ibn Faḍlān does not mention the addition of grave goods to the burial mound built over the site of the cremation. If this grave is like most others now excavated, however, such grave goods would have been added, and many of the materials mentioned in his account are similar to those found in graves where cremation has not been used. Although there is variety in the grave goods found in Germanic graves, there is also a surprising underlying consistency. Woven cloth is not an uncommon item. Of course, much of this can be attributed to the simple remains of whatever material was used to clothe the dead, but the abundance of cloth and associated instruments of cloth making clearly goes beyond what would remain from shrouding alone. The cenotaph at Sutton Hoo contained a great variety of textile material, buried apparently in close conjunction with the other grave goods (Bruce-Mitford 1975:445–81). Ibn Faḍlān mentions a brocade caftan with gold buttons. Remains of woven material occur in many Scandinavian grave sites; the Ladby ship contained not only cloth remnants, buckles, and buttons but gold and silver threads (Thorvildsen 1961). The Oseberg ship contained not only textile scraps but textile-making equipment: a loom and some combs. There were also textile fragments in the Gokstad and Tune ships (Sjøvold 1969); both woven material and pieces of silk with gold threads were found in the Gokstad ship (Gjessing 1957:8). Combs have been discovered in the Vendel cemetery and in Ottar's mound (Stolpe and Arne 1927; Chambers 1959:357). The comb is a widely used instrument in the preparation of thread for weaving (Hoffmann 1964:284–88). We know that weaving and spinning are among the evolved or related attributes of Urth. Thus, we might expect to find in some places the loom, thread, comb, heddle rods, weights, etc. associated by extension with the more basic attributes of Urth. On the other hand, these combs may also have been representative of cosmetic use as well as of weaving. There is some additional evidence from British and continental graves that may extend these data:

> The cremation urns from the large cemeteries of the region between the Elbe and the Weser frequently contain miniature sets of toilet implements, shears, tweezers, and knife, usually made of bronze. In some cases the tweezers, which are in any

> event more normally made of bronze, as also is often the case in England, may be perfectly serviceable implements, but the knife and shears made of that metal must be regarded as models. As such they appear more than once in English urns. (Leeds 1936:30)

These items are not unique to women's graves. In Indo-European mythology, human and animal hair express symbolically vegetation, and there is evidence to suggest that cutting of hair—for tonsure or, perhaps, for weaving—suggested participation in cosmic regeneration (Lincoln 1977). Thus, the conjunction of weaving and toilet implements would not be unexpected; rather, articles that represented both would create more powerful 'iconic' evidence.[*]

Weapons and armor, just as described by Ibn Faḍlān, are regularly found in Germanic graves. Shields, one sword or more, helmets, arrows, daggers, knives, spears, etc. are common (Shetelig and Falk 1937:377–405). These items are usually real, not stylized or model implements. They are often valuable heirlooms and have been much sought after by grave plunderers. In many cases, for example in the Oseberg and Gokstad ships, the probable cache of ritually buried weapons has disappeared (remains of the corpse, as well, have disappeared from the Oseberg find) (Sjøvold 1969). Most burials retain, however, some of their buried weapons. The Ladby ship was found to contain arrowheads and a shield boss (Thorvildsen 1961). In the Tune ship were found a sword handle, spearhead, and shield boss (Gjessing 1957:4). 'The grave-goods of the Anglo-Saxon Taplow barrow . . . in Buckinghamshire [included] two spears, a sword, . . . [and] two shield bosses' (Chaney 1970:98). The Sutton Hoo ship–cenotaph contained a shield, a sword, and spears. The Sutton Hoo shield is quite typical of this kind of grave goods. It was old at the time of its burial; it had been repaired before its inhumation. It is both relatively large (about thirty-six inches in diameter) and well constructed (leather over wood, containing an iron boss with gilt-bronze rivet-heads, and silver-plated bronze and gold foil decorations). It was surely a well-used and well-cherished weapon. It 'is remarkably similar . . . to those found in the earliest of the boat-graves in the Swedish cemetery at Vendel . . . Human faces very like that on the bird's hip on the Sutton Hoo shield are set in the interlace on the flange of the shield-boss from Vendel, grave XII, a burial which is dated by

Swedish archaeologists to about A.D. 650' (Bruce-Mitford 1972: 26). Weapons were found in all but three of the fourteen graves in the Vendel cemetery. Two-edged swords, shield bosses, helmets, and arrowheads seem to be most common, but the kinds of armor and weapons found are not limited to these alone; for example, there are some knives and spear heads also (Stolpe and Arne 1927).

The importance of weapons, especially the shield, was noticed by Tacitus. The shield played a significant role in the social and military life of the German man. The male child was granted adult status by receiving a spear and shield:

> in ipso concilio vel principum aliquis vel pater vel propinqui scuto frameaque iuvenem ornant: haec apud illos toga, hic primus iuventae honos; ante hoc domus pars videntur, mox rei publicae. (*Germania* 13)

> in the presence of the Assembly, either one of the chiefs or the young man's father or some other relative presents him with a shield and a spear. These, among the Germans, are the equivalent of the man's toga with us—the first distinction publicly conferred upon a youth, who now ceases to rank merely as a member of a household and becomes a citizen. (Mattingly 1970:112)

The shield functioned within the society as a symbol of the public and private esteem of the man himself:

> corpora suorum etiam in dubiis proeliis referunt. scutum reliquisse praecipuum flagitium, nec aut sacris adesse aut concilium inire ignominioso fas, multique superstites bellorum infamiam laqueo finierunt. (*Germania* 6)

> They bring back the bodies of the fallen even when a battle hangs in the balance. To throw away one's shield is the supreme disgrace, and the man who has thus dishonoured himself is debarred from attendance at sacrifice or assembly. Many such survivors from the battlefield have ended their shame by hanging themselves. (Mattingly 1970:106–7)

At his funeral (in Tacitus, a cremation), the arms of the dead man were burned with him:

> Funerum nulla ambitio: id solum observatur ut corpora clarorum virorum certis lignis crementur. struem rogi nec vestibus nec odoribus cumulant: sua cuique arma, quorundam igni et equus adicitur. sepulcrum caespes erigit. (*Germania* 27)

> There is no ostentation about their funerals. The only special observance is that the bodies of famous men are burned with particular kinds of wood. When they have heaped up the pyre they do not throw garments or spices on it; only the dead man's arms, and sometimes his horse too, are cast into the flames. The tomb is a raised mound of turf. (Mattingly 1970: 123)

There is some contradiction with the account of Ibn Faḍlān, but the two accounts do share the fire, the sacrifice of a horse, the earth marker erected upon the site of the cremation, and, most important, the burial of the man's arms with him.

Armor burial symbolizes, in at least one way, the close of a man's earthly life.[9] If his life begins officially with his investment with this armor, it is right that the use of these weapons ceases with him. The man's life and the life of his weapons are integrally bound up in each other. What the man has accomplished with the weapons is not only a part of his own life story but also a part of the life story of the weapons as well; great deeds are accomplished by great weapons in the hands of great men. The glory belongs to both, just as the ignominy of cowardly deeds falls upon cowardly men and ill-constructed weapons alike. Weapons in the possession of a man at the time of his death are, naturally, buried with him lest they fall into the hands of those who would or could use them in a lesser way and, thereby, dishonor them. Likewise, a warrior must not leave his weapons to be confiscated by an enemy. The literature of the Germanic peoples bears out the practice as well; one need only turn to the descriptions of the funerals and battles in *Beowulf*, if nowhere further, to find adequate corroboration. It is likely that the cultural symbolism of the very important shield represents not only individual protection but the concept of protection in general. As such, it is a culturally realized symbol of sovereignty, closely related in Germanic culture with the concept of physical force. Aggressive power is surely suggested by the sword, also regularly found in Germanic graves. Thus, sword and shield together would

combine to represent the symbolic attributes of the leader: the man at once wise counselor and warrior, protector of his people and soldier.[10] Further, the combination of sword and shield together can be seen to parallel aspects of the symbolic iconography of the world tree itself, with the shield expressive of the wide-spreading, protective branches and the sword of a stout, supportive trunk.

The integral relationship of man and weapon extends symbolically to artifacts other than weapons. Any artifacts with which a man surrounds himself during his lifetime can be seen to symbolize particularly important occurrences in that lifetime; the artifact, then, is felt to partake of or 'contain' the significant portion of the experience. Thus, buried artifacts would be those that represented especially significant actions or aspects of the life enclosed within the burial vehicle. All objects carry their associative pasts with them into the grave, just as does the man buried. The burial provides the effective close to the life of man and object; both together become one with the great, universal collection of past events. In addition to weapons, Germanic graves contain large quantities of goods not pertinent to war, fighting, or military activity. If we ignore items used for human adornment (clasps, brooches, buckles, etc.) and coins, the remaining materials regularly buried in Germanic graves fall almost exclusively into the broad category of utensils, frequently household or domestic implements: buckets, dishes, barrels, goblets, dippers, etc.[11] A few citations will give some indication of the variety of items found.

The Ladby ship contained pieces of an iron-bound wooden bucket, a silver and gilt plate (now destroyed), and a bronze dish. 'Nothing of the undoubtedly rich collection of domestic utensils deposited beside the dead chieftain has been preserved whole . . . , but it can be seen from the remnants that the ship contained both coarser kitchen utensils, such as the large iron-bound wooden bucket, and finer pieces of a dinner-set, such as a bronze dish imported from the British Isles. A plate of solid silver decorated with engraved interlacements and gilt on the border is hardly native work either' (Thorvildsen 1961:35–36). In the Oseberg find, in addition to the materials already mentioned, were found the remains of barrels, dishes, dippers, a wooden bowl, two metal cauldrons, two hand axes, knives, a frying pan, some small caskets, a tripod, a stool, and iron rods (Gjessing 1957; Sjøvold 1969).[12] In addition, there are bronze fittings of various kinds 'of foreign ori-

gin, and there is no doubt that they are Celtic work, probably from Ireland. Quite a lot of Celtic metal work ornamented in the same style as that found in the Oseberg ship . . . has been discovered in other Viking graves from more or less the same period' (Sjøvold 1969:44). There are also the remains of some wooden buckets with metal fittings, among which is 'the strangest piece of metal work in the whole find, namely the . . . mounts on the so-called "Buddha bucket". This is most probably of West-European origin, but more likely British than Irish' (Sjøvold 1969:44). This is a bronze handle fitting; the man illustrated on it has buddhalike crossed legs. 'British enamel work of a type very similar to that in the Oseberg find has been discovered in a couple of other Viking finds' (Sjøvold 1969:46). In the Gokstad ship were found hooks, buckets, cauldrons, kegs, two candlesticks, small wooden cups, and an oak plate (Gjessing 1957; Sjøvold 1969). The Borre find contained, in addition to some iron goods, 'a strange glass goblet, a tangible proof of connections abroad, as it is probably Frankish work' (Sjøvold 1969:75). Although outweighed in bulk by weapons, domestic implements were buried in the graves in the cemetery at Vendel. Graves I and XII, for example, contained glass beakers or goblets; graves IX, X, XI, and XIV have the remains of iron cooking pots. There was a bronze basin in grave XIII, a wooden bucket with iron fittings in XIV, and a wooden box with lock in grave IV (Stolpe and Arne 1927).

In the British Isles, the situation is the same. In addition to its weapons, the Taplow barrow contained two buckets and some glass drinking horns (Chaney 1970:98). In the ship–cenotaph at Sutton Hoo were found three cauldrons, an iron lamp, some chainwork, three iron-bound wooden buckets, a large and a small silver dish, a silver ladle cup, two decorated aurochs drinking horns, maplewood and pottery bottles, eight silver bowls, two silver spoons, a heavy bronze bowl, and a thin, bronze hanging bowl (Bruce-Mitford 1972).[13] The large silver dish, called the Anastasius dish, named for Emperor Anastasius I (A.D. 491–518), is of Byzantine origin (Bruce-Mitford 1972:35–36). The smaller silver dish is not of local manufacture either; it comes probably from the Mediterranean region (Bruce-Mitford 1972:66). The two silver spoons are inscribed with the Greek names 'Saulos' and 'Paulos', respectively, and they are 'of a well-known late-classical type' (Bruce-Mitford 1972:68).[14] The heavy bronze bowl 'is not of local manufacture and

must have come from the Near East, probably Alexandria. It is of a type known in the archaeology of the period as "Coptic bowls", i.e. from Christian, or Coptic, Egypt' (Bruce-Mitford 1972:27). The bronze hanging bowl is probably of Celtic origin. 'The bowl had worn through or sustained damage before it was buried, and had been patched in several places with riveted silver plates' (Bruce-Mitford 1972:27).

Some of these items are clearly functional and show signs of use; others are more likely to be ornamental. Some are made of wood or other common material; some are silver, bronze, or glass. Some are of common, local manufacture; others are imported materials likely to have been highly prized. Although we can give a fairly complete accounting of these grave goods, they tell us directly very little about why they were placed in the graves. They are, in fact, simply there, without explanatory labels. Everything so far examined, however, has pointed clearly to the possibility that Germanic burial was felt to be a total commemoration of all of the activities of the earthly life just closed. If the burial of weapons and armor marks the end of a waging of war through the disappearance of both the agent of battle and the instruments through which he acted, then the other objects buried should represent other aspects of that life. What the commemorated activities might have been we do not know. Some general information is forthcoming, however, from an examination of the various kinds of grave goods found.

Some events in an individual's life are more or less unique and private; such events are likely to be represented by individual or uncommon items among the grave goods. More public or social activities will be represented by goods of a type repeated throughout. Each of the ship burials has its unique items: the loom in the Oseberg ship and the whetstone scepter of Sutton Hoo, for example. All of the graves show multiple occurrences of utensils, especially containers; cauldrons, buckets, drinking horns, bottles, cups, bowls, and dishes abound. These vessels all share the basic shape of the ships in which they are buried, and this shape is, of course, shared by the well, the container and source of life itself. If their symbolic significance is to be granted, then these artifacts will share in the meaningful close of all life on earth, which the burial represents. What the armor and weaponry represent, these vessels

express as well. Some of the more common containers would be associated with ordinary, everyday activities. On the other hand, the heirlooms of precious metal or glass are more likely to commemorate some particular, significant moment in life; they might be a prize brought back from some distant expedition, a gift of value from a grateful lord, an award for successful deeds, etc. Not all grave goods are containers, and there is no reason why they all should be; but, without reasons to the contrary, it is most likely that the persistent imagery of the well suggested a container or similarly shaped artifact as a commemorative object for significant events.[15]

Germanic gravesites other than ship burials also show frequent occurrences of containers as grave goods. Silver goblets and dishes, of local manufacture but copied from Roman models, have been found in the graves of German leaders (*Fürsten*) in northern continental Europe. These date from about the time of Tacitus's account (Much 1967:121–22). The Germanic burial at Ittenheim (seventh century after Christ) contained classical and Byzantine artifacts: some Roman horse harness, and more importantly, a phalera, and a 'Coptic' bronze tankard and pan (Werner 1943). In Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, in addition to funeral urns, both bowls, especially hanging bowls, and glass cups and beakers are frequently found. Such glass is common throughout the North Germanic world; much of it is imported (Harden 1956). The parallels between Swedish and Anglo-Saxon finds are striking (Leeds 1936). Many of the beakers found in England are of Celtic or Roman (or imitation Roman) manufacture; the finds in Vendel graves I and XII are possibly 'of English origin [and] had been conveyed a long distance by sea, and when we take into consideration the state of commerce at that time [seventh century after Christ], it is evident that this must have made them especially costly' (Stjerna 1912:129).[16] The hanging bowls also show a great variety in design and provenience. Many of these show classical or 'Coptic' origins or influences. Celtic influence is shown especially in the designs of escutcheons.[17] Concerning grave goods found in Anglo-Saxon burials, it is clear that at least 'some of the Anglo-Saxon sixth- and seventh-century artifacts, such as hanging bowls and some of the Sutton Hoo finds, are . . . at least in part to be regarded as cult symbols' (Wrenn 1965:40). The exact nature of these cults is not important here; however, there does seem to be a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that

there are important symbolic aspects to all of these grave goods. A shared, cultural symbolism would easily allow for their incorporation into local cults.

As has been noted above, many of these grave goods either are of foreign origin or are made in imitation of foreign items. Few ship burials lack works of foreign manufacture, and this fact is in every way typical of Germanic burials in general. The shield and helmet of the Sutton Hoo closely resemble those found in the cemetery at Vendel. Celtic work, including the 'Buddha bucket', was found in the Oseberg ship. The goblets in the Gokstad ship are probably Frankish. 'Coptic' work is found not only at Sutton Hoo but at Vendel and at Ittenheim. The list can be continued easily. No distinction seems to have been made as to their monetary value. The 'Buddha bucket' was made of wood and, in spite of its interesting handle mounts, was not an obviously opulent item. On the other hand, the Anastasius dish from Sutton Hoo is clearly expensive. It is possible to attribute the presence of these items in the grave to their being part of a collection of personal 'keepsakes', a collection of acquired loot. This seems too narrow; it certainly would not account for the regular repetition throughout the Germanic world. It has been suggested that the grave and the objects in it contain together the eventful activities of the life commemorated. The accumulation of items acts symbolically as an accumulation of events. The more important the life, the more likely there would be important foreign connections and foreign goods in the grave. Gifts and booty may very well be represented among these; however, there are likely to be personal items as well commemorating homely activities. What the representations will be will depend upon the individual. The very spread of materials suggests comprehensiveness. A full life will draw its significant events from activities performed as widely as possible in space (hence the variety and abundance of foreign items) and as deeply as possible in time (hence the presence of old, used vessels and heirlooms). Because all actions in time and space fall within the purview of Urth, her symbols, especially the well as enclosure, dominate. Other items, such as the sword and shield, suggest the tree. All, however, ultimately combine to express the power of *wyrd* over the lives of all people.

It might be useful here to pause momentarily to reexamine the significance attributed to the information presented above about Germanic burial. The assertion everywhere has been that the re-

peated and conspicuous features of Germanic graves repeat and illustrate basic conceptual figures definitive of a Germanic world view or cosmography. There is no question about the 'Germanic' nature of this material, but can we see in it anything that is essentially or *uniquely* Germanic? We should be especially concerned that any such uniqueness be associated directly with the aspects of the myth of Urth's Well and Yggdrasil, which have already been presented. With respect to the archaeological material here considered, what is there in it that is peculiarly Germanic? Let us begin by tackling the most vulnerable part of the record: the presence of containers within Germanic graves. How far can we go in asserting that the presence of containers in gravesites supports a cosmic structure of a kind of reality beyond daily life that is itself containerlike? One might object that the grave in itself is a container in all cases, Germanic or otherwise. This is true, but this does not account for the presence of other artifacts within graves that are themselves containers. It is clear that the practice of including containers within gravesites is not limited to Germanic burials. The practice is widespread. It would seem, then, that the mere presence of containers does not in itself represent any uniquely Germanic feature. If, however, we examine the materials of the Germanic sites in comparison with the goods of the other European cultures most closely associated with the early Germans, certain significant distinctions begin to emerge.

First, to the east of the Germanic peoples lived the early Slavic peoples. 'At the beginning of their history the Slavs used to cremate their dead, collect the ashes and deposit them in special urns which were then buried, and over the graves they erected mounds . . . The cinerary urns were sealed with an inverted dish' (Dvornik 1956:52). Prehistoric archaeological evidence extends our knowledge considerably. The burials of the North Carpathian (Proto-Slavic) culture of the late Bronze Age reveal that both cremation and inhumation were practiced.

> Grave pits were lined with timber and in some cases roofs, or even the whole grave chamber, were preserved. Ornaments were placed in the women's graves, but, with the exception of warrior graves in which bridles and parts of weapons were found, male burials were usually poor. (Gimbutas 1971:55)

A good deal of cultural continuity leads up to these burials. House

graves appear in Europe with the movement west of the so-called Kurgan culture from the central Asian steppes (east of the Black and Caspian seas) in the late third millennium B.C. Remains of this culture from the third millennium back to at least the early fifth millennium B.C. have been found in the Eurasian steppes regularly showing 'house graves built of timber or of stone slabs . . . covered with an earthen or stone mound and then topped with a stone stela' (Gimbutas 1970:170). House graves are present in the eastern Ukraine and southern Russian steppes in the late Chalcolithic and early Bronze Ages (Gimbutas 1956:168–69). The occurrences in the middle and late Bronze Ages are occasionally impressive, as in the graves of the Únětician culture (ca. 1650–1450 B.C.); for example, 'the huge burial mound at Helmsdorf in Saxony . . . was an extremely rich grave containing gold ornaments . . . , two pins . . . , two spiral earrings . . . , a spiral . . . , a bronze chisel . . . , a diorite axe . . . , a pottery vase . . . , and potsherds. The grave lay within a chamber built of wooden beams and was covered with stones' (Gimbutas 1965:260). In the east, these continue in the North Carpathian, proto- or early Slavic culture (Gimbutas 1965:453).

The careful and obvious closing of graves here suggests the idea of grave as 'house': a container that somehow offers a permanent dwelling place for the dead. This representation is carried out later in 'the magnificent burial known as Chernaja Mogila discovered in the town of Chernigov, which dates from the mid tenth century. Three members of a royal family, husband, wife and son, had been placed in a timber mortuary house and equipped with everything—horses, weapons, sickles, buckets, pots—that was believed to be necessary for the after-life' (Gimbutas 1971:159). Here the theme of the house is carried out to the full, and the abundance of grave goods can be seen as relating directly to the furnishing of this house. There are no extraneous or random items; all support the configuration of grave as 'furnished house'.

Unlike the grave at Chernigov, however, most Slavic grave sites are complex, without such a central motif. This is, perhaps, the result of a constant and continual overrunning and resettling of Slavic territory by other cultures. One of the most interesting of such sites, the Chernjakhovo complex of the third to fourth centuries after Christ shows a cultural mix of Slavic people with 'Sarmatians, Hellenized remnants of Scythians, Romanized Greeks, Dacians, and Getae' (Gimbutas 1971:68). With these were the east-

ern Germanic Goths who were settling along the northwest coast of the Black Sea. 'The inventories of grave goods show a uniform character in most of the large cemeteries excavated. In rich women's graves there were usually no ear-rings or pins, but the graves contained one or two fibulae, glass, amber or precious stone beads and a comb. In men's graves the items might include a belt clasp, one or two fibulae and a knife. There was an enormous quantity of pots in richer graves' (Gimbutas 1971:72). These sound much like the Germanic materials already examined, and the graves contain none of the order or structure that Chernaja Moglia exhibits. Of course, here the presence of Germanic influence is already being felt.[18] Not surprisingly, at Chernjakhovo was discovered 'an exceptionally well endowed grave, which was probably that of a Gothic chieftain of the fourth century AD . . . In a pit more than two metres deep lay an extended skeleton equipped with two silver spurs, a silver knife, several bronze vessels of Roman type, a silver bow fibula, a Roman glass cup, wheel-made dishes and vases and dice of glass paste' (Gimbutas 1971:72). With this, we are fully back within the Germanic realm with its eclectic clutter *and* its containers.

As in the Slavic practice, the figure of the grave as house is repeated in the burials of the Mediterranean peoples who lived to the south of the early Germans. 'The tomb is the house of the dead. This is an idea common to the whole ancient world, going back in Italy beyond the foundation of Rome. The prehistoric cemeteries of the first iron age have yielded a number of cinerary urns exactly reproducing the various types of huts which sheltered the tribes who then peopled the peninsula. The burial places of the Etruscans are often on the plan of their dwellings, and Roman epitaphs leave no doubt as to the persistence of the conviction that the dead inhabit the tomb' (Cumont 1923:48).[19] The Etruscan burial 'house' was often quite elaborate:

Near Orvieto was found the *Tomba Golini*, a tomb-chamber of the end of the fourth century B.C. A mural painting from this [Etruscan] tomb . . . depicts the preparation of . . . a banquet. Servants and wineservers are rushing busily around. On the ornate tables resting on long legs which end in animals' feet stand drinking bowls, mixing vessels and jugs of different sizes and shapes, a whole dinner service. Here at the kitchen-stove baking and cooking are going on, there someone is kneading

dough in a big basin, and on one of the projections of a tree whose branches have been cut off hangs a whole ox cut open. Its bloody head, parted from the torso, is lying on the ground near by. Candles, fixed in high candelabra shaped like birds' heads, throw a festal light over the underground chamber'. (von Vacano 1960:99)

For the Etruscans, 'care for the dead seemed constantly to obsess the living. The Etruscan tomb is constructed in the form of the Etruscan house, but with particular care, solidity and lavishness. After the burial, it was protected by a circle of stones or an immense flagstone sealing the entrance . . . There the man rested with his weapons, and the wom[a]n with her jewels' (Bloch 1958: 157). The situation is much the same for the early Roman dead:

It was necessary not only to ensure him a roof but also to provide for his support, for he had the same needs and tastes beneath the ground as he had upon it. Therefore the clothes which covered him, the jewels which adorned him, the earthen or bronze vessels which decked his table, the lamps which afforded him light, would be placed beside him. If he were a warrior he would be given the arms he bore, if a craftsman the tools he used; a woman would have the articles necessary to her toilet, a child the toys which amused him; and the amulets, by the help of which all that was maleficent would be kept away, were not forgotten. (Cumont 1923:49)

The earliest Roman graves do not have such an obvious one-to-one relationship of 'grave life' to daily life, but their symbolism is not widely different. The early Iron Age graves in the Roman Forum show this clearly.

The graves are of two types: for cremation and for inhumation. The former were pits, at the bottom of which was placed the *dolium* which was closed with a lid. The *dolium* contained the cinerary vase, often a hut urn, and several small votive jars. The inhumation graves . . . were *fossae* in which the body was often stretched out in an oak coffin. With one exception, these graves contained no hut urns, but the rest of their material resembled that of the cremation graves—biconical urns, goblets with reticulated ornamentation, two-handled cups and bossed amphorae. (Bloch 1960:76–77)

By the third century after Christ, inhumation is regular, and the sarcophagi become very ornate. The house symbolism is maintained. It can be carried to extremes, as in the case of the burial from Simpelveld in southern Holland, in which 'the whole interior of the sarcophagus is carved with scenes of home-life [including] a bath-house with a projecting bay, distinguished by its high shuttered windows and a ventilator for a heating-system just below the eaves' (Richmond 1950:19). In every case there seems to be emphasis upon grave as house. Even the graves of children, not usually given space in burial grounds, 'were sometimes placed in earthenware jars under the roof-extension [of a house]' (Bloch 1960: 78).

The Celtic peoples, who lived generally to the west of the Germans, exhibit in their burials some of the features already noted in Slavic and Italic graves, but they are, in the main, different. Probable 'Celtic' burials of the late Bronze Age, specifically those of the Deverel–Rimbury people in Britain, point up the difference.[20] There is no evidence of

great labours in the building of temples or tombs, [or of] great sacrifices for the enrichment of their dead. They had inherited from central Europe the custom of cremation burial in large cemeteries or 'urnfields'. The true central European urnfield had no grave-mounds, but in the west the old Battle-Axe warrior tradition was still sufficiently alive for low saucer-shaped barrows often to be raised over the cremations, or for the urns to be buried in the flanks of older tumuli. In Britain this persistence of the barrow idea was particularly strong in Wessex. No durable possessions went with the ashes into these cineraries. (Hawkes and Hawkes 1953:97–98)

In the early Iron Age (La Tène culture), however, the situation changes. Individual aristocratic graves begin to show elaborate and expensive goods (Hubert 1932:98–157). In Britain,

the dead were laid in pits below small, round barrows, fully clad and decked with ornaments, and, just as in France, they might be accompanied by their war chariots, sometimes complete, more often dismantled . . . [Horses] were too valuable for sacrifice, and their harness alone went into the grave. Very frequently large joints of pork or whole pigs were buried, and

even the humbler graves were supplied with a leg standing in an earthenware jar. (Hawkes and Hawkes 1953: 110)

By the second and first centuries B.C., there are important remains of the Belgae, a Celtic people whose culture had been significantly tinged already by Germanic elements.[21] 'Remains of this Belgic culture have often been discovered. The Belgae, like the Germans, cremated their dead, and they buried the ashes in shapely urns, usually pear-shaped and often with a pedestal foot, which are sometimes found grouped in cemeteries or urnfields' (Hawkes and Hawkes 1953: 121). So far so good, but the remains become problematical. In Belgic graves in Kent, for example,

> the urn was accompanied by other pots, no doubt to hold funeral offerings of food and drink, and sometimes by bronze or even silver brooches, shaped like a large and ornate safety-pin. At Aylesford there were also bronze vessels—a pan and wine-jugs—from Italy, and a great wooden bucket bound and handled in bronze, with two unearthly-faced human heads frowning above the rim, and designs beaten out on the upper band, including strange, leafy-tailed horse-monsters. (Hawkes and Hawkes 1953: 121–22)

This sounds suspiciously not only like the burial of the Gothic chieftain at Chernjakhovo, mentioned above, but like the Germanic burials already described.

Although there is a good deal of variety in the Slavic, Italic, and Celtic material here presented, two significant, related similarities seem to run through much of it. First, the grave is, at least in the Slavic and Italic data, clearly considered to be a house, a permanent, fixed dwelling place. It is, surely, an enclosure, as we might very well expect, but it is fully closed. Not only are the burials roofed over or enclosed within wooden coffins, but the element of total closure is emphasized by the presence of flagstones in the Etruscan sites and lids placed over the openings of the *dolia* in those of the early Romans. The building of mounds over the Slavic and Celtic graves might very well effect the same closure. The permanence of these grave houses is, at once, repeated by their being furnished with materials needed to make such dwellings inhabitable. This is most obvious in the full, domestic representations of the Etruscans, but symbolic furnishings are common throughout,

whether they are symbolic of feeding, as the pork in the Celtic sites seems to indicate, or of other aspects of daily life, as in most Slavic sites. Indeed, the grave goods in all cases seem representative of some aspects of what might be called 'normal daily needs'. It is only in graves that can easily admit of Germanic influence that one begins to notice both the extraordinary amount and the variety of grave goods, especially, as I would point out, a superabundance of pots and containers.

It is, perhaps, useful at this point to reexamine the information cited above about the westward movement of the central Asian Kurgan people and their burial practices. Not only did they seem to be responsible for introducing the idea of the house grave to the European continent, but their

> expansion in the second half of the third millennium B.C. into the North Pontic area, Anatolia, the Aegean, the Balkans, central Europe, northwestern Europe, the East Baltic area, and central Russia brought destruction to the old European neolithic and chalcolithic cultures and to the Early Bronze Age Aegean and western Anatolian cultures . . . The Kurgan culture spread astonishingly uniform cultural elements all over the vast area of Europe, the Caucasus and Anatolia. (Gimbutas 1963: 833–34)

Aspects of this culture spread widely throughout Europe during the Bronze Age. This continuity in all probability expresses the beginnings of Indo-European culture in Europe. It is unlikely that these early people spoke anything like 'Celtic, or Italic or Germanic or any other known Indo-European language of central or west Europe. But the likelihood that they did speak one or more dialects within the Indo-European group seems . . . a very strong one' (Piggott 1965: 91).

If the Kurgan people were Indo-European, we can see their burial practices as reflective of at least some essential aspects of that culture. The grave as house seems to be one of these, although it is by no means unique to Kurgan culture, as the Etruscan materials show. It has been perhaps misleading to suggest that Kurgan burials are uniformly or entirely of a 'house' nature. Other aspects of their burials can also be seen, from the context here developed, to be of importance. Vehicle burial, for example, mentioned above with respect to Celtic and Germanic graves, is not absent from

Kurgan burials. In the burials of the Otomani culture (2000–1550 B.C.) of eastern Europe (Transylvania), wagon wheels and four-wheeled wagons have been frequently found. Clay models of such wagons are also common. 'The number of wheels and models is big enough to show that vehicles played an important role. Miniature models may have been made as symbols of the real ones' (Gimbutas 1965:206–7).

> Funeral wagons with water bird heads decorating the axle caps were used especially in Late Urnfield times [twelfth to eighth centuries B.C.] for the burial of royal personages or warriors . . . Whether this custom was alive before the Urnfield period in central Europe, cannot be ascertained . . . In Early Geometric Greece, funeral wagons were used and burned containing the dead . . . Also, the bodies of Hittite kings of the fourteenth century B.C. were brought to the cemetery in a special wagon, as funeral texts show. (Gimbutas 1965:342)

In the Hallstatt and La Tène cultures, elaborate burials occur 'often in timber mortuary houses and under barrows, sometimes with a four-wheeled wagon which must in some sense have been a status-symbol, as the chariot was in later times' (Piggott 1965:196).

The evidence suggests that the burial practices of the early Indo-Europeans had elements not only of fixity and closure but of process and movement. The Slavic and Mediterranean practice has emphasized that of closure; the Celtic has done this as well but not apparently to as complete a degree. The Germanic peoples of all of the European branches of the Indo-European parent culture emphasized the element of process or movement. This parallels in some important ways the emphasis found in Germanic myth on process and flux, perhaps a distinctly Germanic development of an earlier shared cultural heritage.

Not only the idea of the grave as fixed permanent dwelling place of the dead but the symbolic utility of grave goods differentiate other Indo-European graves from Germanic burials. Variety and abundance of goods are rather the norm for Germanic graves. Although these too show the 'symbolic utility' in the presence of weapons, harness, and so forth (and some Germanic graves even show remains of foodstuffs), little of this 'utility' is culturewide. Rather, we are constantly surprised by the utter strangeness of some of the kinds of things that do manage to get buried. In addi-

tion, there appear to be no strongly felt culturally repeated artifacts that specify male or female graves; the opposite is the case. Weapons are found in female graves; toilet implements are found in male graves. The greatest abundance, however, clusters around containers. If nothing else, the grave must surely have been felt to represent some significant aspect of the act of accumulation, an accumulation partly social, partly individual. Most striking, however, is the evident lack in Germanic burials of any feeling of grave as 'fixed' or 'static'. The enclosure of the Germanic grave comes in its fullest form to represent the ship. Although these are enclosures, they are neither fixed nor permanent. They represent movement with respect to water. Burials (both real and fictional) in ships, in barrows near the sea, and in ship-shaped barrows are, within the western European cultures of the period, unique to the Germanic peoples.[22] Thus, the Germanic grave is representative of enclosure, as we expect, and probably even of habitation or dwelling, but it is not fixed or closed or permanent (in a spatial sense). The ship has the power of motion, and a burial in one is most likely to represent a 'going' or a process rather than a final, permanent closure. The burial becomes a circumscribing yet partial containment.

Ships suggest travel or the journey, a common motif expressive of discovery, acquisition of knowledge, or death. There are important manifestations of it in Oriental and classical myth (Patch 1950:7–26). Among Celtic peoples, the voyage to the Happy Isles or to the Land beyond the Waves is a common literary theme (Patch 1950:27–59). That the Germanic peoples should have something of the same traditions comes as no surprise. There are some significant differences, however, between the ways the Celtic and Germanic peoples treat them. Celtic voyages are most often those of discovery (immrama), of which the voyage of Bran son of Febal—later to become the voyage of Saint Brendan—is one of the most famous. Bran and his companions float from island to island observing one miraculous kind of life after another: an island of joy and an island of women, among many others. In these travels, Bran

enters a world where our world as we know it seems to resolve itself into its components. The people of the Island of Joy are not enjoying any particular pleasure; they are not laughing *at* anything. The island symbolizes joy in its elemental isolation.

The Island of the Women is likewise the quintessence of femininity and erotic pleasure, separated from everything with which it is intermingled in normal experience. (Rees and Rees 1961 : 322–23).

The tale focuses upon learning about and examining those aspects of these insular worlds that lie outside the ordinary world of men and that clarify man's own existence. In a peculiar way, such worlds are more intensely human than ordinary life.

There are some parallel journeys in the Germanic materials, too, but they differ in some basic ways. Among the Germans, men do not often visit other created worlds. Gods seem to engage in this kind of travel more readily, but, even here, it is not overly frequent. More often than not, too, the emphasis is upon the 'discovery' or 'outcome' of the journey rather than upon the mode of or matter of the transport. Most often it is simply said that such-and-such a god appeared among some created beings of a species not his own. When mode of transport is utilized it is generally not by boat; rather, horseback is the common means: Hermod rides to Hel in his abortive attempt to gain Balder's release; the Valkyries carry their slain warriors to Valholl on horseback.

In the Germanic tradition, voyaging by ship is linked to the interaction not of created world with created world, as, for example, of the world of gods with the world of men, but of all created beings (gods and men) with the realm beyond man's knowledge. In this respect, the accounts share something with the Celtic 'story of the voyage of the mortally wounded King Arthur to Afallon for the healing of his wounds' (Rees and Rees 1961 : 318). Arthur's last voyage is not really typical of the *immrama* generally. Most often, the Celtic voyage is the means by which men visit some enchanted or 'happy' island—or a fairyland. The way in which life there is more or less than human provides the voyager with knowledge. The voyage tends, on the whole, to be placid; the voyager tends to be an observer. Often the voyage has been seen or prefigured in a vision prior to departure. The goal of the Celtic voyage is usually known. Sometimes it leads to death, or immortality.[23] More often, it involves a return. The Germanic ship burial, as it appears to those who perform it, seems neither placid nor passive. If it embodies the idea of destination or return, it does so in a way to dissociate that destination from the world of men. For men, this voyage is its own

destination; it is not a means of reaching anything but itself. The burial ship, itself a symbol of action and movement but whose destination is unknown, embodies within it the most significant action possible outside the reality of the realm of the well. The burial ship expresses man's power to act and his desire to fix that action within the greater reality beyond.

It is surely pertinent that the expression 'to travel forth' (OE *forþfaran, forþferan*) is regularly utilized in Old English for the act of dying, for example as in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: 'þy ilcan geare Loðere Cant wara cining forðferde [Laud 685]' (Plummer and Earle 1892 : 39); 'on þam ilcan geare he forþfor [Laud 571]' (Plummer and Earle 1892 : 19).[24] In Old Norse, the noun *far* generally refers to 'a means of passage, a ship . . . every floating vessel . . . a trading vessel', etc. (Cleasby et al. 1957 : 141). Indeed, in Old Norse, the verb *fara* is very common 'as it denotes any motion; not so in other Teut[onic] idioms; in [Ulfilas] *faran* is only used once, viz. Luke x.7; Goth. *farjan* means *to sail*, and this seems to be the original sense of fara . . . [Ger.] *fahren* and [Mod. E] *fare* are used in a limited sense' (Cleasby et al. 1957 : 141). In spite of its rather wide and general denotation in Old Norse, some uses of *fara* retain its original nautical senses, e.g. *farask* 'to perish, to be drowned, perish in the sea'. Grimm and Grimm (1862 : 1251) also noted that *fahren*, in the sense of depart, was more than a simple modern euphemism: 'fahren, *cedere, excedere vita, sterben*, abfahren, hinfahren . . . *verfahren, fortgefahren*' originally existed with the sense of *erfahren* 'suffer, go through, experience'. All these relate to process and ultimately to movement. The Germanic ship grave represents activity, process, and a 'going forth', and the grave goods must, of necessity, be felt to go forth with it. Of these, some (especially the accumulation of containers) are, in all probability, culturally predetermined; others seem unique and important solely to the individual buried, whose life within the world of men here closes, but whose presence continues beyond this world in the greater reality of the well itself.

Rituals and Everyday Life

ONE of the most interesting accounts of Germanic ritual practice, from an outsider's point of view, occurs in the *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg–Bremen* by Adam of Bremen. This eleventh-century history gives a North European, yet Christian account of the culture of pagan Scandinavia. Significant here is the description of the pagan temple at Uppsala, Sweden:

> Nobilissimum illa gens templum habet, quod Ubsola dicitur, non longe positum ab Sictona civitate [vel Birka]. In hoc templo, quod totum ex auro paratum est, statuas trium deorum veneratur populus, ita ut potentissimus eorum Thor in medio solium habeat triclinio; hinc et inde locum possident Wodan et Fricco. (Adam von Bremen IV, 26:257–58)

> That folk [the Swedes] has a very famous temple called Uppsala, situated not far from the city of Sigtuna and Björkö. In this temple, entirely decked out in gold, the people worship the statues of three gods in such wise that the mightiest of them, Thor, occupies a throne in the middle of the chamber; Wotan and Frikko have places on either side. (Tschan 1959: 207)

This site at Uppsala seems to have been well enough known to continental Christian Germans for them to be able to add information to Adam's account. We have already made mention of one scholium to this particular account in the first part of essay 2, a scholium referring to the golden chain around the temple. The text is accompanied by another:

Prope illud templum est arbor maxima late ramos extendens,
semper viridis in hieme et aestate; cuius illa generis sit, nemo
scit. Ibi etiam est fons, ubi sacrificia paganorum solent exerceri
et homo vivus inmergi. Qui dum non invenitur, ratum erit
votum populi. (Adam von Bremen IV, scholium 138 [134]:
257–58)

Near this temple stands a very large tree with wide-spreading
branches, always green winter and summer. What kind it is
nobody knows. There is also a spring at which the pagans are
accustomed to make their sacrifices, and into it to plunge a live
man. And if he is not found, the people's wish will be granted.
(Tschan 1959:207)

The added information clearly suggests a representation of Ygg-
drasil, the world tree, with its 'wide-spreading branches, always
green'. The exact connection between the tree at Uppsala and the
idea of Yggdrasil is not known. Uppsala may have been the center
of the universe to the Swedes, or the tree may have had the power
of an icon, derivative of the force of the world tree itself.[1] The
scholium also mentions a spring (Lat. *fons*), which accompanies the
tree and in which sacrifices are made. The spring is necessary to
complete the configuration of tree and well as it occurs in the
myth; the scholiast seems to have been aware of this.

The sacrifice consists of plunging a live man into the spring; if
he disappears, the sacrifice is deemed favorable. The implied alter-
native suggests an unfavorable omen if the man does not disappear
into the spring. The division seems, to modern readers, arbitrary.
The ritual sacrifice mirrors elements in the myth of Urth's Well,
however, and these elements supply the necessary order of sacri-
fice. The spring is one of the clearest natural representations of the
bounded, welling, water source. If the well is the well of the past,
into it would be gathered all actions; likewise, it would supply
strength and guidance. The sacrificial victim carries with him a se-
ries of actions proposed by those making the sacrifice. If these ac-
tions are acceptable to and representative of the working out of the
course of events flowing out of the past, the victim will be gathered
directly into them. He will disappear into the spring, into the well,
and symbolically into the past. Acceptance will signal the favor of
the past as it is in the process of working itself out into the present.

The association of drowning or disappearance *into* water with

divine favor and, alternatively, of rejection by the water with dis-
favor exactly parallels the procedure of the ordeal by water. Or-
deals, particularly the ordeal by water, were already in use by the
continental Germans before the time of Adam of Bremen. They
were clearly popular enough to have been explicitly banned by the
Volksrecht in A.D. 829 (Nottarp 1956:56). Many kinds of ordeals
were practiced by the Germanic peoples: the plunging of a part of
the body into hot liquid (usually water), the grasping of hot metal,
the eating of apparently toxic foods, dueling, etc. In each case, the
ordeal was autonomic or self-deciding, with the results always *di-
rectly* observable in the outcome of the test. Thus, favor or disfavor,
innocence or guilt could be objectively determined. The actions of
each ritual openly proclaimed the presence of divine involvement
in the immediate affairs of men. The 'favor' obtained by the sacri-
fice at Uppsala and the 'innocence' derived from the individual
ordeal are essentially the same; both show the actions of men to be
in accord with the overarching course of the greater reality beyond
direct perception.[2]

Because the Germanic concept of present reality was basically
one of uncertain flux, the direct appeal to greater power was assur-
ing. Nor is it surprising that it should be: 'both ordeals and oaths
. . . are linked with anxiety. The former is associated with obe-
dience and the latter with responsibility training' (Roberts 1965:
205). Obedience to strict codes of behavior is revealed in all records
of Germanic culture; it underlies everything we have come to call
'heroic'. Ordeals are common in societies where such individual
conduct is stressed and where kinship is greatly emphasized. 'Au-
tonomic ordeals[,] used to determine guilt or innocence[,] are
found where there is something of a general, but weak, authority
system. [They] appear to be ways of achieving decisions in the pres-
ence of weak authority . . . By appealing to the gods, then, the
users of the autonomic ordeal free the guilty man's kinsmen of the
obligation to revolt—they might not be willing to defer to a human
decision[,] but they accede to the will of the gods' (Roberts 1965:
208–9).[3] Both the ritual at Uppsala and the related ordeal ask for
mediation from the power found in the universal water.

The temple at Uppsala is dedicated to the Æsir Thor and
Odin, and to Frikko, and the priests who ministered in the temple
apparently acted as mediators between the Æsir and ordinary men.
It is to be remembered, however, that the Æsir are mediating gods

and not divine makers of law. 'They render decisions based upon
what has existed in precedent [i.e. in the past]. Yggdrasill is the bar
of justice, while the Urðarbrunnr furnishes the precedents, where-
by "skolu goðin eiga dóma sina hvern dag". The Urðarbrunnr is
the *fons juris* of Norse mythology' (Schwartz 1973:21). That the
basis of Germanic law should be found in this myth and in its man-
ifestation in the sacrifice at Uppsala is not unlikely; just, temporal
law is man's mirror of universal reality.

Sacrificial immersion plays an important part in the ritual of
the Germanic goddess Nerthus as described by Tacitus in the *Ger-
mania*. It is worth quoting in some detail:

> nec quicquam notabile in singulis, nisi quod in commune
> Nerthum, id est Terram matrem, colunt eamque intervenire
> rebus hominum, invehi populis arbitrantur. est in insula Oce-
> ani castum nemus, dicatumque in eo vehiculum, veste contec-
> tum; attingere uni sacerdoti concessum. is adesse penetrali
> deam intellegit vectamque bubus feminis multa cum venera-
> tione prosequitur . . . donec idem sacerdos satiatam conversa-
> tione mortalium deam templo reddat. mox vehiculum et vestis
> et, si credere velis, numen ipsum secreto lacu abluitur. servi
> ministrant, quos statim idem lacus haurit. arcanus hinc terror
> sanctaque ignorantia, quid sit illud quod tantum perituri vi-
> dent. (*Germania* 40)

> There is nothing noteworthy about these tribes individually,
> but they share a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother
> Earth. They believe that she takes part in human affairs, riding
> in a chariot among her people. On an island of the sea stands
> an inviolate grove, in which, veiled with a cloth, is a chariot
> that none but the priest may touch. The priest can feel the
> presence of the goddess in this holy of holies, and attends her
> with deepest reverence as her chariot is drawn along by cows
> . . . until the goddess, when she has had enough of the society
> of men, is restored to her sacred precinct by the priest. After
> that, the chariot, the vestments, and (believe it if you will) the
> goddess herself, are cleansed in a secluded lake. This service is
> performed by slaves who are immediately afterwards drowned
> in the lake. Thus mystery begets terror and a pious reluctance
> to ask what that sight can be which is seen only by men doomed
> to die. (Mattingly 1970:134–35)

There is general agreement that Nerthus is a goddess of fertility.[4]
This interpretation is supported by the association with Nerthus of
the symbolic attributes of Urth's Well. The deity is feminine. Addi-
tionally, the goddess remains hidden 'on an island of the sea [in] an
inviolate grove' when her ritual is not being performed. The grove
and the sea suggest both the symbolic wetness and the image of the
tree that associates Yggdrasil with Urth. There is also the secret
lake in which the representation (*numen*) of the goddess is bathed
at the end of the ritual. The lake is located within the most sacred
precinct (*templum*) of the earth mother's island.[5] A small, enclosed
body of water on an island, the sacred precinct, which itself is en-
closed by water, repeats and reinforces the symbolic nature of both
the water source and the conception of enclosure. Thus, the very
holy water in Urth's Well is strongly suggested. The idea of the
island is not semantically too different from that of the well. Both
include water and enclosure; an enclosure *of* water against an en-
closure *by* water. Mythically, the distinction is relatively superficial;
thus, Nerthus's Island and Urth's Well are not as distinct as they
might at first seem.[6]

It is not too surprising to find that during the ritual the image
of the earth mother, Nerthus, is carried among the people in a
vehiculum drawn by cows. The *vehiculum* is sacred and is touched
only by the officiating priest. We do not know exactly what this
vehiculum was. The term is usually translated as 'chariot' or 'wagon'
because the remains of cult wagons are not uncommon in Scan-
dinavia. The most well known of these are the Dejbjærg wag-
ons, but there are others; we need not limit the interpretation to
wheeled vehicles.[7] Regardless of its exact nature, such a vehicle
must provide enclosed space within which the sacred image may be
placed and protected. The sacred space includes the surrounding
walls of the vehicle, as Tacitus's account makes clear. The relation-
ship between the vehicle and the image recalls the myth of Urth's
Well more distinctly when, at the conclusion of the Nerthus ritual,
'the chariot, the vestments, and (believe it if you will) the goddess
herself, are cleansed in a secluded lake'. All of the artifacts of the
ritual are cleansed in the holy water; even the slaves or ministrants
(*servi*) of the ritual are themselves 'immediately afterwards drowned
in the lake'.[8]

The similarity to the sacrifice at Uppsala is great. It is easy to
visualize the image and its surrounding vehicular walls sinking

slowly as the purifying waters rise up and swirl around it. The washing and ritualistic drowning explicitly join the desired fertility celebrated in the ritual just performed with all favorable acts of beneficial fertility in the past. These acts symbolize a continuing favorable course of events. The ritual gets its power from the holy waters of the well, to which all elements of the ritual and all events finally return. It may be, as Tacitus says, that the purpose of the drowning is to instill terror and awe in those who do not fully understand its meaning. It certainly has suggested these ideas to Tacitus, but he, for all his interest, stands as a Roman outside Germanic culture. It seems reasonable that the Germanic peoples understood quite clearly what the purpose of the ritual was, and the disappearance of the ministrants would probably not have been a very 'terrible' fact. On the contrary, the ritual purification and its concomitant drowning would provide the people proof that the ritual had been satisfactorily performed and that the ministering slaves had been accepted by the powers of generation.

It is informative to compare some of the elements of the two rituals here described with the account of the burial rite given by Ibn Faḍlān, as discussed in the first part of essay 2. All include a ritual death: the two here by drowning, and Ibn Faḍlān's by stabbing and strangulation. In the two present cases, the sacrificial death occurs at the height or center of the ritual; in the funeral rite, the death occurred before the climactic cremation. As we have seen, the focus of the funeral rite is upon affairs beyond this world; the ritual of Nerthus and the practice at Uppsala focus on the affairs of the world of men. In every case, the deaths mark the intersection or interaction of this world with the realm beyond. In Ibn Faḍlān's funeral rite, this world is to influence the next; in the ritual drownings, the other realm is asked to influence this; thus, the sacrificial victim is drowned (that is, passes into the realm of the well) alive. The interaction of well and tree is a reciprocal one: The tree fills the well; the well nourishes the tree. Influence is likewise opposed. Although the contexts within which these ritual deaths occur differ, the structural relationships tend to remain the same.

Although Tacitus calls Nerthus *Terra mater*, there is little more than his name to support such a designation. The Germanic figure keeps earth (the worlds of the tree) and the reality or power beyond it (the realm of the well) clearly separate. Even the greatest

and cleverest of beings, Odin, must give greatly of himself—he must hang upon the tree or pledge his own eye—to associate with and master even a fraction of the power and wisdom of the cosmos beyond the world of men. The Norn Urth is abstract, unapproachable, unhuman. She is hardly an earth mother; a sexual union of Urth and even Odin (let alone some lesser being) is unthinkable. Urth's power and fecundity are of another dimension. In the ritual of Nerthus, the goddess is mysterious and isolated; her image is chaste, withdrawn, inviolate. The power she symbolizes is a power beyond and apart from common knowledge and everyday activity. Ibn Faḍlān's funeral ritual presents an interesting perspective: There are two women. One, the Angel of Death, is austere, threatening, and essentially nonhuman; the other, the sacrificed girl, is a sexual object and a woman of no importance. She is, however, unique in Germanic lore.

The peculiar position of women in early Germanic society is not noticeable only here. Tacitus, too, found them to be treated with deference and reverence as something apart. The Germanic peoples feared enslavement of women above that of men, and hostages would be most highly regarded if they included some women of noble birth:

> inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid et providum putant, nec aut consilia earum asperantur aut responsa neglegunt. (*Germania* 8)

> More than this, they believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and a gift of prophecy; and so they do not scorn to ask their advice, or lightly disregard their replies. (Mattingly 1970: 108)

Caesar also mentions this prophetic gift." The 'gift of prophecy' is, of course, an English translation of Tacitus's Latin phrase for this 'holy' activity. Exactly what it was felt to be among the Germans is not recoverable from this account, but that women were more in touch with forces beyond this life than men seems sure, and the nature of these forces has already appeared in other evidence.

The vehicle of Nerthus is drawn by cows. Although animals play no other role in her ritual, they are meaningfully associated with other aspects of gaining information about the working of

reality, what the Roman writers call 'prophecy'. Tacitus also mentions the Germanic practice of obtaining auspices from the activities of live animals:

> et illud quidem etiam hic notum, avium voces volatusque interrogare: proprium gentis equorum quoque praesagia ac monitus experiri. publice aluntur isdem nemoribus ac lucis, candidi et nullo mortali opere contacti; quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur hinnitusque ac fremitus observant. nec ulli auspicio maior fides, non solum apud plebem, sed apud proceres, apud sacerdotes; se enim ministros deorum, illos conscios putant. (*Germania* 10)

Although the familiar method of seeking information from the cries and the flight of birds is known to the Germans, they have also a special method of their own—to try to obtain omens and warnings from horses. These horses are kept at the public expense in the sacred woods and groves that I have mentioned; they are pure white and undefiled by any toil in the service of man. The priest and the king, or the chief of the state, yoke them to a sacred chariot and walk beside them, taking note of their neighs and snorts. No kind of omen inspires greater trust, not only among the common people, but even among the nobles and priests, who think that they themselves are but servants of the gods, whereas the horses are privy to the gods' counsels. (Mattingly 1970: 109–10)

It seems likely that all of the Germanic peoples regarded animals with a particular reverence. The animals eventually found their way into Germanic myth and art, and they have associated themselves with the most profound aspects of Germanic thinking.

The awe that surrounds Tacitus's commentary seems to imply that animals have a closer relationship to the powers of the universe than do men. Animals appear also in the Germanic myth both in the well and in the branches of the world tree:

> Þá mælti Gangleri: Hvat er fleira at segja stórmerkja frá askinum?—Hárr segir: Mart er þar af at segja. Örn einn sitr í limum asksins . . . en í milli augna honum sitr haukr sá, er heitir Veðrfölnir. Íkorni sá, er heitir Ratatoskr, rennr upp ok niðr eptir askinum ok berr öfundarorð milli arnarins ok

> Níðhöggs; en IV hirtir renna í limum asksins ok bíta barr . . . En svá margir ormar eru í Hvergelmi með Níðhögg, at engi tunga má telja. (*Gylfaginning* 16: 33–34)

Then said Gangleri: 'What more mighty wonders are to be told of the Ash?' Hárr replied: 'Much is to be told of it. An eagle sits in the limbs of the Ash, . . . and between his eyes sits the hawk that is called Vedrfölnir. The squirrel called Ratatöskr runs up and down the length of the Ash, bearing envious words between the eagle and Nídhöggr; and four harts run in the limbs of the Ash and bite the leaves . . . Moreover, so many serpents are in Hvergelmir with Nídhöggr, that no tongue can tell them.' (Brodeur 1929: 29)

These animals are instrumental to the working out of the power of this myth: The harts bite, the serpents gnaw, the squirrel runs: all work to bring the realm of the tree within that of the well. It is not surprising, then, that the gods, like men, would associate themselves meaningfully with the animals that surround the tree and well. Horses and birds play an exceptionally prominent role here. Both are connected with Odin in many descriptions of the god. And, to Tacitus, the flights of birds and the snorting of horses are the most common Germanic means of obtaining information. Horses (and, perhaps, birds) play a particularly significant role in mediating the intellectual exchange between the world of men, the world of gods, and that of animals. Animals living upon the margins of worlds—neither fully domestic nor fully wild—provide the meaningful links between the worlds they touch. Most wilder animals, like those that run upon or gnaw the world tree, have their role to play in the cosmic structure, but it is a role distant to men, who know of them but little and that by report. Animals, however, like fowl and horses (and also some other herbivorous animals like the harts in the tree or the cows of the ritual of Nerthus), exist in a relatively close relation to men and can share with men the knowledge that is uniquely that which belongs to animals within the realm of the tree. Horses also mediate between men and gods, and the ride on horseback is the usual means of facilitating transport among the various Germanic worlds.

In addition to mentioning the flight and cries of birds and the neighing of horses as a means of gathering 'prophetic' informa-

tion, Tacitus also describes the Germanic predilection for dicing and gaming. The following method of casting lots exists to obtain auspices:

> sortium consuetudo simplex. virgam frugiferae arbori decisam in surculos amputant eosque notis quibusdam discretos super candidam vestem temere ac fortuito spargunt. mox, si publice consultetur, sacerdos civitatis, sin privatim, ipse pater familiae, precatus deos caelumque suspiciens ter singulos tollit, sublatos secundum impressam ante notam interpretatur. (*Germania* 10)

> Their procedure in casting lots is always the same. They cut off a branch of a nut-bearing tree and slice it into strips; these they mark with different signs and throw them completely at random onto a white cloth. Then the priest of the state, if the consultation is a public one, or the father of the family if it is private, offers a prayer to the gods, and looking up at the sky picks up three strips, one at a time, and reads their meaning from the signs previously scored on them. (Mattingly 1970: 109)

The importance of the lots resides in the significance of the 'signs' they contain (those that are marked upon them) and in their random configuration on the white cloth. Apparently the casting can be accomplished by anyone whose importance in the particular context is most prominent: the priest of the state or the father of a family. The scoring of the symbols on slices of wood repeats the action of 'scoring on wood', one of the activities of the Norns in *Vǫluspá* 20. The idea of runes is suggested, but Tacitus's writing is too early; runes do not appear to have been in wide use until the third century after Christ (Shetelig and Falk 1937: 212). Yet, these markings seem to suggest a scoring of a related but prerunic type. The runes were not merely an alphabetic writing system to the Germanic peoples.[10] Probably they originally represented symbolically some fixed and realized aspects of the forces that structure the universe. This being the case, such early lot casting would suggest a partial, relatively minor aspect of this larger concern. The three symbolic pieces of branch, chosen at random, map the way in which the course of events in the world is progressing; thus, they symbolically represent the scoring of the Norns and the power of

Urth. It is perhaps also significant that the tree from which the branch is cut is a 'nut-bearing tree'. A tree that obviously bears fruit would signify fecundity, productivity, and generative power.[11]

The picking at random of three lots suggests a gamelike or chancelike quality to the activity. Games of chance played an important part in the lives of the early Germans. In an urn burial in the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Caistor-by-Norwich were found 'the ashes of a man, some 30 sheep's astragali (some of them in fragments) together with 33 bone cylindrical playing-pieces of a type similar to those of the Taplow cemetery sometimes referred to as draughtsmen, now in the British Museum. On one of these sheep's ankle-bones is a quite clearly incised runic inscription of six letters in a line on its largest flat surface' (Wrenn 1962: 307).[12] Gaming pieces have also been found in some of the ship burials: Pieces of what were probably two gaming boards and a draughtsman made of horn were found in the Gokstad ship (Gjessing 1957; Sjøvold 1969). Draughtsmen were found in graves IX and XII at Vendel; in addition, dice fragments were found in grave XII (Stolpe and Arne 1927). Although among continental Germans 'Würfel tauchen in der älteren römischen Kaiserzeit sehr selten unter den Grabbeigaben auf[,] in der jüngeren Kaiserzeit treten sie (oft zusammen mit Spielsteinen für Brettspiele) häufiger in reicher ausgestatteten Gräbern auf, und das gleiche gilt für die Völkerwanderungszeit. Das Brettspiel mit Würfeln ist offenbar der vornehmen Schicht vorbehalten gewesen' (Much 1967: 322). Tacitus speaks directly of such games of chance:

> aleam, quod mirere, sobrii inter seria exercent, tanta lucrandi perdendive temeritate, ut, cum omnia defecerunt, extremo ac novissimo iactu de libertate ac de corpore contendant. victus voluntariam servitutem adit. (*Germania* 24)

> They play at dice—surprisingly enough—when they are sober, making a serious business of it; and they are so reckless in their anxiety to win, however often they lose, that when everything else is gone they will stake their personal liberty on a last decisive throw. A loser willingly discharges his debt by becoming a slave. (Mattingly 1970: 121)

The game described is not unlike the whole procedure of casting lots already described. The seriousness with which the Germans

pursue the game surprises Tacitus. There is nothing frivolous about it, nor is there any reason to expect that there would be. The casting of the dice or lots, with the element of chance configuration deriving from the throw, expresses the working out of the power of Urth as it flows out into the lives of men. Not only is the activity serious, it is diligently pursued to its ultimate success or defeat. If one casting dice feels himself in the grip of the power of the course of events, his life is governed by this force, and the sequence of actions inherent in it must be endured or pursued to its conclusion. There is no honorable retreat from such an obligatory moment. If the will of Urth is that he lose, he loses. He gives up his freedom 'willingly'; it is in the nature of events that he do this.

The interrelation between gaming and the power of Urth is further explored by Schneider (1956) in his interesting examination of the universal implications of the system of Germanic runes. He locates within the symbolism of the *þ*-rune, ᚼ , the power of 'allmächtige Schicksal *ϸurðiz*' (411). The argument derives in part from the iconographic representation of the rune (in its various guises: ⊓, ⊏, ⊔, ᚼ) as *Würfelbecher* 'dice cup', which suggests games of chance. In the roll of the dice, as in the casting of lots, is to be seen—albeit in an imperfect and limited way—something of the pervasive power of Urth. What is now apparent is that the symbolism of the dice cup shares the larger symbolic attribute of Urth, the cup in general, the container, the enclosure, the well. It is perhaps significant that the other containerlike rune is Anglo-Saxon *ur*, ᚼ , from Germanic *ūruz* 'aurochs'. Aurochs drinking horns have been found in burials, and they were probably not uncommon; Caesar mentions the eagerness with which the Germanic peoples sought out these animals:

> Amplitudo cornuum et figura et species multum a nostrorum boum cornibus differt. Haec studiose conquisita ab labris argento circumcludunt atque in amplissimis epulis pro poculis utuntur. (*Belli gallici* VI, 28 : 129)

> The size, conformation, and appearance of their horns are very different from those of our oxen. They are much sought after by the natives, who fit the rims with silver and use them for goblets at their grandest feasts. (Hadas 1957 : 142)

Again the connection is made between artifact or object, its use, and the symbolic power that use represents.

The silver decoration of the horn cups brings to mind Tacitus's comments about the Germans' apparent lack of regard for precious metals:

> argentum et aurum propitiine an irati dii negaverint dubito. nec tamen adfirmaverim nullam Germaniae venam argentum aurumve gignere: quis enim scrutatus est? possessione et usu haud perinde adficiuntur: est videre apud illos argentea vasa, legatis et principibus eorum muneri data, non in alia vilitate quam quae humo finguntur. (*Germania* 5)

> Silver and gold have been denied them—whether as a sign of divine favour or of divine wrath, I cannot say. Yet I would not positively assert that there are no deposits of silver or gold in Germany, since no one has prospected for them. The natives take less pleasure than most people do in possessing and handling these metals; indeed, one can see in their houses silver vessels, which have been presented to chieftains or to ambassadors travelling abroad, put to the same everyday uses as earthenware. (Mattingly 1970 : 104–5)

The ironic tone of the opening of the passage and the passage in the text that follows the quoted section (which states that the Germans living close to Roman civilization have quickly learned to value money) have caused commentators to look askance at the whole passage. Even if Tacitus is in some ways elevating the Germanic character to contrast it with the decadent Roman character of his time, there is no reason to believe that the passage is entirely lacking in fact. The Germans obviously had and revered precious metals; 'the archaeological evidence shows that the Germans were by no means indifferent to the precious metals' (Anderson 1938 : 58).[13] Tacitus explicitly states that silver vessels especially are to be found in Germanic homes. Surprisingly, these vessels do not seem to be reverenced above others of ordinary material as, he implies, would be the case among the Romans. Tacitus's assertion is supported by the evidence of the grave goods described above. There are precious metals, especially silver; there is pottery, glass, and wood. If we believe Tacitus, it would be commonplace to find all of these in Germanic households. The more expensive and esoteric—gifts from ambassadors—and the cheaper and more common would nestle together. It seems that the Germans could revere equally all of these. The reverence, however, does not lie with the

precious metal. It can be found in the nature of the object. Its significance lies in the particular action with which it is symbolically associated. Any item brought back from foreign lands would offer itself openly for such association. Everyday items, under the proper circumstances, would also achieve reverential symbolism. It is the importance of the ordinary, not a lack of pleasure in the precious, that is unique to Germanic culture.

Drinking provides a final topic for consideration; it seems to have played an important role in Germanic society, as Tacitus points out. Early in the morning, both feasting and business begin. First, men breakfast,

> tum ad negotia nec minus saepe ad convivia procedunt armati. diem noctemque continuare potando nulli probrum. crebrae, ut inter vinolentos, rixae raro conviciis, saepius caede et vulneribus transiguntur. sed et de reconciliandis invicem inimicis et iugendis adfinitatibus et adsciscendis principibus, de pace denique ac bello plerumque in conviviis consultant, tamquam nullo magis tempore aut ad simplices cogitationes pateat animus aut ad magnas incalescat. (*Germania* 22)

> then they go out to attend to any business they have in hand, or, as often as not, to partake in a feast—always with their weapons about them. Drinking-bouts lasting all day and all night are not considered in any way disgraceful. The quarrels that inevitably arise over the cups are seldom settled merely by hard words, but more often by killing and wounding. Nevertheless, they often make a feast an occasion for discussing such affairs as the ending of feuds, the arrangement of marriage alliances, the adoption of chiefs, and even questions of peace or war. At no other time, they think, is the heart so open to sincere feelings or so quick to warm to noble sentiments. (Mattingly 1970:120)

These drinking bouts (*convivia*) at which serious business is discussed seem to be closely related to the practice of the *symbel*, which is not infrequently recorded in North and West Germanic literature. References to it occur in the Old Saxon *Heliand: sittien at sumble* (3339); in Old Norse, especially in the Eddas; in *Locasenna* (8),

> Sessa oc staði   velia þér sumbli at
>   æsir aldregi,

> þvíat æsir vito,   hveim þeir alda scolo
>   gambansumbl um geta

> Seats and places for thee at *symbel*
>   the Æsir never choose,
> because the Æsir know about those kinds of men it is right
>   to have at glorious-*symbel*

and in *Hymisqviða* (1), *Ár valtívar veiðar námo, / oc sumblsamir, áðr saðir yrði* 'Once the battle-gods took a great-hunting-catch, / and, desiring-*symbel*, [so that] they might become sated'; and (2), *Þú scalt ásom opt sumbl gora* 'Thou shalt often prepare *symbel* for the Æsir'. There are other significant occurrences elsewhere. In Old English, *symbel* occurs importantly not only in *Beowulf*, as we shall examine later, but also in *The dream of the rood* (141), *þær is Dryhtnes folc / ʒeseted to symle, þær is sinʒal blis* 'There are God's folk seated at *symbel*; there is continual bliss'; and *Judith* (15), *Hie ða to ðam symle sittan eodon* 'Then they went to sit at *symbel*'.[14] The list is by no means exhaustive.

Although the references to the activity are frequent, none of these tells us very much explicitly about what the *symbel* was. Many references to the *symbel* are ritualistically fixed within their texts. There is the frequently repeated alliterative phrase *sittan to symle* (*Judith* 15 or *The dream of the rood* 141), *sitia sumbli at* (*Locasenna* 10). Especially in the Norse sources, the term seems to be greatly restricted. It is more frequent in Old English, however, where it occurs in early sermons and biblical translation; *symbelness* 'festivity, solemnity', *symbel-calic* 'chalice', *symbel-dæg* 'feast day', etc. Whether the writers using the phrase *sittan to symle* knew fully the nature of the earlier *symbel* when they used it seems, from our point of view, irrelevant. The phrase even in its frozen form suggested features that have been carried through intact in all of the materials extant.

Clearly the *symbel* was some kind of solemn occasion at which the participants significantly sat down. Within the rather strenuously active contexts of most Germanic texts, sitting suggests inaction, rest, and order. Order seems especially important, because to sit requires a place to sit, and a place suggests some apportioning of positions, and the apportioning suggests Urth. The *symbel* is also a joint activity; one never reads of someone at *symbel* alone. Those participating come together and sit, usually within a chieftain's hall. The contexts are not explicit with respect to the location, most

simply stating that such-and-such people were *sumbli at*; however, the locations that are specified are inside, for example in Heorot, Hrothgar's Hall, in *Beowulf*. There are no contexts in which it is explicitly stated that the *symbel* took place outside.

The *symbel* is a kind of feast. It is solemn in the sense of having deep significance and importance, but it is not essentially dour. Thus, in *Beowulf* (611–12), in the poem's first description of the events at Hrothgar's *symbel*, we hear that *Ðær wæs hæleþa hleahtor, hlyn swynsode, / word wæron wynsume* 'There was laughter of the men, noise sounded, / the words were winsome'.[15] It would be easy to infer from this that the whole situation is quite rowdy, boisterous, and chaotic, and Tacitus's remarks about ensuing bloodshed suggest this. Although Germanic literature has its rowdy hall scenes, slaughter, dissension, and almost animalistic eating, in no way are these actions associated with the *symbel*. With respect to the *symbel*, only three types of activity are central: drinking (and its related actions such as the passing of the drinking cup), speech making (with related recitation and singing), and gift giving. First, drinking is the only kind of ingestion that occurs at the *symbel*; there are no references to eating, and it seems reasonable to see it as purposefully excluded from the ritual.[16] The drinking itself is always orderly: The cup is passed, and the drinking it supplies is regularly accompanied by related speaking and response. Although the drink is an intoxicant, no instances are recorded of the *symbel* itself degenerating into a kind of orgy or brawl. When disruption *does* occur in the *symbel*, it is always introduced from outside; it does not grow out of the ritual activity of itself.

The exact nature of the drink used in *symbel* is never made clear. In *Beowulf*, for example, in the first *symbel* of the poem, three references are made to the drink:

> Þā wæs Gēatmæcgum   geador ætsomne
> on bēorsele   benc gerȳmed;
> þær swīðferhþe   sittan ēodon,
> þrȳðum dealle.   Þegn nytte behēold,
> sē þe on handa bær   hroden ealowǣge,
> scencte scīr wered.
>
> (491–96)

So there was for the Geatish-men together
a bench cleared in the beer hall;

thence the strong-spirited [men] went to sit
proud in their strength. The serving-thane fulfilled his office,
[he] who bore on hand the adorned ale-cup,
[and] poured out the clear, sweet drink.

The men are gathered *on bēorsele* 'in the beer hall'; the thane passes round the *ealowǣge* 'ale-cup', which contains a *scīr wered* 'a clear, sweet drink' of some kind.[17] Mead, the most common 'sweet' Germanic drink, is not mentioned here, but it occurs throughout *Beowulf* and elsewhere both by itself and in compounds: *medo-benc, medo-heall, medo-ful* 'mead cup', etc.[18] The same lack of specification occurs in the Norse texts: *Locasenna*, for example, begins with the description of Ægir's ale feast in its prose introduction and again mentions the ale in its opening stanza: *Segðu þat, Eldir . . . / hvat hér inni hafa at ǫlmálom / sigtíva synir?* 'Say thou, Eldir, . . . what here within have the sons of the victory-gods at ale-speaking?' By the third stanza, the drink has changed to mead: *ǫll oc áfo fœri ec ása sonom, / oc blend ec þeim svá meini mjǫð* 'foul-tasting herbs and drinks I bear to the sons of the Æsir, and thus I mix the mead for them with injury'. Likewise, in *Hymisqviða*, Ægir begins by asking Thor to supply him with a kettle *þannz ek ǫllom ǫl yðr of heita* (3) 'with which I [shall] brew ale for you all'. When Thor and Tyr arrive at Hymir's Hall, the home of the brewing kettle they plan to procure, a *biórveig* (8) 'draft of beer' is brought to them. This variety of terms for essentially the same item is explicitly exploited in *Alvíssmál*: Thor asks (33): *hvé þat ǫl heitir, er drecca alda synir / heimi hveriom í* 'how is it that ale is called, which the sons of men drink, in each of the worlds?' Alvis replies (34):

> Ǫl heitir með mǫnnom,   enn með ásom biórr,
>   kalla veig vanir,
> hreinalǫg jǫtnar,   enn í helio mjǫð,
>   kalla sumbl Suttungs synir.

'Ale' it is called among men, and among the Æsir, 'beer',
   the Vanir call it 'a draft',
'clear-strata', the giants, and in Hel, 'mead',
   the sons of Suttung call [it] '*symbel*'.

The context of the drinking, the *symbel*, itself has become one of the names for the drink. If nothing else, this should point to the intimate, essential relationship of the act of drinking the intoxicant

and the nature of the feast, and it apparently does not matter what kind of intoxicant it is. It might be significant, however, that, in the passage from *Alvíssmál* just cited, the generic term picked for this drink is *ǫl* 'ale' and not one of the related possibilities.

Indeed, the term *symbel* itself may very well find its own roots in ale. The word is quite probably a compound of *sum-* or *sam-* (which represents a collecting or gathering): MHG *sament, samt* 'along with'; ON *samka, samna* 'to gather'; etc.) and the form **alu* 'ale' (ON *ǫl*, OE *ealu*, etc.). Thus, the *symbel* would be a 'gathering or coming together of ale'. Semantically, this etymology matches the elements of the *symbel* that we have so far examined. There is much to recommend it over the older etymology (never very widely accepted) that postulated a borrowing of Gk. συμβολή 'collection for a meal' through Lat. *symbola*. Not only does *symbel* occur too frequently in the explicitly Germanic context descriptive of the drinking ritual, but the word frequently occurs without its *-b-*. There is no evidence of compensatory lengthening in the word when this occurs, and there would be if, in fact, the bilabial stop were being lost. The *sum-alu* etymon requires no phonetic adjustment of this kind when an excrescent [b] begins to intrude itself into the word.[19]

As already indicated, drinking is not the unique activity of the *symbel*. Speech making and gift giving also occur. The speeches of the *symbel* in *Beowulf* deal with Beowulf's impending battle with Grendel; arrangements for this action are established during the drinking presented above, and later, after Grendel's death, Hrothgar gives Beowulf gifts.[20] More to the point here, however, is the arrival at the *symbel* of Wealhtheow, Hrothgar's queen:

> Ēode Wealhþēow forð,
> cwēn Hrōðgāres   cynna gemyndig,
> grētte goldhroden   guman on healle,
> ond þā frēolīc wīf   ful gesealde
> ǣrest Ēast-Dena   eþelwearde,
> bæd hine blīðne   æt þǣre bēorþege,
> lēodum lēofne;   hē on lust geþeah
> symbel ond seleful,   sigerōf kyning.
>
> (612–19)

> Wealhtheow came forth,
> Hrothgar's queen; mindful of the proceedings,

> [she] greeted the gold-adorned men in the hall,
> and the noble woman passed the cup
> first to the noble-leader of the East-Danes,
> bade him to be happy at the beer-taking,
> dear to his people; he with pleasure partook of
> the *symbel* and the hall-cup, the victory-renowned king.

Wealhtheow's arrival is striking, not least because it makes obvious the usual absence of women from Germanic literature. Wealhtheow is the first woman of the poem, and there are not many others.[21] She is noble by position or lineage and appears in the poem in a moment of great ritual significance. Wealhtheow, after passing the cup to Hrothgar, *cynna gemyndig* 'mindful of the proceedings' (613), moves through the hall with the cup

> oþ þæt sæl ālamp,
> þæt hīo Bēowulfe,   bēaghroden cwēn
> mōde geþungen   medoful ætbær:
> grētte Gēata lēod,   Gode þancode
> wīsfæst wordum   þæs ðe hire se willa gelamp,
> þæt hēo on ænigne   eorl gelȳfde
> fyrena frōfre.
>
> (622–28)

> until the time came to pass
> that she, the ring-adorned queen, to Beowulf
> bore the mead-cup; resolute of mind,
> she greeted the leader of the Geats, gave thanks to God,
> wise with words that her desire had taken place:
> that she [might] trust in some one man
> as a help against evils.

The elements of this typical *symbel* bear a close relationship not only to those already described by Tacitus but also to those isolated in the myth of Urth's Well. The cup, for example, is an enclosure, in many ways like the *brunnr*. It collects and holds the intoxicating drink, one that is clearly beyond the ordinary. The presence of the noblewoman at the drinking of the intoxicant adds the additional element of female nurture. The act of drinking takes place in the presence of the act of speech, each partaking of the fact of the other; in such activity, the power of all other actions is brought to bear upon the ritual moment and fixes it within the ever-evolving

interrelation of all present actions with the past. This combination of words, their denoted actions, and the semantic elements of the drink and cup repeat the whole act of the continual speaking of the *ørlǫg* and the nurturing of the tree Yggdrasil, the central activities of the Norns. If this action is indicative of the power and presence of the past in the world of men, then here also the ritual words spoken become part of this past. They disappear into the drink; as it is drunk, the speaker of the speech, his actions, and the drink become one, assuring that all now have become part of the strata laid within the well.

The essentially Germanic nature of this kind of ritual drinking can be better seen when it is compared with some of the drinking and libationary rituals of other Indo-European cultures.[22] Among the Celts, feasting and drinking are attested rather early. 'From the seventh century [B.C.], the main trade between the Mediterranean and the Celtic world was that in wine, reflected archaeologically in imported vessels for serving and drinking it, which were then frequently buried with the dead as an expression of the idea [of] the feast beyond the grave . . . The trade continues in the fifth century, with Greek painted cups and bronze flagons in the later Celtic graves' (Piggott 1965:195). The idea of the feast beyond the grave is present in Roman burials. Tombs frequently were perforated to create 'a tube for libations . . . so that [the ashes of the dead] could be plied with wine at the annual ritual feast in which the whole family was conceived to unite, with barriers broken between dead and living' (Richmond 1950:18). All ritual libations attempt to unite this world with powers beyond it, but they do not always reflect the intimate familial and domestic associations so dominant in Roman culture.

Not all libationary rituals are designed to unite the dead and the living. More often, it is the union of men and gods that the libationary act implicitly or explicitly effects. This is one of the most significant aspects of the kind of Greek feasting related by Homer. In the *Odyssey*, Book III, for example, there is a detailed account of a ritual festival of Poseidon that, in many respects, clearly relates not only to some Celtic feasts but also to some aspects of the Germanic *symbel*.

Telemachus and the goddess Athene, in the guise of Mentor, have arrived at Pylos where Nestor and his people are sacrificing bulls. The inner portions of the bulls are eaten, and the thighbones

are burned. When Telemachus and Athene approach, Peisistratus, Nestor's son, welcomes them to the sacrifice:

δῶκε δ'ἄρα σπλάγχνων μοίρας, ἐν δ' οἶνον ἔχευεν
χρυσείῳ δέπαϊ· δειδισκόμενος δὲ προσηύδα
Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην κούρην Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο·
   Εὔχεο νῦν, ὦξεῖνε, Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι·
τοῦ γὰρ καὶ δαίτης ἠντήσατε δεῦρο μολόντες·
αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν σπείσῃς τε καὶ εὔξεαι, ἣ θέμις ἐστί,
δὸς καὶ τούτῳ ἔπειτα δέπας μελιηδέος οἴνου
σπεῖσαι, ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτον ὀίομαι ἀθανάτοισιν
εὔχεσθαι· πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέουσ᾽ ἄνθρωποι·

(*Odyssey* III:40–48)[23]

Thereupon he gave them portions of the inner meat and poured wine in a golden cup, and, pledging her, he spoke to Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis:
   'Pray now, stranger, to the lord Poseidon, for his is the feast whereon you have chanced in coming hither. And when thou hast poured libations and hast prayed, as is fitting, then give thy friend also the cup of honey-sweet wine that he may pour, since he too, I ween, prays to the immortals; for all men have need of the gods'. (Murray 1919:71)

Athene, as Mentor, prays for glory for Nestor and a safe return journey for the ship of Telemachus. She then gives the wine cup to Telemachus, who prays likewise (55–64).

After the feasting, Nestor speaks and asks Telemachus who he is (69–74). Telemachus, only then, reveals the nature of his visit and requests news of his father Odysseus (79–101). Nestor, encouraged by Telemachus, recounts the fall of Troy, the return of Agamemnon to Greece, the resulting slaughter at Mycaene; he suggests that Menelaus, who was detained longer than Nestor in returning from Troy to Greece, might have more news than he of the fate of Odysseus (103–328). With this, as night is drawing on, Athene suggests that the feast end:

· Ὦ γέρον, ἦ τοι ταῦτα κατὰ μοῖραν κατέλεξας·
ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε τάμνετε μὲν γλώσσας, κεράασθε δὲ οἶνον,
ὄφρα Ποσειδάωνι καὶ ἄλλοις ἀθανάτοισιν
σπείσαντες κοίτοιο μεδώμεθα· τοῖο γὰρ ὥρη᾽.

(*Odyssey* III:331–34)

'Old man, of a truth thou hast told this tale aright. But come, cut out the tongues of the victims and mix the wine, that when we have poured libations to Poseidon and the other immortals, we may bethink us of sleep; for it is the time thereto'. (Murray 1919:93)

Therewith, the ritual closing of the feast begins:

τοῖσι δὲ κήρυκες μὲν ὕδωρ ἐπὶ χεῖρας ἔχευαν,
κοῦροι δὲ κρητῆρας ἐπεστέψαντο ποτοῖο,
νώμησαν δ' ἄρα πᾶσιν ἐπαρξάμενοι δεπάεσσι·
γλώσσας δ' ἐν πυρὶ βάλλον, ἀνιστάμενοι δ' ἐπέλειβον·

(*Odyssey* III:338–41)

Heralds poured water over their hands, and youths filled the bowls brim full of drink, and served out to all, pouring first drops for libation into the cups. Then they cast the tongues upon the fire, and, rising up, poured libations upon them. (Murray 1919:93)

As Telemachus and Athene make ready to leave, Nestor speaks once more, inviting Telemachus to his palace. Athene suddenly departs in the likeness of a bird. Nestor, marveling at the miracle, prays to Athene, and later (393–95) a libation of the kind already described is poured to her.

This lengthy digression into matters non-Germanic points up directly the extent to which the Greek and Germanic ritual feasts are alike and dissimilar. Both are at once festive and solemn occasions on which great affairs are considered; both have ritualized patterns of participation. There are, however, important differences: First, women play no important role in the Greek ritual (if we discount Athene's presence). Second, sacrifice and eating of sacrifices play an important part in the Greek ritual; eating is absent from the *symbel*. Third, the Greek feast is held explicitly to honor Poseidon, and prayers are made to him (just as, later, the ritual is carried out again to honor Athene, and prayers are offered to her). It is here that the most significant difference is observable. No gods are mentioned in the Germanic feast; indeed, the *symbel* does not seem to be an occasion upon which men's affairs are related to those of the gods. As a matter of fact, a good deal of the material quoted above (especially the Norse material) indicates that both men *and* gods share the practice of the *symbel*. Thus, there are no

prayers in the Germanic ritual. In the Greek, the accounts of affairs past are associated with a requesting of the gods to favorably structure and determine further human activity. These prayers stand as a kind of neutral ground between the past and present together and a future that is to be determined. The ritual libation here is poured *out to* the gods; hence, the repeated emphasis on the verb χεω 'pour, let flow'. Man opens himself out to a hoped-for good favor of the god celebrated. In so doing, he dissociates himself from the future outcomes of such prayers. In the *symbel*, on the other hand, the emphasis is upon drinking, pledging, and swearing oaths. Those taking part directly and literally associate themselves with the flow of events and hold themselves responsible for forthcoming actions.

When we come to examine Celtic feasting, we discover much less in the way of specific description. We must infer from other sources rather than interpret, as we have been able to do with the Greek and Germanic material. Celtic feasts, as they seem actually to have been practiced, 'show us swaggering, belching, touchy chieftains and their equally impossible warrior crew, hands twitching to the sword-hilt at the imagined hint of an insult, allotted as in Homer the champion's portion (of boiled pork, in the Celtic world), wiping the greasy moustaches that were a mark of nobility' (Piggott 1965:229). The stories of Celtic feasts are considerably more rowdy than anything encountered in the Greek libationary ritual or the *symbel*. The only aspect of the account given above that seems to match any element of the Germanic ritual feast is the presence of 'insult', to which the Celtic chieftain might at any moment react with violence.[24]

The importance of eating to Celtic feasts, mentioned above in the 'champion's portion' of pork, is repeated in Celtic burial urns with pork provision included. Indeed, the association of eating with fecundity and the fertility of the earth seems to be a ritual feature in which Celtic festivals and feasts are unlike both the Greek and the Germanic. This tendency finds significant articulation in the tales told of the Dagda, the Irish 'Good God'. In the mythological cycle, for example, in the account of the Second Battle of Mag Tuired, fought between the Fomoire and the Tuatha Dé Danann, the Dagda enters the camp of the Fomoire to ask for a truce to end the fighting temporarily. The Fomoire grant the request but treat the Dagda as an object of fun:

Porridge was made for him, 'to mock him, for great was his love of porridge'. Goats and sheep and pigs, as well as meal and milk, were cast into the king's gigantic cauldron. The food was then spilt into a hole in the ground, and the Dagda was obliged to eat it all on pain of death ... The ladle was big enough for a man and a woman to lie in but the Dagda finished by scraping the hole with his finger, and then he fell asleep ... A Rabelaisian passage follows which tells of his intercourse with Indech's daughter, who promised her magic assistance against the host of the Fomoire. (Rees and Rees 1961 : 36)

The passage presents a number of the attributes, in a variety of guises, that are essential to the Dagda's character. The cauldron (repeated iconographically in the above account by the hole in the ground) is one of his three major attributes; the other two are a harp, associated with music and inspiration, and an immense club, so large that it often needed to be dragged on wheels (de Vries 1961 : 38–39). The association of club and cauldron repeats the iconic structure of tree and well, and the cauldron is in some ways like the Norse well Hvergelmir, the 'seething cauldron'. In the Celtic myth, however, it is representative of physical or worldly plenty: 'The symbol of abundance in Ireland was this magical cauldron. Of the Dagda's it was said "that no one goes away without being satisfied"' (Powell 1958 : 122).

The club is more explicitly phallic than the tree in the Germanic myth, and the stories of the Dagda celebrate not only fertility and plenty in an abstract sense but human generation and natural harvest. The apparently casual intercourse with Indech's daughter at the end of the passage quoted above is more central to the issue than might at first appear. In the passage, before the quotation begins, 'we are told of the Dagda, "about the Samain (1st November) of the battle", having intercourse with the Morrígan' (Rees and Rees 1961 : 35–36). As one of the destructive female beings representative of battle death and carnage, Morrígan is typical of a general type of Celtic goddess, 'not tribal, or social, [but] of the land or territory to be placated, taken over, or even enslaved, with the occupation of the ground. They display both fertility and destructress aspects' (Powell 1958 : 118).

The fact that the account given above takes place at the time of

Samain is likewise significant. Samain marked the end of summer and the beginning of winter. The word itself may be built from the same IE root, *sem-, that underlies symbel; thus, the Samain festival would have a 'gathering together' or 'confluence' as one of its major semantic elements.[25] The Dagda is also a god of treaties or compacts; the account quoted has him establishing a truce between the Tuatha and the Fomoire. The idea of confluence seems to be central to the festival of Samain. Whether it is a gathering of herds, a gathering of a grain harvest, a ritual kindling of hearths against the coming winter, a reuniting of families (a kind of ritual census), or a rite performed not only to insure a physically fertile and plentiful crop for the new year but also to provide peace among the antagonistic or warring powers within the earth who govern the fertility of the land—all of this is representative of union, good favor, perseverance, and a continuing plenty.

From the material above, it is clear that the Celtic peoples—at least, the Irish—have taken a number of cultural elements that they have inherited from Indo-European sources and turned them their own unique way.[26] In this, the development is much like that, already examined, of the voyage motif. The idea of confluence, as we might call it here, has been adapted to express the confluence of forces generating fecundity and plenty within the world of men. Much of the Celtic material is turned to that concern directly: How may man turn the powers of the earth to his continued good fortune? Seen from this perspective, the Celtic festival is much more like the Greek libationary ritual, with its desire for good fortune, than it is like the symbel. Rather than trying to control the flow of wyrd, an idea whose time will not come till well after the Christianization of the Germanic world, the Germanic drinker–speaker controls only himself, directing his own actions to place them most advantageously within that flow.

Wyrd is a continual presence and influence in the rituals, the artifacts, and everyday activities of the early Germanic peoples. Even though its symbolic attributes can be widely observed, and something of its sustentative and all-influencing power occasionally can be felt from the mute objects of the graves and the chance accounts of commentators with non-Germanic prejudices writing for non-Germanic audiences, these things tell us little about how this power was felt to operate within the lives and affairs of men on earth. How actions are meaningfully related to actions and how

significance is to be discovered in the ordinary sequence of events are not recoverable from the kinds of materials examined so far. If we are to find evidence of the operation of *wyrd*, its sustentative power and its past, we will have to examine the literary remains of the Germanic peoples themselves; only they will be able to place events in what will be their proper order and to give them their proper significance.

Beowulf
and the
Nature of Events

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III

I T is clear to anyone who has read any early Germanic literature (even in translation) that actions are rendered and interrelated strangely and that the structural principles upon which this literature is based differ significantly from those that underlie the literary works of our own era. The relationship in this literature between actions and the language used to express them is fundamental to any understanding of Germanic literature and, indeed, to the culture that gave birth to it. The culture's concerns about men and their actions and its conceptualization of the universe in which men exist form the background of and make underlying assumptions about the nature of all things and events. The literature gives prominence to important events and downplays or ignores events that are trivial. To understand this, we must pay particular attention to what is present and what is absent in early Germanic literature and to the amount of emphasis that is placed on what is, in fact, related.

This essay examines, among other things, the nature of the occurrence of events, how they achieve significance, and how these are related to other events, especially past events. The influence and control of the past over the present are expressed directly by the term *wyrd* in Old English, and its mention in any text brings the power of all past actions explicitly to bear on the material presented. This important influence is indirectly felt in many other contexts, however, in places where *wyrd* is not explicitly mentioned at all. Because the term *wyrd* and the contexts in which it occurs in Old English have been well examined by other commentators, the focus here will be mostly on related contexts, first, because they have tended to be overlooked, and second, because they are of

great importance to our understanding of how *wyrd* operated in Germanic culture.[1] The discussion following is concerned mainly with a consideration of *Beowulf*. The limitation is one of convenience: The poem deals directly with Germanic cultural material; it is relatively long and complex enough in its structure to present a variety of contexts; and I happen to know the poem better than comparable Germanic literary materials in other languages. The inferences drawn here, however, apply, I believe, to Germanic culture in general.

It is perhaps not entirely beside the mark to begin with a look at another poem, *Widsith*. *Widsith* is a strange poem made up almost entirely of lists of kings, heroes, and the names of kingdoms and tribes. In 143 lines of text, about seventy tribes and sixty-nine heroes are mentioned (Chambers 1912:6):

> The poem obviously falls into a prolog (1–9), Widsith's speech (10–134), and an epilog (135–143). The speech itself begins with an introduction (10–13) and ends with a conclusion (131–134) . . . The body of the speech (18–130) includes three mnemonic name-lists very different from the rest of the poem. It was long customary to distinguish them as the weold-catalog or catalog of kings, the wæs-catalog or catalog of tribes, and the sohte-catalog or catalog of heroes. (Malone 1962:27)

The major focus of the poem, in both sheer bulk and structure, is on this sequence of catalogs, or thulas, the Norse name for such lists (Malone 1962:27). Neither the opening introductory lines nor the concluding remarks concerning the nature of the activity of the scop do much to alleviate the continual, almost uninterrupted flow of data that forms the poem's center:

> Ætla weold Hunum, Eormanric Gotum,
> Becca Baningum, Burgendum Gifica
>
> (18–19)

> Attila ruled the Huns; Ermanric, the Goths;
> Becca, the Banings; Gifica, the Burgundians

or

> Mid Sercingum ic wæs & mid Seringum.
> Mid Creacum ic wæs & mid Finnum & mid Casere[2]
>
> (75–76)

> I was with the Siraci (?) and with the Seres.
> I was with the Greeks and with the Finns and with Caesar

Much of the critical comment on *Widsith* concerns identification and isolation of the various peoples and heroes mentioned in it and tries to establish the form, time, and language of the 'original' poem. These comments usually conclude rather tentatively and with some reservation:

> The temptation to attribute historic value to poetry in which the names of historic chiefs often meet us is, of course, strong; and giving way to it, the early chroniclers of many nations have incorporated heroic tradition into their histories. But it is an essential characteristic of heroic poetry that, whilst it preserves many historic names, it gives the story modified almost past recognition by generations of poetic tradition. Accurate chronology too is, in the absence of written records, impossible: all the great historic chieftains become contemporaries: their deeds are confused; only their names, and sometimes their characters, remain. (Chambers 1912:5)

Chambers wishes to establish historical fact and chronology, but the poem does not yield up this material easily. The characters in the poem—linked by being known by one person—become 'contemporaries'. These careful critical operations that have been performed upon the poem have given us, the modern age, a fairly likely date for the composition of the poem as we have it.[1] What, however, does all of this have to do with the poem *Widsith* and with the intentions and impulses that led to its composition; what does it tell us about how the poem as we have it is to be experienced? If it is an attempt to write chronicle or history, it is a terrible, spectacular failure. Yet, someone thought enough of it to see that it was preserved in the *Exeter Book*.

Chambers's difficulties with historical fact and chronology are problems of modern times. Clearly, historical fact counts for little and chronology next to nothing in *Widsith*. The poem is organized along some other principle. It is a series of metrical lists. In one sense, these are mnemonic, as Malone has pointed out. These mnemonic lists, however, are not important because they are useful as devices, such as memory theaters or buildings, which became a central part of medieval and later rhetorical practice; neither do

the lists function as a series of note headings or as an arrangement of topics as in an index of a book. They *are* the whole book. They are mnemonic devices for remembering themselves alone!

If *Widsith* parallels any modern literary practice, it is the anatomy or the encyclopedia.[4] The structure of the poem broadly divides it into sections dealing with kings, tribes, and heroes. In most cases, only the names of individuals or tribes are given; occasionally, there is an additional line expressive of some outstanding attribute or characteristic, but this is all. Such lists are by their natures unending. It is always possible to add new kings, new tribes, new heroes as these become known. The editors are in agreement that such additions have taken place with *Widsith*. Surely the poem invites interpolation of just this kind; as a result, a passage relating a visit to the peoples of ancient times appears:

> Mid Israhelum ic wæs & mid Exsyringum,
> mid Ebreum & mid Indeum & mid Egyptum.
>
> (82–83)

> I was with the Israelites and with the Assyrians,
> with the Hebrews and with the Hindus and with the Egyptians.

Because these are tribes and because tribes form one of the central lists, there is no reason for them not to be included. If they were not in the poem as received, they most certainly should be added— and they are—just as we would add new material about the ancient world to our own encyclopedias when it becomes known to us. We would find it unthinkable not to do this; the Germanic peoples seem to have felt the same way.

The material of *Widsith* is mainly 'factual'—who did what, who was there, etc.—rather than exhortative or moralizing—*why* so-and-so did something, etc. The name 'Widsith' (the name of the scop–speaker of the major part of the poem) signifies 'distant journeying' or 'wide traveling'. This 'width' encompasses both time and space. The scop's comments include both relatively recent history (Ælfwine, king of the Langobards, died ca. A.D. 573) and ancient history. He has traveled among the tribes of western Europe and among those of Asia Minor. The poem tries to include as much of human experience as it can. This experience, these facts about leaders, tribes, and heroes, are part of the great store of knowledge from the realm of the past about which we know little and about

which we strive endlessly to discover more. The poem, then, contains facts much in the way that such events are laid down within and contained by Urth's Well. Such strata are not chronological; they are interrelated through context, and in any context they become 'contemporaries', as Chambers has remarked. The poem also keeps the events alive, for its recitation necessitates reutterance. The speaking of these events seems to prove equal to the occurrence or presence of the event; hence, each event known and related is phrased as if it were being experienced directly by the speaker. The scop does not just know about the Israelites and Assyrians: 'Mid Israhelum ic wæs & mid Exsyringum'; he was actually with them (and is with them), as the recitation of the poem makes clear.

The significance of *Widsith* inheres first in the knowledge it contains and second in the recitation of this knowledge. In an oral tradition, the two points are the same: The existence of material 'facts' is equivalent to their being spoken or sung.[5] A name unspoken is a name unknown; experiences unrecounted are effectively lost to the world of men. This is, of course, a terrible and dangerous loss if the accumulation of the force of past actions is felt to be a powerful influence on the affairs of the present. The more man knows of the past, the more he is able to see his place in the pattern of events clearly; the less he knows, the more likely it is that he will be unready and prepared inadequately to face this course of events. It is the scop, the singer of events, who constantly keeps alive and in mind the affairs of distances far away in time or space. It is not surprising that the events of *Widsith* are voiced through a scop and that the final lines of the epilog to the poem speak of the interrelation of the scop and the tribal leader:

> Swa scriþende gesceapum hweorfað,
> gleomen gumena, geond grunda fela,
> þearfe secgað, þoncword sprecaþ,
> simle, suð oþþe norð, sumne gemetað
> gydda gleawne, geofum unhneawne,
> se þe fore duguþe wile dóm áræran,
> eorlscipe æfnan oþ þæt eal scæceð,
> leoht & lif somod. Lof se gewyrceð,
> hafað under heofonum heahfæstne dóm.
>
> (135–43)

So moving things change by facts,
the singers of men throughout many lands,
speak through necessity, say words of thanks,
ever, south or north, [when] they meet one
pleased by songs, unniggardly with gifts,
who, before the company, desires to heighten fame,
to practice leadership until all passes,
light and life together. He who wins praise
has under the heavens lasting fame.

The relationship is reciprocal; the leader who is eager for fame (*dōm*) supports the scop (*gleoman* 'singer'), who will speak of the leader's greatness. *Dōm*, of course, is 'judgment', 'wise speaking'. In addition to the relationship of leader to scop, the passage expresses something significant about the nature of events as well. Line 135, 'So moving things change by facts', is built around three words: the verb *scrīþan* 'to move, go, glide', which occurs in its present participle *scrīþende* 'moving, going, gliding'; the verb *hweorfan* 'to move, turn, go, wander, roam', which is in the present plural indicative; and the noun *gesceap* 'shape, form, created thing, creature' in the dative or instrumental plural. *Gesceap* often makes reference to the nature of things and is often translated as 'fate'. Thus, *gesceapum* might denote 'through the nature of things' or 'by the structure or shape of creation' or simply 'by facts'. The whole line can express something like 'continual change is in the nature of things'. On the other hand, *scrīþende* need not refer to 'things': it can refer to 'moving' or 'traveling' people as well. The *gleomen* (136) would fit this category, and the two lines (135–36) together might suggest that 'it is in the nature of creation that moving men travel or endure change'. There are other possible interpretations, but in every case the relationship of change, men, and events remains constant, and surely the context suggests all of this. One learns and records these changes, these experiences, which form the bases of the scop's song of praise, and the praise, the wise speaking about the leader who supports the scop, is added to these other events: 'He who wins praise / has under the heavens lasting fame' (142–43). The phrase *under heofonum* 'under the heavens' has double significance; on the one hand, it refers to the sky, and the praise is known throughout this world under these heavens; on the other hand, as the Eddas make clear, the holy Well of Urth is located 'in heaven':

Þriðja rót asksins stendr á himni, ok undir þeiri rót er brunnr sá, er mjök er heilagr, er heitir Urðarbrunnr. (*Gylfaginning* 15:31)

The third root of the Ash [Yggdrasil] stands in heaven; and under that root is the well which is very holy, that is called the Well of Urdr. (Brodeur 1929:27–28)

Fame in this world suggests fame in the realm beyond. The actions of this world find their way into the Well of Urth, just as the singing of the scop also finds its way into the well. The growing song with its accumulating facts corresponds to the growth of material in the realm of the past.

The structural principle organizing *Widsith* also informs *Deor*, a companion poem to *Widsith* in the *Exeter Book*. *Deor* (forty-two lines) is considerably shorter than *Widsith*, and its factual elements are given in more detail. In addition, the individual sections of *Deor* (references to Wēlund, the legendary smith; Beadohild, the daughter of Nīðhād; the unfortunate love of Mǣðhild and Gēat; the reign of Ðēodrīc; the reign of Eormanrīc; and finally the unhappy story of the scop, Dēor, himself) are all separated by the refrain *þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæз* 'that passed, so may this'.⁶ Modern readers interpret this line as a unifying device and find it satisfying; however, for the Germanic audience, it seems more likely that the device was a 'separating' rather than a unifying mechanism, one that would help the listener keep apart the individual facts being cited. One tends to feel that *Deor* has as its major intention the value of enduring suffering in this world; one endures and does not despair, for all suffering has 'passed': *þæs ofereode; þisses swa mæз*. We must be wary of our word *passed*, however, which translates *ofereode* 'went over' or 'went beyond'. *Passed* cannot mean 'passed away' or 'disappeared' but, more nearly, means 'passed out of this world into the beyond' or 'transcended limited human experience'. The suffering described in *Deor* is worthy of mention only because it has gone beyond mere human suffering and has significantly passed into the realm of all great suffering. This transcendence of ordinary experience makes the individual incidents of the poem worthy of mention. As with *Widsith*, the speaker of *Deor* directly associates himself with the material related in the poem: Widsith travels, Dēor suffers. Through his own difficulties, Dēor achieves his place

within the 'factual' experience of the world, his immortality and fame. His poem makes this explicit.

The emphasis on the interrelationship of factual details of the sort just described in *Widsith* and *Deor* forms one of the major structural underpinnings of *Beowulf*. The poem is filled with detail: personal histories, repetitions of deeds of valor and cowardice, genealogies, etc. This material and its use in the poem have generally been thought of by commentators as analogical to the 'central narrative' of the poem, Beowulf's life story. The whole idea of a central narrative, however, a central 'story' with related analogical details, presents problems. Modern readers seem to want this central narrative; we call the poem 'Beowulf' and by so doing imply that Beowulf's part of the poem is its center. Yet, at every turn the forward, narrative motion halts; just as we want to find out what happens next, the poem introduces details that seem irrelevant: We are told what happened to somebody else somewhere else. In moments of great tension, the poem tends to become discursive. Beowulf's fight with the dragon, for example, covers about 500 lines. The introduction of the dragon's treasure (line 2200) is followed by a description of its theft and an account of its burial. Beowulf's discovery of the ravaging dragon only occurs about 125 lines later (2324). Beowulf has an iron-bound shield made (2336–39), but this is not followed by the expected fight; instead, we are given reminiscences of Beowulf's earlier exploits, the death of Hygelac, and the fate of his sons (2345–96). In four lines, Beowulf and his men trace the dragon to its den (2397–400). Again, the fight is postponed. We hear more of Hygelac and his sons (2425–508): eighty-four lines! There are twenty-seven more lines given to Beowulf's accounts of his own exploits before he gets down to attending to the dragon. His sword fails, and the dragon appears to get the upper hand. At this point (2602), Wiglaf is suddenly introduced. Later, he and Beowulf succeed in killing the dragon (2705). Through none of this are narrative speed and development central.

This continual refusal to stress the story does not mean that the poem is not much concerned with events. On the contrary, the interrelation of events is its central concern, but they are not structured to make a narrative.[7] Instead, the poem stresses aspects of occurrences that seem abnormal to us now (influenced as we are by narrative) and deemphasizes others. The primacy of temporal or

chronological sequence, for example, is downplayed. Of course, some events are presented in temporal order—certain aspects of life demand this—but the direct evolution of one event into another is not emphasized. Rather, events are likely to be spotty. This is exactly what has been noticed above in the presentation of the battle of Beowulf and the dragon. It is, to an even greater extent, the way in which events are related in both *Deor* and *Widsith*. Likewise, events are not likely to follow one another with any strong feeling of cause and effect. There is in Germanic literature no strong feeling of *immediate* causality of events one upon another.[8] The individual segments of what appear to us to be clearly interdependent and related actions frequently occur in *Beowulf* as separate and distinct entities, like raindrops falling, as if by chance, into the same puddle.

To illustrate this phenomenon, let us examine a part of the battle between Beowulf and Grendel's Mother (the second major 'action' sequence of the poem). Beowulf has just struck out with the sword, Hrunting, which, for the first time in its history, does not bite. He throws down the sword and

> Gefēng þā be eaxle   —nalas for fæhðe mearn—
> Gūð-Gēata lēod   Grendles mōdor;
> brægd þā beadwe heard,   þā hē gebolgen wæs,
> feorhgenīðlan,   þæt hēo flet gebēah.
> Hēo him eft hraþe   andlēan forgeald
> grimman grāpum   ond him tōgēanes fēng;
> oferwearp þā wērigmōd   wigena strengest,
> fēþecempa,   þæt hē on fylle wearð.
> Ofsæt þā þone selegyst,   ond hyre seax getēah
> brād [ond] brūnecg;   wolde hire bearn wrecan

(1537–46)

Below, the Old English passage is rendered as literally as possible, with the connectives (conjunctions) linking events retained with the passages of the text they accompany. A Ø precedes a segment of the text for which no connection is explicitly present:

(þā)   the man of the Battle-Geats grasped Grendel's Mother by the shoulder

   (nalas) unhappy for the fighting

(*þā*)   the rigor of battle of the life-enemies moved quiɔkly (*brægd . . . beadwe heard* [1539])

(*þā*)   he was enraged

(*þæt*)   she sank to the floor

(*eft*)   she repaid him quickly requital with grim grasps

(*ond*)   seized against him

(*þā*)   weary-in-spirit, the foot warrior, the strongest of fighters tumbled over

(*þæt*)   he came into a fall

(*þā*)   [Grendel's Mother] sat upon the hall-visitor

(*ond*)   drew out her broad, brown-edged dagger

(*Ø*)   would avenge her child

When we examine the whole battle scene, we can sense that it is somewhat curiously presented. Instead of having two combatants locked in mutually affecting conflict, the text seems rather more interested in keeping them separate: Beowulf does this; Grendel's Mother does that and that; the battle rages; Beowulf falls; Grendel's Mother draws her knife, etc. Occasionally, their actions seem to be related, for example, where Beowulf falls and Grendel's Mother sits atop him (1544–45). We are tempted to read this as 'because Beowulf has fallen, Grendel's Mother can now gain the upper hand'. The text, however, says '(*þæt*) he came into a fall' and '(*þā*) [Grendel's Mother] sat upon the hall-visitor'.⁹ The Old English text is concerned with what each participant is himself doing, but it is not really much concerned with what each participant is doing to the other or what they (together) are doing. The text collects their actions and places them in conjunction with each other, and the fact that these actions might have some chronological or causal relationship or that the necessities of the physical would place certain restrictions upon their occurrence is not of uppermost importance in the textual configuration they form.

This short battle sequence is typical of the method of presentation of events throughout the poem. Every action calls to itself other actions to which it is significantly linked. This linkage may be immediate proximity in time and space, as much of the material in this battle is. The linkage may be allusive and distant but may share some significant thematic elements, as much of the material linked to Beowulf's final flight with the dragon seems to be. Such linkage

is valuable because it illustrates and extends the significance of the associated actions. In *Beowulf*, as in *Widsith* and *Deor*, the value of any one action is not clear until it is further related to other actions; the more relations it has with other actions, the greater and clearer its significance becomes. The importance of any action lies not so much in the process or manner of its occurrence but in the *fact* of this occurrence and the possibilities this fact has for allowing the action, now fixed, to be related to other facts. Thus, Beowulf's fight with Grendel's Mother is like a string or arrangement of beads or the interwoven strands of a rope, where each bead (or strand) maintains its individuality and the construct of the whole results from the stringing or interweaving. The elements that make up the account can easily be unstrung or unwoven and reconfigured if there is some reason to do so.

The separability of the various elements making up this battle can be seen clearly when this first version is compared to the two retellings of the battle that occur later in the poem. These are both related by Beowulf himself: in the first (1655–66), he retells the battle for Hrothgar, and in the second (2135–41), the exploit is repeated for Hygelac. In neither of these versions are all the details of the struggle repeated.¹⁰ Indeed, Beowulf's accounts exclude the actions of Grendel's Mother. He focuses almost entirely on himself. In the account to Hrothgar, the only mention of Grendel or his mother (1665–66) refers to them as *hūses hyrdas* 'keepers of the house'. Grendel's Mother does not 'act' at all. First-person pronouns (*ic, mē, mec*) occur seven times in the passage. Any reference to the battle itself is obliquely made through terms like *wigge* 'fight' or *weorc* 'deed' (1656) or *gūð* 'battle' (1658). The major portion of this account is given over to how the sword Hrunting, with which Beowulf had been armed for the battle, was unable to assist him (1659–60) and how the battle was finally won by an *ealdsweord* (1664–66), which he discovered in Grendel's Mother's cave. When Beowulf repeats the battle for Hygelac, it is again related in terms of what he alone did:

Ic ðā ðæs wælmes,   þē is wīde cūð,
grimne gryrelīcne   grundhyrde fond.
Þǣr unc hwīle wæs   hand gemǣne;
holm heolfre wēoll,   ond ic hēafde becearf

in ðām [gūð]sele   Grendeles mōdor
ēacnum ecgum;   unsōfte þonan
feorh oðferede;   næs ic fǣge þā gȳt

(2135–41)

I, as is widely known, found
the grim, terrible ground-guardian of the surging-water.
There, awhile, was a hand shared between us;
the sea welled with blood, and I cut off the head
of Grendel's Mother in the battle-hall
with great blades; uneasily thence
[I] bore away life; I was not yet marked [= *fǣge*]

Grendel's Mother is only passively present; her hand is 'shared'
with Beowulf's (2137), and her head is cut off (2138). First-person
pronouns again predominate (*ic* three times, *unc* once). There is
apparently no need for Beowulf to recount the rigors of the strug-
gle because it is already *wīde cūð* 'widely known'. It is clear that
Grendel's Mother's action no longer plays any significant role. It is
Beowulf's victory alone that has continued significance.

Action as fact (or related to fact) has been noted in other as-
pects of Germanic culture. First, of course, is the association of
actions with items. Gifts, swords, armor, ships, etc. play an impor-
tant role in *Beowulf*.[11] What we gain from the literature, which
could only be inferred from the grave finds, is some explicit ac-
count of the significance of these goods. They are usually heir-
looms, items with histories and genealogies. Indeed, it is the great-
est element of value of an heirloom that it carries with it its own
past. In the literature, these significant items have a tendency to get
themselves attached to significant actions. The various versions of
the fight with Grendel's Mother show this clearly. The first account
ends with Beowulf's victory, which has been maneuvered by divine
control; after Grendel's Mother had gained the upper hand

Hæfde ðā forsīðod   sunu Ecgþēowes
under gynne grund,   Gēata cempa,
nemne him heaðobyrne   helpe gefremede,
herenet hearde,—   ond hālig God
gewēold wīgsigor;   wītig Drihten,
rodera Rǣdend   hit on ryht gescēd

ȳðelīce,   syþðan hē eft āstōd.
Geseah ðā on searwum   sigeēadig bil,
ealdsweord eotenisc   ecgum þȳhtig,
wigena weorðmynd;   þæt [wæs] wǣpna cyst,—
būton hit wæs māre   ðonne ǣnig man ōðer
tō beadulāce   ætberan meahte,
gōd ond geatolīc,   gīganta geweorc.
Hē gefēng þā fetelhilt,   freca Scyldinga

(1550–63)

The son of Ecgtheow would have departed
under the wide ground, the warrior of the Geats,
had not his battle-byrnie given him help,
the hard war-net,—and holy God
controlled the battle-victory, the mighty Lord,
the Ruler of the heavens decided it in right[;]
easily then [= *syþðan eft*] he stood up.
There appeared [or 'he saw'] in the midst of things [= *on
    searwum*] a victory-blest sword,
and old, supernatural sword, mighty with blades,
the glory of warriors. That was the choicest of weapons,
except it was greater than any other man
might bear to battle,
good and decorated [= *geatolīc*], the work of giants.
He, the soldier of the Scyldings, grasped the ringed-hilt

and, with it, Beowulf slays Grendel's Mother. Not only is the sword
important to the action, but the amount and kind of description
lavished upon it in the context point toward its special significance.
The battle has, immediately before the presence of the sword is
introduced, been placed within the decision of God, and his domi-
nance of the whole action is made explicit.[12] Indeed, it is his deci-
sion that has made Beowulf the victor. This action, then, is gov-
erned by the controlling forces of the universe beyond the world of
men (and monsters, whose world seems in this text to be most
closely identified with and tangential to man's). The sword Beowulf
finally uses to kill Grendel's Mother has its source and history out-
side man's world, too. It is, among other things, an *ealdsweord
eotenisc*, a *gīganta geweorc*, in fact, *cyst* 'the best, the choicest' of weap-
ons. It is so great, however, that its use lies beyond the means of

most men. The extensive description of the sword may seem to modern readers strange, because very little of it beyond the phrase *ecgum þȳhtig* 'mighty with blades' seems to be of any direct relevance to Beowulf's problems. All of this historical, descriptive material is, however, in the Germanic context, extremely relevant. Hrunting, the sword that he has tried to use against Grendel's Mother and that has failed to bite, is the very best kind of human sword, but it is not sufficient to the greatness of this task. Beowulf is dealing with the greater-than-human, and he needs a corresponding weapon; hence, we are explicitly told of this sword's origin and history. This greatest of swords will provide the greatest action in the hands, naturally, of the greatest of men. As a result, the glory of the deed is shared by Beowulf and the sword.

When Beowulf reports the battle to Hrothgar, he spends little time on Grendel's Mother, as we have already seen. He focuses on God's control of the battle, the appearance and description of the sword, and how it melted in the blood of the battle. After Beowulf's report to Hrothgar concludes (1676), the poem explains how Beowulf gave the hilt to Hrothgar (1677–78), and, in lines 1679–86, the history of the sword continues. The hilt then encourages Hrothgar to speak, but before he does, a further, more extended description of the sword hilt occurs:

> [Hrothgar]   hylt scēawode,
> ealde lāfe,   on ðǣm wæs ōr writen
> fyrngewinnes,   syðþan flōd ofslōh,
> gifen gēotende   gīganta cyn,
> frēcne gefērdon;   þæt wæs fremde þēod
> ēcean Dryhtne;   him þæs endelēan
> þurh wæteres wylm   Waldend sealde.
> Swā wæs on ðǣm scennum   scīran goldes
> þurh rūnstafas   rihte gemearcod,
> geseted ond gesǣd,   hwām þæt sweord geworht,
> īrena cyst   ǣrest wǣre,
> wreoþenhilt ond wyrmfāh

(1687–98)

Hrothgar looked at the hilt,
the old heirloom, on which was written the beginning
of ancient-strife, after the flood slew,
the rushing sea, the race of giants

[who] did terrible things; that was a people foreign
to the eternal Lord; to them, a final-reward
God gave through the whelm of the water.
Thus [it] was on the hilt-guards of bright gold
through runes rightly marked,
set and said, for whom the sword was made
originally, the best of irons
with twisted-hilt and serpent decorated

The description sticks close to early history: for whom the sword was made, what happened to the race of giants, etc. The emphasis on the runes and what they write seems to stress again that the sword carries with it its own history. Now the poem, after the sword's last act, extends this history and associates it with Beowulf's own, which is just beginning to expand throughout the world. Beowulf's exploit gains stature through its association with such a magnificent sword. When Hrothgar does finally speak in response to Beowulf's account of the battle with Grendel's Mother (1700 ff.), he speaks directly of the wide-ranging significance that Beowulf's exploits have now acquired. The whole passage grows and juxtaposes event to event, showing the interrelation between what is occurring and what has occurred.

Beowulf gives the sword hilt to Hrothgar, and Hrothgar reciprocates by giving gifts to Beowulf. These reciprocal actions not only bind Hrothgar to Beowulf and vice versa but continually weave events into each other and actually extend the physical presence of the actions they commemorate.[13] Thus, Hrothgar now has the sword hilt with its value, and Beowulf has the gifts given him, which, as they were given to commemorate his victorious action, also carry the value of the act. When Beowulf returns to the land of the Geats and reports his exploits to Hygelac, the report concentrates on the gifts that have been given to him by Hrothgar. The battle is given in very little detail; Grendel's Mother is hardly present. Also, unlike the speech to Hrothgar earlier in which the sword and its history are greatly emphasized, the sword is only passively mentioned here (2138–40); Beowulf mentions that he cut off Grendel's Mother's head with 'mighty blades'. This report is followed by a lengthy passage (2142–76) in which Hrothgar's gifts to Beowulf are described and distributed by Beowulf to Hygelac and his court. Beowulf recounts the history and importance of each

gift. Additionally, the poem itself often furnishes more infor-
mation about the gifts than could be given by Beowulf himself.
Through the giving and receiving of these gifts, the significance of
Beowulf's victories is extended to the Geats, whose nation now will
share in the greatness they symbolize. It is not surprising to have
learned earlier in the poem (1195-96) that one of the rings in-
cluded among these gifts belonged later to Hygelac and was worn
by him at the time of his death (1202-14).

The association of actions and things also marks the two great
clusters of events that begin and end the poem: the life and death
of Scyld (1-52) and Beowulf's battle with the dragon, his winning
of the dragon's treasure, and his funeral. Although considerably
less space is afforded the activities of Scyld, the account occurring
at the very beginning of the poem has great prominence. The first
half of the account deals with Scyld's rise to glory, and the last half
is descriptive of his funeral. Scyld's accomplishments are briefly
noted: He *meodosetla oftēah,* / *egsode eorlas* (5-6), and that is about it.
Clearly, the emphasis of the account is not on *what* or *how* Scyld
accomplished what he did but on the fact that he did it, that he was
one of the *æpelingas* who *ellen fremedon* 'one of the noble men who
accomplished great things'. That he is worthy of remembrance and
that his *eaferan* 'followers' (in the sense both of descendants and of
retainers) carried on this glory in the world are significant. The
passage culminates in the description of his funeral (26-52), the
most important event of his life, and it is given all the prominence
that the death of a great man requires.

Scyld's ship funeral has not remained unnoticed by commenta-
tors because elements of it parallel closely the known remains of
Germanic burials. The ship is laden with *mādma mænigo* (41) and
mādma fela (36) 'much treasure' and with weapons. When the ship is
loosed from its mooring, it sails out to the open sea:

> Men ne cunnon
> secgan tō sōðe,   selerædende,
> hæleð under heofenum,   hwā þæm hlæste onfēng.
>
> (50-52)

> Men do not know,
> truth to tell, the hall-counselors,
> men under the heavens, who received that cargo.

This funeral exhibits in its details the iconographic elements
found in the myth of Urth's Well, which are common in known
Germanic burials. There is the enclosure, the water, and the or-
thogonal relationship between the well and tree, achieved by the
placing of Scyld's body in the center of the ship, *mærne be mæste* (36),
at the most significant point.[14] In the rite, the ship sails out to dis-
appear from the world of men; Scyld, his treasure, his life will join
with the water. This fact gives line 52 added resonance because
no man on earth has the knowledge to speak of those who would
receive such cargo in the beyond, in that realm of existence to
which Scyld has departed. In addition, there is a strong feeling of
generation in the passage with its emphasis upon Scyld's *eafera.*
Scyld's life and actions are still felt, especially at this moment of
their recitation.

The presence of great treasure in Scyld's funeral ship is con-
trasted to the absolute lack of goods that accompanied Scyld's first
appearance in this world:

> Nalæs hī hine læssan   lācum tēodan,
> þēodgestrēonum,   þon þā dydon,
> þē hine æt frumsceafte   forð onsendon
> ænne ofer ȳðe   umborwesende.
>
> (43-46)

> Not at all did they adorn him with fewer gifts,
> with tribal-treasures, than those [others] did
> who sent him forth at the beginning
> alone over the wave as a child.

Scyld apparently arrived a foundling in the land of the Danes: He
ærest wearð / *fēasceaft funden* (6-7) 'first was found bereft-of-things'.
This voyage out contrasts with his final voyage back. In each case,
the actions of his being 'sent' are governed by verbs the agency of
which is left unspecified, and the whole passage is suffused with the
presence of unseen power. We should not ignore the interesting
semantic and alliterative relationship between the phrases *fēasceaft*
(7) 'without-things' and *æt frumsceafte* (45) 'at the beginning' or,
more literally, 'at [the point] without things prior or before'.[15] Thus,
Scyld was *æt frumsceafte, fēasceaft.* These things are, of course, pos-
sessions, accomplishments, any personal history, everything. Scyld

must make his way entirely on his own and create his own history. His relation to Beowulf in this respect is very close. Beowulf also begins with very little personal history, and he also must create it as he lives his life. The poem presents for us the process by which Beowulf also becomes a great leader and merits an important funeral at the poem's end. This is one of the most important structural elements of the poem: how the man born *fēasceaft* achieves greatness.

Beowulf's death and funeral, the focus of the ending of the poem, are, as we have already noted, much interrupted by 'extraneous' material about Wiglaf, Beowulf's earlier exploits, Hygelac's death, etc. All of this is necessary, however, to illustrate fully the significance of Beowulf's life. The importance of his actions lies not only in what he performs—this is but a small portion of its significance—but in the extent to which these actions touch upon and are touched by other aspects of human activity from earliest times onward. That Grendel and his relatives descend from Cain, for example, seems, at first, a rather awkward insertion of Christian material into a purely Germanic text; yet, as with *Widsith*, such significant factual material is the very stuff from which a Germanic text is woven. Beowulf's life mixes with Cain's and Scyld's: old, important things whose first force was felt *in gēardagum*, in earliest times; they touch the Frisians, the Franks, the Swedes, and so on. Where these significances are finally to go the poem leaves to us.[16]

Beowulf's fight with the dragon is integrally linked with his acquisition of the dragon's treasure, which is repeatedly emphasized throughout the last third of the poem from its first mention (2212) till the end. There is no escaping it, and the modern reader is likely to be a little taken aback by its continually asserting itself into affairs that seem to have very little relation to it. Yet, it is clearly of central importance to the whole last action of the poem. The treasure had been buried by the last survivor of a now-vanished people. Because the people's history is about to come to an end, its acquired *longgestrēon* 'old tribal-treasure' (2240) also ceases to have active history or value. Thus, it is buried and significantly passes from the world of men into a stone barrow:

> Beorh eallgearo
> wunode on wonge   wæterȳðum nēah,
> nīwe be næsse . . .
>
> (2241–43)

> A barrow all prepared
> stood on the shore near the water-waves,
> new on the headland . . .

The treasure is composed of artifacts of the usual kind: *wǣge* 'cup' (2216), *sincfæt* 'cup' (2231, 2300), *sweord* 'sword' (2252, 3048), *fǣted wǣge* 'ornamented cup' (2253), *dryncfæt* 'drinking cup' (2254, 2306), *helm* 'helmet' (2255, 2762), *herepād* 'corselet' (2258), *searogimmas* 'skillfully cut jewels' (2749), *earmbēaga fela* 'many arm-rings' (2763), *bēagas* 'rings' (3105), *segn eallgylden* 'golden banner' (2767), *bunan ond discas* 'cups and dishes' (2775, 3047–48), *orcas* 'pitchers(?)' (3047), much gold and iron. It does not seem wrong to see this collection of items as the grave goods of the vanished race, buried in what would be a cenotaph like Sutton Hoo. The shape of the barrow, the enclosure within stone, and its proximity to the *wæterȳð* 'sea-wave' (water in motion) all suggest the iconography appropriate to burial. Even the coiled, sleeping serpent within the barrow, who eventually strikes up and out when disturbed by the theft of the *sincfæt* 'cup' (2231), is iconographically correct for expressing the surging forth of the past upon the present. The treasure's value is a value of the past, and its burial has explicitly cut it off from the present. Its dragon-guardian, clearly not a part of the everyday world of men, remains apart from the here-and-now only until the affairs of the present and the past collide. Once disturbed, the past surges forward and shapes the present. The *þēow* 'slave' (2223) who steals the cup is unnamed in the text and plays no part in the final events beyond setting them going; he is *unfǣge* 'untouched, unmarked' (2291) by the greatness of things. It is Beowulf, the leader of his people, who becomes involved and who wins the treasure and achieves the greatness of the victory.[17] Beowulf understands clearly that the theft has violated the *ealde riht* 'the old right' (2330), the power and order of the past, and this realization stirs him uncommonly: *brēost innan wēoll / þēostrum geþoncum, swā him geþȳwe ne wæs* 'his breast welled within with dark thoughts, as was not its custom' (2331–32). Thus, Beowulf and the dragon, the present and the past, are drawn together. When Beowulf approaches the barrow

> Him wæs geōmor sefa,
> wæfre ond wælfūs,   wyrd ungemete nēah,
> sē ðone gomelan   grētan sceolde,

sēcean sāwle hord,   sundur gedǣlan
līf wið līce . . .

(2419–23)

　　　　His spirit was resolute,
restless and slaughter-eager, *wyrd* [was] exceedingly near,
which was obliged to greet the aged [man],
to seek his soul's hoard, to rend asunder
life from body . . .

Wyrd, acting through the agency of the dragon, is to acquire the hoard of Beowulf's soul just as Beowulf will acquire the dragon's hoard. Beowulf's 'soul's hoard', his spirit and the great deeds accomplished through it, is connected directly to all of the lengthy 'digressions' that pervade the fight: Hygelac's ill-fated expedition into Friesland, Beowulf's own early exploits, Herebeald's killing of Hæðcyn, the difficulties with the Swedes, and so on. This battle will result in all of these activities attaching to the dragon's hoard when Beowulf wins it, as does the fact of the victory itself. The treasure will pass from the dragon to Beowulf, and it will be reburied with Beowulf when his presence in the world of men ceases.

　　The passage in the text that describes the state of events just after Beowulf arrives at the dragon's barrow offers still more emphasis upon the iconography of the myth of Urth's Well. Beowulf

Geseah ðā be wealle   sē ðe worna fela
gumcystum gōd   gūða gedīge,
hildehlemma,   þonne hnitan fēðan,
sto[n]dan stānbogan,   strēam ūt þonan
brecan of beorge;   wæs þǣre burnan wælm
heaðofȳrum hāt . . .

(2542–47)

Saw there by the wall—he who many
battles survived, good with manly-virtues,
[who had survived] battle-rushes when foot-soldiers fought
　　together—
[he saw] a stone-arch standing [and] a stream out thence
breaking from the barrow; there was whelm of a bourne
hot with battle-fire . . .

Here the water, the surging, the enclosure are all explicitly laid out. The detail of the surging forth of the hot stream (*burnan wælm /*

heaðofȳrum hāt), an apparently extraneous detail, suggests Hvergelmir, the 'seething cauldron', one of the types of the *Urðarbrunnr*, and the presence of the dragon suggests the serpents within it. *Burne* is not a common word in Old English, and this is its only occurrence in the whole of *Beowulf*. Its use here makes it quite clear that this situation is one in which *wyrd* is *ungemete nēah*.

　　Beowulf dies after slaying the dragon, and the poem recounts the details of his funeral and burial. These rework most of the main elements found in Scyld's ship burial at the beginning. Both men are buried with the great treasures indicative of the greatness of their lives' actions; both return to water (Scyld to his ship, Beowulf to his barrow on *Hronesnæs* 'the whale's headland'). This disappearance from the world of men into water (or into some close conjunction with water) carries the special significance of the passage of events in this world into the realm beyond, which exerts great force upon the direction of events here. Such events are not limited to men alone or to the rituals surrounding funerals. After Beowulf has slain the dragon, for example, his men

　　　　　　dracan ēc scufun,
wyrm ofer weallclif,   lēton wēg niman,
flōd fæðmian   frætwa hyrde.

(3131–33)

　　　　　　also shoved the dragon,
the serpent over the cliff-wall, let the current take,
the flood enfold the guardian of the treasure.

Things also disappear. The treasure won through Beowulf's victory over the dragon is said to *meltan mid þām mōdigan* 'melt with the great-man' (3011) on his funeral pyre before being buried in the barrow. Melting plays a significant part in the other great actions of the poem.[18] The sword with which Beowulf has dispatched Grendel's Mother 'melts' after the action (1605–15). The dragon slain in the lay of Sigemund also melts: *wyrm hāt gemealt* (897). Because disappearance into water or dissolving into liquid represents the dominant influence upon man's affairs by the powers beyond, it adds an important dimension to Beowulf's descent into the mere to seek out Grendel's Mother (1442 ff.). The mere itself had been significantly described earlier:

Þǣr mæg nihta gehwǣm nīðwundor sēon,
fȳr on flōde.   Nō þæs frōd leofað
gumena bearna,   þæt þone grund wite.

.   .   .   .

Þonon ȳðgeblond   up āstīgeð
won tō wolcnum,   þonne wind styreþ
lāð gewidru,   oð þæt lyft drysmaþ,
roderas rēotað.

<div align="right">(1365–76)</div>

There may one see each night a fearful-wonder,
fire in the water. No man lives so wise
among the sons of men who knows that depth [= grund]

.   .   .   .

Thence the wave-tossing rises up
dark to the skies, when the wind stirs
bad weather, until the air becomes gloomy,
the heavens weep.

The welling fire-water of the mere seethes with serpents:

Gesāwon ðā æfter wætere   wyrmcynnes fela,
sellice sǣdracan   sund cunnian,
swylce on næshleoðum   nicras licgean,
ðā on undernmǣl   oft bewitigað
sorhfulne sīð   on seglrāde,
wyrmas ond wildēor.

<div align="right">(1425–30)</div>

They saw in the water many of the serpent-kind,
wondrous sea-dragons exploring the waters,
such nicors as lie on the headlands,
who, in the mornings, often accomplish
sorrowful deeds on the sail-road,
serpents and wild-beasts.

This scene is as fraught with the elements of significant action as
that of the dragon's barrow already described.

Closely related to the elements presented above are those sur-
rounding the repeated acts of swimming in the poem. It is made
clear from early in the poem (506 ff.) that Beowulf is a proficient
swimmer.[19] From its first mention in the poem, the Breca contest, to

the last, Beowulf's escape from Friesland, swimming accompanies
great actions. In the first, we find the pervasive sea beasts attempt-
ing to drag Beowulf permanently into their realm:

Swā mec gelōme   lāðgetēonan
þrēatedon þearle.   Ic him þēnode
dēoran sweorde,   swā hit gedēfe wæs.

<div align="right">(559–61)</div>

Thus it happened to me that the evil-accomplishers
harassed [me] severely. I served them
with a precious sword, as it was fitting.

In the last episode, Beowulf saves not only his own life but the
honor of his compatriots who have fallen in battle:

Þonan Bīowulf cōm
sylfes cræfte,   sundnytte drēah;
hæfde him on earme   (āna) þrītig
hildegeatwa,   þā hē tō holme (st)āg.

<div align="right">(2359–62)</div>

Thence Beowulf came
by his own skill bearing himself [up] by means of the water;
he had on his arm alone thirty
pieces of war-armor when he stepped to the water.

His ability to swim, to overcome the moment of great activity, al-
lows him to escape with the armor of his companions, to keep it
from plunder, and to save for the Geats the glory it represents
(Clark 1965a).

Actions and things are further significantly linked in the poem
through speech. Indeed, it is the relation between actions and
things together and the act of speech that is most clearly expressed
by the Germanic poem. Speech is the means by which the fact of
any action is made explicit and the way in which its continuing
presence is assured. We have sensed this factual nature of the act of
speaking already in both Widsith and Deor. Speech plays a likewise
important role in Beowulf. There seem to be at least two important
kinds of 'fact-establishing' speech utilized in the poem: the bēot or
gilp (speech that binds the present to the past) and, for want of a
better term, the 'account' (speech by which the past is brought for-
ward into the present).[20] The 'account' is best exemplified by the

form of most Germanic poems themselves: *Widsith* and *Deor* are good examples, so are most other Old English 'historical' poems, and so is the Norse Edda. There are within *Beowulf* a number of these set 'accounts': the lay of Sigemund, for example, and the battle at Finnsburg. Having looked at two of these in some detail, we know pretty well what they are like. The other kind of speech, the *bēot* or *gilp*, differs in significant ways from the account. 'The words *gylpword* and *beotword* . . . seem to mean the same thing; but it is probable that *gielp*- stresses the glory of the adventure, something to boast of, whereas *beot*- stresses the fact that it is a promise, a vow. Both words with their derivatives recur again and again . . . [in] heroic poetry' (Einarsson 1934:976).[21] The *bēot* places its 'promise' of action within a closely defined course of events from which the speaker will be unable to extricate himself without showing himself to be a fool or a coward. Thus, the utterer of the *bēot* places himself at the confluence of words and deeds; the outcome is the direct association and involvement of the speaker in the unity of the two where the deed is found to be at one with the *bēotword*. Otherwise, he will be at variance with the course of events implying either his inability to understand the course of events (proving him to be a fool) or his inability to act honorably within it (proving him to be a coward). Thus, the *bēot* links foreseeable events with the words representative of them. In the *bēot* the word precedes events and statements become facts; in the 'account', on the other hand, the actions precede the words; however, in both the act of speaking and the fact of occurrence are linked.

The most important instances of both the account and the *bēot* in *Beowulf* occur in conjunction with the *symbel*, the ritual feast, in the poem (but, it needs to be stressed, not only there). A *symbel* proceeds first to whatever speaking is central to the occasion. The speech making takes the form of either *bēot* or 'account' or both (most frequently both). Relevant events from the past are reiterated and, through their being spoken, create a context in which advice or counsel can be given to those making the *bēot*. Actions of the past are usually sung by the scop.[22] The first *symbel* in the poem provides a good example. Beowulf and his men arrive at Heorot while Hrothgar and his men are at *symbel*. When the Geats are admitted to the hall, Beowulf speaks:

Bēowulf maðelode   —on him byrne scān,
searonet seowed   smiþes orþancum—:

'Wæs þū, Hrōðgār, hāl!   Ic eom Higelāces
mǣg ond magoðegn;   hæbbe ic mǣrða fela
ongunnen on geogoþe . . .'

(405–9)

Beowulf spoke—on him his byrnie shone,
the sown, carefully-worked net, by the skill of the smith—
'Be thou hale, Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's
kinsman and young-retainer; I have many glorious-deeds
undertaken in youth . . .'

The speech is in every way typical, even to Beowulf's reference to himself as *Higelāces mǣg* 'Hygelac's kinsman' and his immediate progression to the *mǣrða fela* 'the glorious-deeds' he has already undertaken. Such epithets as *Higelāces mǣg* (or *bearn Ecgþēowes* 'Ecgtheow's son') are common, more common than the individuals' proper names in the poem. They establish important social and legal relationships or linear, historical relationships, which are of extreme importance in extending the scope of the poem. The first things Beowulf speaks of are these relationships. First, his position as a kinsman of Hygelac is established; then, he proceeds to establish his historical credentials by telling of the deeds he has already undertaken.[23] This having been done, he can better and more credibly announce his intentions:

ic mid grāpe sceal
fōn wið fēonde   ond ymb feorh sacan,
lāð wið lāþum;   ðær gelȳfan sceal
Dryhtnes dōme   sē þe hine dēað nimeð.
Wēn' ic þæt hē wille,   gif hē wealdan mōt,
in þǣm gūðsele   Gēotena lēode
etan unforhte,   swā hē oft dyde,
mægen Hrēðmanna.   Nā þū mīnne þearft
hafalan hȳdan,   ac hē mē habban wile
d[r]ēore fāhne,   gif mec dēað nimeð

(438–47)

I oblige myself with grip
to fight with the fiend [Grendel] and fight for my life,
hate against hate; there I must trust
in God's judgment as to the one whom death takes.
I believe that [Grendel] will (if he can overcome

the man of the Geats in the battle-house)
eat fearlessly (as he has often done)
the powerful Hrethman. Nor need you my
head hide, but he will have me
stained with blood, if death takes me

The passage lays out clearly the exact nature of the either/or posi-
tion into which Beowulf is placing himself: him or me; there is no
escape clause, no loophole that will allow Beowulf to emerge from
this battle neither victorious nor dead, without becoming known as
a fool or a coward. All hear these words; all know what the possible
outcomes can be. The obliging fixity of the *bēot* is here established
through the repeated use of *sculan* 'shall, be obliged to' in the pas-
sage. This allows Beowulf to control his role in the situation to
some degree. The speech, however, ends later: *Gǣð ā wyrd swā hīo
scel* 'Wyrd goes always as it is obliged to' (455). The speech ulti-
mately links Beowulf's obligations to the power of *wyrd* and its obli-
gation to go *ā . . . swā hīo scel* 'ever as it must'. It is the nature of any
bēot to place its stated action directly into this flow.

Hrothgar replies immediately (456–90). He speaks first of
Beowulf's father, Ecgtheow, whose own meager history is here ex-
panded. Through this, Beowulf's history and credibility likewise
expand. Then, Hrothgar speaks of himself, of how his past and
that of Beowulf's father have been interwoven. Now, again, it is
interwoven with Beowulf's through Beowulf's arrival. Only after all
this does Hrothgar speak of Grendel and the difficulties he has
caused the Danes. He makes no explicit reference to Beowulf's *bēot*,
but he has accepted it; he concludes:

Site nū tō symle   ond onsǣl meoto,
sigehrēð secgum,   swā þīn sefa hwette.

(489–90)

Sit now at the *symbel*, and let loose your thoughts,
[speak of the] glory of men, as your spirit encourages.

The speeches of Beowulf and Hrothgar are sealed, as it were,
by the orderly drinking that follows. As the drinks and drinking
cups are passed, *Scop hwīlum sang / hādor on Heorote* (496–97) 'All
the while, the scop sang bright in Heorot'. The context does not
make clear what the scop sings, but it is surely to be some account
of great actions and not unlike *Widsith* and *Deor* in its structure.

The *symbel* continues with Unferth's challenge to Beowulf's
abilities (499–528) and Beowulf's reply describing the swimming
contest with Breca (529–601). This speech ends with Beowulf re-
iterating his *bēot* and again pledging himself to do battle with
Grendel (601–6). After this, Wealhtheow arrives and passes the
mead cup eventually to Beowulf:

Hē þæt ful geþeah,
wælrēow wiga   at Wealhþēon,
ond þā gyddode   gūþe gefȳsed

(628–30)

He partook of the cup,
the battle-fierce warrior, from Wealhtheow,
and so spoke ready for battle

Beowulf speaks and again repeats his resolve to slay Grendel or be
killed in the effort.

The *symbel* is followed by the battle of Grendel and Beowulf,
which it assures. The pattern of linkage between words, things, and
actions is further extended through this battle. It takes place within
Hrothgar's mead-hall, in which the partaking of the magical liquid
was accomplished. Indeed, it is with respect to enclosures of similar
type that all of Beowulf's great battles occur: this one in Hrothgar's
mead-hall, the second in the underwater cave of Grendel's Mother,
and the third at the *beorh* of the dragon, with its hot, welling
bourne. Each battle is carefully preceded by an extended *bēot*. In
these significant locations, the great actions previously established
through words take place most auspiciously. Grendel, for his part,
will attempt to pull his adversary into his own existence, to make
him disappear from the world of men, from the present. Grendel
will try to eat, to swallow up Beowulf as he has done so many times
before with other adversaries. In this sense, Grendel is closely asso-
ciated with the other 'monsters' of the poem; they all act as agents
of the realm beyond the ordinary world of men. The sea monsters,
for example, who attack Beowulf in the swimming contest with
Breca,

Næs hīe ðǣre fylle   gefēan hæfdon,
mānfordǣdlan,   þæt hīe mē þēgon,
symbel ymbsǣton   sǣgrunde nēah

(562–64)

Not at all had they there the pleasure of their fill,
the wicked-destroyers, partaking of me,
seated at *symbel* near the sea-bottom

In this parody *symbel* of the sea monsters occurs the only instance in
the poem of eating with respect to this ritual; however, it is proper
here, for the sea monsters are agents of the power of existence
beyond this world. They are the means by which men leave this
world and enter that which lies beyond it. Thus, these monsters
would literally devour the man. Where the men pledge, the mon-
sters eat. Likewise, Grendel's activities in the mead-hall are 'actual'
in this sense, and, bestial as they seem, they are closely linked to the
symbel's ritual, which is recalled during the battle. The struggle is
called an *ealu-scerwen* 'ale-dispensing' or 'ale-drinking':

Dryhtsele dynede;   Denum eallum wearð,
ceasterbūendum,   cēnra gehwylcum,
eorlum ealuscerwen.

(767–69)

The noble-hall dinned; to all the Danes there was,
to the town-dwellers, to each of the brave,
to the men, an ale-drinking.[24]

The earlier *bēot* has so established these actions that the battle now
becomes itself the equivalent of the earlier-performed ritual, and
the Danes, who were present at the *bēot* and its ale-drinking, now
take part in the battle as well.

The battle ends with Beowulf's victory; Grendel receives his
death wound and retreats, leaving his arm and shoulder:

Hæfde Ēast-Denum
Gēatmecga lēod   gilp gelǣsted

.   .   .   .

Þæt wæs tācen sweotol,
syþðan hildedēor   hond ālegde,
earm ond eaxle   —þǣr wæs eal geador
Grendles grāpe—   under gēapne hr(ōf).

(828–36)

To the East-Danes had
the man of the Geatish-tribe made good his gilp

.   .   .   .

It was a sweet thing,
when the battle-brave [one] lay down
the arm and shoulder—there was all together
Grendel's grip—under the gabled roof.

The actions of the *bēot* are now fact; it has been brought about as
Beowulf spoke it. The fact of the occurrence is made known
through the presence of the 'things' of Grendel, the arm and shoul-
der, and these have been brought within the enclosure of the hall
under gēapne hrōf, within the known, factual portion of reality.
Beowulf's accomplishing actions too have become part of this real-
ity, part of the past. The deed is likewise reworded now, this time in
an 'account':

Ðǣr wæs Bēowulfes
mǣrðo mǣned;   monig oft gecwæð,
þætte sūð nē norð   be sǣm twēonum
ofer eormengrund   ōþer nǣnig
under swegles begong   sēlra nǣre
rondhæbbendra,   rīces wyrðra.—

(856–61)

There was Beowulf's
glory related; many said often
that south nor north by the two seas,
over the spacious-earth, nor any[where]
under the expanse of the heaven was a better
shield-bearer, or worthier of a kingdom.

More meaningfully, when the *symbel* that celebrates Beowulf's vic-
tory begins, in addition to the drinking of the mead and the ritual
giving of gifts (things) associated with the action, the scop again
sings. This time we know what it is—the lay of Sigemund—but it
begins:

Hwīlum cyninges þegn,
guma gilphlæden,   gidda gemyndig,
sē ðe ealfela   ealdgesegena
worn gemunde,   word ōþer fand
sōðe gebunden;   secg eft ongan
sīð Bēowulfes   snyttrum styrian,

ond on spēd wrecan   spel gerāde,
wordum wrixlan . . .

                                                        (867–74)

            The while a thane of the king
a *gilp*-laden man, mindful of speeches,
who, of all of the old-speakings,
a great many kept in mind, [he] found additional words
bound with truth; this man then undertook
to stir up through [his] craft the deed of Beowulf
and to create with skill a careful account [= *spel*],
to mingle the words . . .

Now, for the first time, Beowulf becomes part of the great past kept
and sung by the scop. The fabric of his own greatness has now
begun to be woven in earnest. The poem continues to accumulate
the actions of Beowulf as they associate themselves with other great
actions. The poem as we have it becomes the container of Beo-
wulf's life, his actions, and the actions of others whose lives his
touches in a significant way. Thus, the end of the poem leaves the
Geats singing his praises:

cwædon þæt hē wǣre   wyruldcyning[a]
manna mildust   ond mon(ðw)ǣrust,
lēodum līðost   ond lofgeornost.

                                                        (3180–82)

they said he was of the world-kings
of men the kindest and most noble,
most gentle to his people and most praise eager.[25]

Action,
Space, and
Time
—
IV

HE Germanic cosmos is con-
figured by the world tree and the wells at its base. The multiplicity
of worlds within the tree and the three wells, into which the tree's
roots reach, reduce to one structure of one tree, Yggdrasil, with its
roots in one well, the *Urðarbrunnr*, the Well of Urth. The worlds of
men, gods, and other beings are directly expressed by the tree.
Ultimately, however, all significant worldly concerns (concerns of
the tree) are related to and structured by that part of the cosmos
configured by the well, which expresses that portion of universal
reality lying beyond the direct reach or comprehension of worldly,
tree-related beings, be they men, gods, or others. The iconography
of tree and well and its various mythic expressions show clearly
how the tree and well mutually interact and support each other.
The actions of men, gods, and other beings layer and fill the well,
and these layering strata themselves structure and influence the
affairs of men. This influence and structure not only is found in the
mythic expression of the Eddas but is reflected importantly in
many other aspects of Germanic culture: in its artifacts, in its ritu-
als, in its social and legal structure, and in the culture's own vision
of itself as it is presented in literature. The spiritual force that holds
together in tension the elements of well and tree is expressed fun-
damentally in all aspects of the culture. Further, it seems likely both
from the literature and from the derivation of the name *Urth* itself
that the same force might have significant shaping power not only
in conceptions of time and space but also in the very nature of the
common Germanic language.

Indeed, it is speech that renders explicit the continuing junc-
ture of tree and well. Here, daily, the Norns speak the *ørlǫg*:
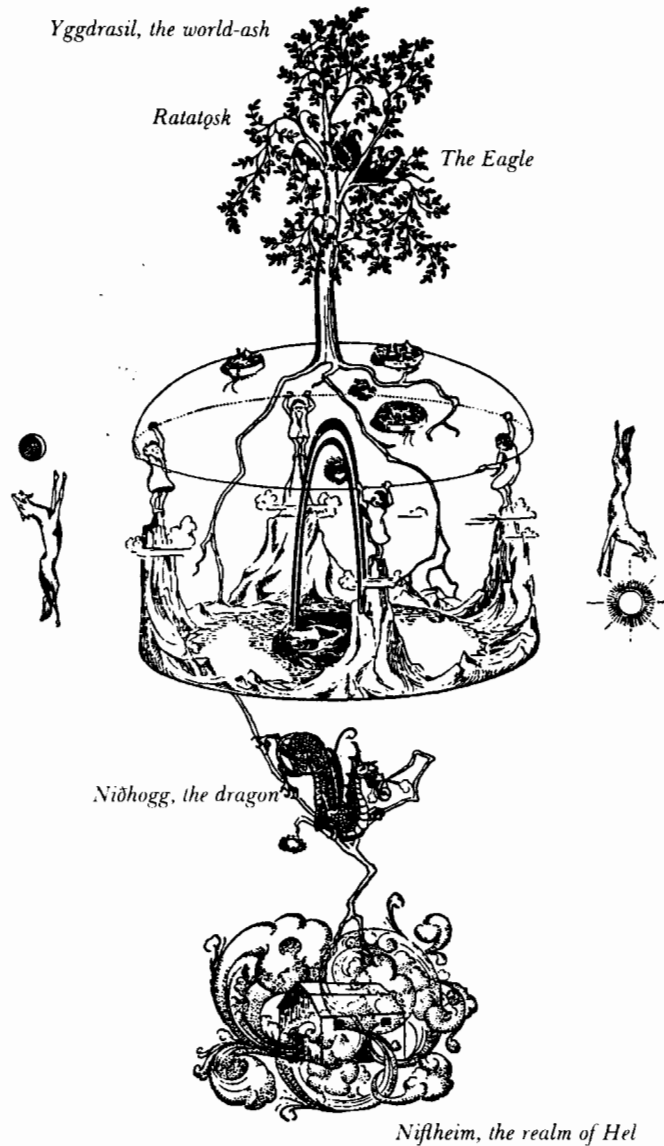
Diagram illustrating Norse cosmography

Figure 1

Figure 2
The root in heaven
and over Urth's Well.

The root over Ginnungagap
and over Mímir's Well.

The root over Niflheim,
the lower world, and
over Hvergelmir.

Yggdrasil's trunk.

þær lǫg lǫgðo,   þær líf kuro
alda bornom,   ørlǫg seggia.

(Vǫluspá 20)

Laws they made there,   and life allotted
To the sons of men,   and set their fates.

(Bellows 1926:9)

The laying down of this speech, as we have seen, structures the events of all worlds. Here also the gods themselves assemble:

Þriðja rót asksins stendr á himni, ok undir þeiri rót er brunnr sá, er mjök er heilagr, er heitir Urðarbrunnr; þar eigu goðin dómstað sinn. (Gylfaginning 15:31)

The third root of the Ash stands in heaven; and under that root is the well which is very holy, that is called the Well of Urdr; there the gods hold their tribunal. (Brodeur 1929:27–28)

They hold their tribunal in as close a conjunction as is possible with the Norns. The Norns' speech (or, as has been suggested, the speech of Urth) operates within the worlds of the tree, giving them sustenance and drawing to the well those actions to be laid within its enclosure. This act of speech and, by extension, all acts of speech render apparent the universal tensions expressed through the related dichotomies of, respectively, well/tree, within/without, layered order/chaos, and past/present. These ultimately express a related opposition: fact/process. Thus, well-within-layered-fact-past stands in a significantly tense relationship to tree-without-

chaotic-process-present. The gap between these is bridged and rendered real through the act of speech, through language.[1]
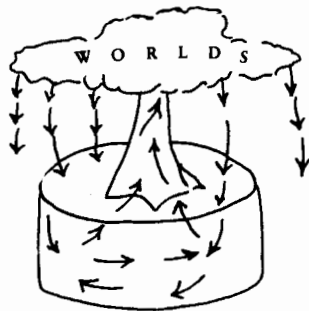
This cosmic structure expresses much about the nature of the time–space continuum in which events occur, and it is important to try to discover how this continuum might be configured. Most attempts to do this have come to grief not, it would seem, because the essential structure has not been seen but because too much of the repeated incidental detail has not been eliminated. Thus, figure 1, reproduced from Gordon (1957:196), presents a typical but by no means exhaustive accounting of many of the most striking details of the Norse cosmos. It remains, however, essentially detail and readily demonstrates the kinds of problems that most graphic representations express. Figure 2, adapted from Rydberg (1906:402), is more schematic, less detailed, but still does not eliminate the multiplicity of roots and wells.[2] Assuming that the many wells are but multiple aspects of a single well, we can reduce both of these figures to one that is something like the plant motif already explained in essay 1. Figure 3, simpler than figure 1, does not ignore the essential structural elements to be expressed. Here the tree rises from the well, and its branches, containing all created worlds, overspread it. The actions of these worlds fall as dew, some into the well and some outside it. Those actions falling within form the layered, seething, active strata within the well. These create a source of power, which, in turn, returns through the root to the upper portion of the tree. This sequence of interrelated actions can be further abstracted to figure 4, which is simpler than figure 2. This gives us the most fundamental account of the structure of the Germanic cosmos. Above the horizontal lie the created worlds; below it lies the enclosed and structured portion of the universe. Anything

else, which is neither above nor within the well, is lost. Ultimately, it is of no significance to anything or anybody created. Through the horizontal pass the vertical, mutually opposite lines of power and sustenance. These verticals represent all actions in and relating to created space: Those descending (A, B, and D) have their immediate origin in the created worlds of the tree; those ascending (C and E) come only from the well; their source is within the layered strata of the well. This source cannot be known directly by any created being, god or man. Ascending lines of force are well-derived and are never lost; these lines return to the well as rising line C connects with D and returns; line E, not represented as connecting, does eventually make some significant connection and will ultimately return to the well. Descending lines, tree-derived lines, may be of several kinds: First, they may be of type D, which is directly contingent upon and structured clearly by the ascending line C; second, they may be of type B, also falling within the well, yet with no *apparent* well-derived contingency; or, third, they may be of type A, which has no significance at all beyond the ephemeral immediate.

These three kinds of actions can be seen operating in *Beowulf*. Actions of type D are those that have great, obvious significance for both men living and all of the actions of their own and other men's pasts; in such actions, the presence of the past is direct and unremittingly present in the whole context of events, as in the moment before Beowulf fights with the hoard-guarding dragon:

> Him wæs geōmor sefa,
> wæfre ond wælfūs,   wyrd ungemete nēah,
> sē ðone gomelan   grētan sceolde,
> sēcean sāwle hord . . .

> (2419–22)

Figure 4
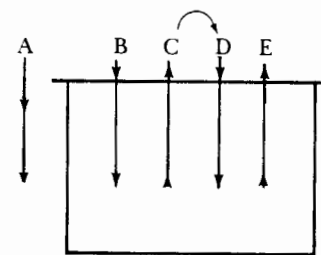
Figure 5
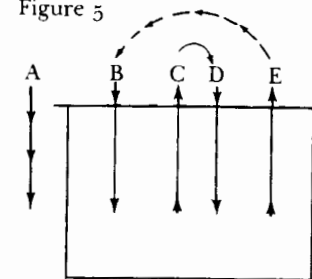
His spirit was resolute,
restless and slaughter-eager, *wyrd* [was] exceedingly near,
which was obliged to greet the aged [man],
to seek his soul's hoard . . .

There is no question at all about the significance of this moment, and the explicit reference to the exceedingly close presence of *wyrd* makes this plain. *Wyrd*, acting as point *C*, touches and controls Beowulf's actions (point *D*) and ultimately brings them within the realm of the power of the universe within the well. Actions of type *B*, those of universal significance without immediate obvious contingency are less easy to find, but we can see the growth of power and influence of Scyld Scefing, who began his life with nothing and ended it with everything (4–52), as, at least, beginning as a kind of type-*B* action. As we have seen, Beowulf's own life is a series of similarly developing actions. Actions of type *A*, insignificant activities, are unrecorded; we can assume that Beowulf's apparently uneventful, fifty-year rule, after his adventures in the land of the Danes and before his fight with the dragon (2207–10), was filled with activity of type *A*. Because men live above the horizontal of figure 4, they can never be sure that an event has fallen within or without the enclosure below. They can, however, be sure that when something obviously important does occur its significance no longer remains solely above the horizontal, within the created worlds of the tree.

It seems clear that, as a cosmic representation, figure 4 is not entirely accurate; in fact, it represents a scheme of events only as they may be seen or comprehended by beings of the worlds of the tree. From this point of view, activities of types *A* and *B* are immediately indistinguishable—a problem for all created beings. Activity of type *B* seems to have its provenance within the tree. Likewise, activity of type *E* seems to go nowhere and to attach to nothing. This, surely, cannot be the case. Thus, the three kinds of actions *D* (significant, past-controlled), *B* (significant but not apparently or immediately past-controlled), and *A* (insignificant) probably reduce to simply two: *D* and *A*, significant and insignificant, respectively. Thus, there are ultimately no type-*B* or type-*E* actions. Man's ability to produce significant events is always contingent upon the operating presence of the past, even though it is not always obviously

or clearly there. We can see that the apparently inauspicious beginnings of both Scyld and Beowulf are themselves structured by *wyrd*, albeit in an unobvious, tacit fashion. The scheme of figure 4 could be more realistically constructed as figure 5. Here, no upward-moving force lacks connection with a downward-moving one: All events of the past return to it either directly and obviously, as in *C*→*D*, or more tangentially, as in *E* --→*B*. Action *A* remains insignificant. Figure 4, then, gives us the apparent reality of the worlds of the tree alone; figure 5 provides a fuller cosmic structure as perceived from the reality of the realm of the well.

The configuration of the cosmos divides into two distinct realms, that of the tree and that of the well. These are distinct in more ways than in their immediately perceptible shapes alone. Men live within the realm of the tree, which configures what we now might call 'created' reality. It is a realm of things, objects, their relations and their actions. It is largely and most obviously physical and real in a three-dimensional sense. All aspects of it become known first and most clearly by their created shapes and by the ways in which those shapes move and interact. It is a realm of actions, not motives; a realm of physical realities, not abstractions.

The realm of the well is different. That portion of the cosmos that it configures includes everything that exists within the realm of the tree except those aspects of tree-configured three-dimensionality that have no significance beyond the ephemeral present of that reality (that is, activity of type *A*, as defined above). Additionally, it contains other portions of the cosmos to which access is denied to the beings whose present existence is restricted to the realm of the tree. Thus, men do not know directly anything of the nature of the reality of the well. It is clear, though, that it is, in opposition to tree-oriented reality, conceptual rather than physical, abstract rather than three-dimensionally real. Within the well, the interrelations among actions rather than actions themselves are of paramount importance; here, within the realm of the well, are the motives and reasons for and the final causes of the acts that occur within the realm of the tree. Within the well, the power of all events past still surges, writhes, twists, whelms, and weaves the whole of this greater reality 'out'.

Men refer to both realms with their language. Because men's language must, of necessity, manifest itself within the realm of the

tree, it is impossible for any direct statement to be made about the realm of the well. The figural and conceptual quality of language makes approximations to such statements possible, however. Language can figure events in such a way that their more abstract rather than their merely physical relations are paramount. The truth of such statements lies in the closeness, the conceptual 'nearness', with which they embody relations beyond the merely present.

Within the realm of the tree are many worlds. The world of men is not unique; there are also the worlds of animals, the world of giants, the world of gods (perhaps several of these), the worlds of monsters, and so on. Given such a proliferation, it would be unwise to assume that a totaling up of men's knowledge of these worlds would in any essential way encompass the whole of the realm of the tree. Indeed, the Germanic way of thinking seems to have a priori assumed that there was far more within the realm of the tree than man had so far known and that more might at any moment be discovered. This process of 'discovery' was itself a powerful impetus among Germanic peoples to know, acquire, and find out as much as might be known within the realm of created existence. Because all of these worlds are capable of interacting with each other—gods with men, men with monsters, gods with giants, animals with men and gods, etc.—the possibilities for inter-action are many. Germanic story and myth account for many of these. What is the significance of such interaction, as it were a hori-zontal interaction ($\leftrightarrow$) within the branches of the tree rather than the vertical interactions ($\updownarrow$) presented by figure 4? From the dis-cussion above, we would assume there to be relatively little. In one sense, this is true.

Interactions among worlds are quite limited; even though Beowulf does battle with three centrally important creatures from portions of the universe quite separate from the everyday world of men, these encounters in the poem are subordinated to more im-mediate affairs relating to and stemming from the world in which Beowulf actually lives and over which he eventually rules. We are not told nor are we concerned with any changes in the larger order of the realm of the tree that the elimination of Grendel and his mother may portend; the poem is not concerned with the triumph of the world of men over the world of monsters. In *Grettissaga*, the encounter between Grettir and the undead spirit Glam does not

significantly alter the relationship of world with world; Grettir kills Glam and in so doing is cursed and haunted, but the significance of the curse plays itself out in Grettir's further interaction with other men. Even the conflict between the Æsir and Vanir, although it is frequently mentioned in Norse literature, is never presented cen-trally, and we are unsure of its ultimate significance. Although the Edda gives us some account of the relations between gods and men, the usual pattern of the text is to have men acting within their world and gods within theirs. The interaction is small, usually pro-ducing epigrammatic pieces of wisdom learned by analogy or ex-ample. What is significant in the affairs of the gods is quite prob-ably significant in the affairs of men, too, as the same universal powers dominate both.

This kind of 'horizontal' knowing, this learning of the other portions of the realm of the tree, gains its significance by providing information or knowledge that might signify something of import about the other realm, the realm of the well. It seems clear from all of the Germanic material we still have access to that no one within any 'created' world knew of the realm of the well fully. This is true even of the world of the gods, who, as any Germanic man would have owned, knew more than men did but who still failed of certain or final knowledge. Even Odin, who had learned more than any other 'created' being, still wanted more knowledge, needed more understanding of that portion of reality beyond even his grasp. Nor was it unlikely, to pose a hypothetical case, that some other 'created' being might know more than Odin himself; this possibility seems always to lie just below the surface of all of those curious disguised meetings of Odin with men, or with other gods, or with animals. Created reality clearly never suffices fully of knowing.[3]

The relationship among the various worlds of the realm of the tree is an uncertain if not an uneasy one. It seems clear that, gener-ally, there is access from one world to another. Thus, men may interact with animals and, to some degree, with gods, etc. With respect to the two worlds just mentioned, man's world seems to have greater access to the world of animals than it has to the world of gods. Thus, men have living closely with them in their own world a number of animals, what we would call domesticated ones, and a number of others—perhaps horses might belong here—who live in close proximity to men but whose lives are somewhat more

distant. The gods, on the other hand, seem to have a closer relation to horses, and to birds and wolves, than do men. The worlds of men and gods likewise intersect: Men learn from gods; gods learn from men. It seems that gods learn more from men than men learn from gods, but this is uncertain. The myths and stories tell us what men learn, but what the gods learn is largely hidden from men. All this learning implies that there is more to be learned, and it hints at other relations beyond those of which men already know.

The process of 'learning' just described is a peculiar one. Learning and knowledge were not by any means passive activities for the Germanic people. Because acquiring knowledge and acquiring things were so integrally related conceptually, such acquisition is often described and carried out in what seems to us to be a rather violent and disorderly way. Rape and pillage, reason and passion, seem not to have been widely different in impulse or process for these people. Thus, the descriptions of 'interchange' among worlds are themselves more often than not told in or accompanied by terms of power, domination, and, ultimately, destruction. The sharing of information (and 'sharing' is surely the wrong term here) is most often a combat in which the 'concept' or 'knowledge' is contended, wrestled for, and finally won in a purely physical sense. It is clear also in the materials we have access to that the reasons why a particular act of violence or learning is committed are seldom if ever given: Gods come disguised among men and sit and speak with them. Why? We do not know this. It is that which gods do. Why do the dead sometimes walk among the living? We do not know. It is what some dead do. Men fight with monsters because that is what the configured relation between the world of men and that of monsters is like. Of most significance in all of these encounters is that the learning provided by the interchange teaches something of the 'appropriate' relation among worlds, that is, how men are supposed to act in such circumstances. The encounter, then, has the force of an example.

The fact that some of these interactions among worlds seem constructive and some destructive, by our contemporary reasoning, seems to have had little import for the early Germanic people. That the realm of the tree was a partial and insubstantial realm was simply an intellectual and conceptual given. The cosmos, of which it is but part, has its structure elsewhere as the realm of the well

works daily to bring more and more of the realm of the tree into itself. Men do what they do, as do gods and animals and monsters, etc. At best, men learn something more of that greater reality of which the realm of the tree is but a part. The more significant the interaction of world with world, the more it will imply of those forces that configure all action, the source and goal of all acts. In doing what is ultimately 'right', that is, that which derives its power and force from the structure of the well, man acts to the 'right' end, to that one cosmic moment in which tree and well unite and the relations among and structure of all things are clarified.

When worlds collide, the importance of the collision lies largely in the vertical ($\updownarrow$) significance or depth of past that the collision involves. Indeed, such interaction among created worlds implies a wider involvement of the past in the affairs of all tree-related worlds: not in the greater range of horizontal ($\leftrightarrow$) involvement within the tree but in a more forceful involvement of well-derived vertical force. Thus, the victory of Beowulf over Grendel initiates a wide-ranging interweaving of Beowulf's own history and that of the Geats with the whole biblical account of the race of Cain (102–14) and, beyond that, with the genealogy of the Danes. This significance is extended through the following encounter of Beowulf with Grendel's Mother. These two separate battles manage to unite and reexpress a substantial portion of the past, placing all of these past events in mutually informing, tangential relationships with each other. The idea of the battle itself, whether it be a physical one or one of wits, iconographically represents this interaction of separate pasts by means of separate activities; its greatest importance lies here, in the vertical lines of force that reach up and out of the past. In their interrelationship lies the real contention, and in their final configuration the real significance. Thus, strangely enough, who wins, in our sense, is of little value because the past is always the winner; it is the factual nature of having fought, which changes the configuration of everything, that men need to know of.

The impulse in Germanic culture to extend the significance of any human event by showing it in conjunction with other events, human and otherwise, and ultimately with related events from beyond the created worlds is great. It is not surprising that Beowulf's greatest exploits go beyond merely human ones. In Germanic liter-

ature and myth, the dragon most obviously suggests not only the interrelation of men's world with those tangential to it but also the reality and presence of the past. Níthhogg lies within Hvergelmir, one of the types of the well of the past. All dragons coil and layer and, as with Beowulf's adversary, fly up and out upon the present when the configuration of the past is to be rearranged. The hoard-guarding dragon of *Beowulf* is typical. Significant actions and the presence of dragons, especially as they illustrate activities in opposition, are regularly linked. The figure died hard. It makes itself felt in the horrors of the depredations in A.D. 793 of the Vikings in Northumbria as reported in the Laud Manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

> Her wæron reðe forebecna cumene ofer Norðanhymbra land. ⁊ þ folc earmlice bregdon; þ wæron ormete lig ræscas, ⁊ wæron ge seoweṅe fyrene dracan on þam lyfte fleogende. (Plummer and Earle 1892:55)

> Here were fierce fore-beacons come over the land of Northumbria, and they terrified that people miserably; [there] were excessive lightnings, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air.[4]

The binding, involving structure of Germanic interlace design, with sometimes one, sometimes more serpents holding themselves fast within an apparently never-ending, ever-changing coiled pattern, suggests the power and importance of both the artifact it covers and the wearer who exhibits it.

For the Germanic peoples, space, as it is encountered and perceived in the created worlds of men and other beings, exists, to any significant degree, only as a location or container for the occurrence of action. 'The distinction between *position* and *content*, underlying the construction of "pure" geometric space, has not yet been made . . . Position is not something that can be detached from content or contrasted with it as an element of independent significance; it "is" only insofar as it is filled with a definite, individual sensuous or intuitive content' (Cassirer 1955:84).[5] The content is action, whether of individual men, of men acting in consort or in opposition, of men and monsters, or of whatever. In all cases, immediate actions are discontinuous and separable, deriving their

power and structure from the past. Because 'physical space is in general characterized as a *space relevant to forces*' (Cassirer 1955:95), Germanic space will define itself by its relevance to this past.

Because the past acts immediately but discontinuously, locational relations are likewise discontinuous. In *Beowulf*, the land of the Geats and the land of the Danes are separated by the sea, but the spatial discontinuity between them is further accentuated by the text. The description of the journey of Beowulf and his fourteen men to the land of the Danes illustrates this clearly:

> Fyrst forð gewāt; flota wæs on ȳðum,
> bāt under beorge. Beornas gearwe
> on stefn stigon,— strēamas wundon,
> sund wið sande; secgas bǣron
> on bearm nacan beorhte frætwe,
> gūðsearo geatolīc; guman ūt scufon,
> weras on wilsīð wudu bundenne.
> Gewāt þā ofer wǣgholm winde gefȳsed
> flota fāmīheals fugle gelīcost,
> oð þæt ymb āntīd ōþres dōgores
> wundenstefna gewaden hæfde,
> þæt ðā līðende land gesāwon,
> brimclifu blīcan, beorgas stēape,
> sīde sǣnæssas; þā wæs sund liden,
> eoletes æt ende.
>
> (210-24)

Time went forth; the ship was on the waves,
the boat under the hill. The ready men
stood on the prow,— The streams curled,
water against the sand; The warriors bore
into the bosom of the boat bright weaponry,
adorned armor; The men shoved out—
warriors on a willed-journey—the bound wood.
(*þā*) went over the sea impelled by wind
the foamy-necked ship most like a bird,
(*oþ þæt*) about the proper-time of the second day
[that] the wound-stemmed [ship] had gone
(*þæt*) the going [men] saw land,
the sea-cliffs shine, the steep hills,

the wide headlands. Then was the water traversed,
at the end of the trip.

Of the fifteen lines of text, the first seven (210–16) deal exclusively with the act of boarding and shoving off. The ship sails in open water only in lines 217–18. In lines 219–24, the Danish shore is perceived and reached; the journey ends. In spite of the iconography of the ship and its weapons and its action of movement on water, the journey lacks event (the importance, of course, comes later in the land of the Danes where significant action does take place). The sailing is described by the colorless verbs *gewītan* 'go, proceed' (*gewāt* [210, 217]) and *gewadan* 'go, advance' (*gewaden* [220]), which tell us little more than that the sailing 'happened'. This sea voyage has little more significance than a ride in an elevator has; both seem to serve the same function—to facilitate spatial displacement. Where there is no action of significance, there is, in effect, no space. We might note that the return voyage from the Danes to the Geatish coast (1903–13) has the same tripartite structure, equally lacks event, and serves the same functional, spatial service. After both sea journeys, the text gets down immediately to important matters at hand, which reestablish the vertical lines of force informing important matters immediately present. No one asks Beowulf what kind of trip he had. The arrival on the Danish coast is followed by the coast guard's questioning of Beowulf's *intent* in Hrothgar's kingdom; Beowulf's arrival home is followed by his own account to Hygelac's court of his actions in the land of the Danes, in effect bringing the two lands into immediate conjunction. Space (a place for action) and distance (the physical extension of space) are, if not imperceptible, at least uninteresting when action does not occur.

Significant action, action that is past-dominated, is by its nature enclosed, realized and factual. It tends to force its factual nature upon the activities it touches. In the passage just cited, for example, the actual process of the ship's sailing (217–18) is dominated by the connective *þā*. The actual sailing is insignificant, however. It is its end and the space that the end of the journey defines that are of significance, and this is differently expressed. Its appearance in the text is twice dominated by *þæt*, first in *oþ þæt* (219) and again by *þæt* alone (221). *Þæt* is a nominalizing or substantive form that renders the actions it accompanies 'factual'. The idea is

not surprising to us because Mod.E *that* functions in a similar way. The distinctions for us, however, among various occurrences of *that* as a marker of substantive, result, and purpose clauses will tend to confuse us. Uses of *þæt* in Old English seem to be undifferentiated and uniquely factual.

To illustrate this further, let us return to the battle sequence of Beowulf and Grendel's Mother, which we considered in essay 3:

> Gefēng þā be eaxle   —nalas for fæhðe mearn—
> Gūð-Gēata lēod   Grendles mōdor;
> brægd þā beadwe heard,   þā hē gebolgen wæs,
> feorhgenīðlan,   þæt hēo flet gebēah.
> Hēo him eft hraþe   andlēan forgeald
> grimman grāpum   ond him tōgēanes fēng;
> oferwearp þā wērigmōd   wigena strengest,
> fēþecempa,   þæt hē on fylle wearð.
> Ofsæt þā þone selegyst,   ond hyre seax getēah
> brād [ond] brūnecg;   wolde hire bearn wrecan

(1537–46)

(*þā*)	the man of the Battle-Geats grasped Grendel's Mother by the shoulder
	(*nalas*) unhappy for the fighting
(*þā*)	the rigor of battle of the life-enemies moved quickly (*brægd . . . beadwe heard* [1539])
(*þā*)	he was enraged
(*þæt*)	she sank to the floor
(*eft*)	she repaid him quickly requital with grim grasps
(*ond*)	seized against him
(*þā*)	weary-in-spirit, the foot warrior, the strongest of fighters tumbled over
(*þæt*)	he came into a fall
(*þā*)	[Grendel's Mother] sat upon the hall-visitor
(*ond*)	drew out her broad, brown-edged dagger
(*Ø*)	would avenge her child

The most frequently occurring connector of the events described here is *þā*, which occurs five times. If it is translated as *then* or *when* in Modern English, lines 1539–40 would be rendered: 'Then the rigor of the battle of the life-enemies moved quickly when he was enraged' or 'When the rigor of battle of the life-

enemies moved quickly, then he was enraged'. Neither translation is felicitous. The other renderings of *þā*, most commonly *since* or *thereupon*, do not help either.[6] More often than not, translators of Old English simply ignore most occurrences of *þā* and do not translate them. The terms that our language suggests as translations are all causal or temporal in orientation; we are interested in making significant interconnections and establishing immediate horizontal relationships of dominance or dependence among actions. From everything so far discovered of the earlier framework in which Old English and other Germanic languages would operate, such tangential, horizontal relationships are of little import. Thus, it seems reasonable to look for the significance of *þā* elsewhere.

Enkvist (1972) has postulated that *þā* might very well be an 'action marker', specifying portions of a text in which significant or densely concentrated actions occur. This is surely true of the battle sequence just discussed, but it will not account for the occurrence of *þā* in the relatively action-bland ship journey. With respect to action, *þā*, in the journey sequence, suggests just the opposite. Yet it seems very likely that *þā* does point to something important about the nature of the actions it accompanies. If actions derive their significance from the historical depth that informs them, it will be important to keep activities with different histories clearly separate, thus allowing the individual pasts of individual actors to operate as much as possible separately. *Þā*, then, is a separating device useful in keeping actions of individual significance apart. This seems to be what is going on in the battle between Beowulf and Grendel's Mother. Here *þā* is regularly used to show a shift of focus with respect to who the particular actor is. It is as if the battle were being filmed from different perspectives and the final text were a collection of different still shots. The occurrence of *þā* is a clue to the reader (listener) that the perspective of action is to change. Thus, the short battle segment above runs:

(*þā* = focus) the man of the Battle-Geats grasped Grendel's Mother by the shoulder . . .
(*þā* = focus shifts) the rigor of battle of the life-enemies moved quickly
(*þā* = focus shifts) he was enraged
(*þæt* = focus shifts) she sank to the floor

In this way, we are able to keep the individual actions of Beowulf and Grendel's Mother apart. In the ship journey, *þā* clearly separates the apparently uneventful 'going' from the significant 'having gone' that marks its close.

In each case, the most significant, conclusive events are marked with *þæt*, not *þā*. *Þā* is clearly an action or process marker, whereas *þæt* is factual. Repetitions of *þā* keep actions going; *þæt* marks the factual reality of actions in completion. Thus, *þæt* occurs in the last line of those quoted from the battle sequence. We are accustomed to translate *þæt* by the phrase 'so that', making the text into a sequence of result: 'He was so enraged that she sank to the floor'. The implication is clear enough; Beowulf has become so emboldened and carried away with his part of the battle that he has been able to summon the strength and gain the leverage to bear Grendel's Mother to the ground. The context does not say this literally, however. Instead, it says two things: first, (*þā*) Beowulf was enraged, and second, (*þæt*) Grendel's Mother sank to the floor. The focus clearly changes from Beowulf to Grendel's Mother. It seems possible to rephrase the last line with *þā* rather than *þæt* and leave the meaning much the same. What we would lose by doing this is the significant additional emphasis that *þæt* provides: to pinpoint the action it precedes in such a way that the action is heightened in importance and that the actuality of its occurrence is stressed. Regularly, *þæt* precedes actions that are to be especially significant within a particular context. It occurs again in the passage where Beowulf himself falls, overcome by Grendel's Mother. If these contexts express cause and effect or result, they do so clumsily: 'Beowulf became enraged so that Grendel's Mother sank to the floor'. Unless she has fainted at the sight of the man (not a likely reading), the two actions are too widely separated to operate in a result context. The other lines (1543–44), '(*þā*) . . . the strongest of fighters tumbled over (*þæt*) he came into a fall', do not form a result construction either. The actions in each part are the same; both describe Beowulf's falling. The shift in phrasing, however, from tumbling (*oferweorpan*), a verbal action, to the fall (*fyll*), now a noun, surely pinpoints and refocuses, this time on the same actor but in a new perspective. The presence of the noun in the second statement focuses on the occurrence, the fact of this fall and all of the potential implications it has for Beowulf.

In the ship journey, the concluding events are twice marked:

oð þæt ymb āntīd   ōþres dōgǫres
wundenstefna   gewaden hæfde,
þæt ðā līðende   land gesāwon

(219–21)

(*oþ þæt*) about the proper-time of the second day
[that] the wound-stemmed [ship] had gone
(*þæt*) the going [men] saw land

The first *þæt* occurs in conjunction with *oþ*. Together these two forms are regularly translated as 'until'; the translation is not inappropriate but fails fully to catch the implications of the Old English original. *Oþ þæt* always stands between two actions, the first of which is specified as being in the process of occurring 'until' the physical presence of the second abruptly and entirely obliterates, dominates, or overrides the first action by its presence. *Oþ-* is a form in Old English regularly presenting this kind of exclusive connection among items, for example in *oþþe* 'or', and *þæt* specifies the factual nature of what follows it immediately.[7] Thus, occurrences of *oþ þæt* in Old English will always join two mutually exclusive actions and will specify the predominance in the context of the second of these. It frequently occurs where motion is followed by perception (Gruber 1974). The nature of such perceptions renders process factual not as 'result', as we are tempted to read it, but as dominance by destruction or impingement. Sometimes it seems to be a dominance of result; sometimes not. The connection may not even necessarily be logical by our standards.

The sea journey, above, is typical of uses of *þæt* and *oþ þæt* with respect to activity directed toward a goal. Such contexts regularly contain 'a reference to continued or completed motion . . . either a . . . clause introduced by *oþþæt* and continued with a finite form of *magan* and a dependent infinitive, usually *seon* or *wlitan*, or simply *oþþæt* followed by a finite form of the verb of perception, . . . a description of the goal . . . with appropriate nouns in the accusative: *weallas* appears very often and designates both natural and man-made walls, . . . sometimes a reference to time . . . , presumably emphasizing the brightness or prominence of the destination' (Clark 1965b:647–48). All of these elements appear in the sea journey here. We have a situation in which activity, the act of arriv-

ing, realizes and nominalizes itself simultaneously in the achieving and in the perception of its goal or destination.

In this journey, we can recognize that the nominalizing procedure is also space-defining. Although *weallas* 'walls' is not present in this particular context, the repetition of *brimclifu* 'sea-cliffs', *beorgas* 'hills', and *sǣnæssas* 'headlands', all in apposition with *land* in the description of the journey's end, suggests the same thing. Walls and sea-cliffs equally define and enclose, just as significant actions create and define their own space. Likewise, the decorative motif of the intertwining serpents does not so much fill an already-defined space, as do the marginal illuminations of medieval Christian manuscripts, as it creates and defines its own space. It is important that, in interlace designs of this sort, there are no 'loose' ends, no parts of the serpent activity that do not ultimately rejoin and enclose. The enclosure is created by the actual, physical activity within it.

If significant action is space-defining and if significant action is past-oriented, it does not seem at all unlikely that the structure of significant space would shape itself formally like that of the past. The emphasis upon *weallas* 'walls', natural or man-made, would suggest the edge of a defined space with respect to which significant action may occur. Spatial walls derive directly from the image of the well and its functional closure of activity. Such walls, whether of vehicles, as in the ritual of Nerthus, or those deriving from the mountains surrounding the pagan temple at Uppsala, define sacred spaces of particular importance. With respect to men's actions alone, the hall of the chieftain provides the significant space; the *symbel* occurs within the hall. Beowulf's own first battle with Grendel occurs within Hrothgar's mead-hall. The importance of man-made halls, because they figure as a kind of container inside which significant events may occur, is central to all Germanic literature.[8] *Rigsþula*, for example, plays off throughout an alternation of actions inside and outside halls. Doors or entranceways seem to occupy a particularly significant focal point:

Gecc hann meirr at þat   miðrar brautar,
kom hann at húsi,   hurð var á gætti;
inn nam at ganga . . .

(*Rigsþula* 2:280)

Walked unwearied   (in middle ways);

to a dwelling he came,   was the door bolted.
In gan he go . . .

(Hollander 1962 : 120–21)

and again later:

Gecc Rígr þaðan   réttar brautir;
kom hann at sal,   suðr horfðo dyrr,
var hurð hnigin,   hringr var í gætti.

(Rígsþula 26 : 283)

At his staff Ríg strode   steadfastly on;
a hall he saw then,   was southward the door,
raised on high,   with a ring in the doorpost.

(Hollander 1962 : 124)

The emphasis suggests immediately the doorlike frame over and beyond which the slave girl described in the funeral ritual of Ibn Fadlān realizes her vision of paradise. Natural 'halls' also play significant roles. Beowulf's fight with Grendel's Mother and his last battle with the dragon occur in well-defined spaces closed by structural 'walls'. The headlands of the sea, which figure prominently in the descriptions of sea journeys, at the end of *Beowulf* form the edge or walls of the sea itself. As the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* makes clear, the sea is Ægir's Hall, and references associating Ægir, the sea, mead, death, and poetry form one of the most important and frequent kennings in skaldic poetry.

Man's orientation in space is largely determined by the significant action that spatial phenomena allow or define. Man acts in a way that will allow him either to enter significant space or to create it. Figure 4 presents just such a diagram of interrelationships of space and action. The reciprocal, vertical lines of force, definitive of actions both well-derived and well-directed, create and define significant space. Man stands, as it were, at the horizontal center of the diagram, at the intersection of tree and well. Because the most dominant space lies within the well, man is oriented toward it and defines his own activity and space in such a manner as to replicate it to as great a degree as is possible.

Man's position at the horizontal center of figure 4 is not solely spatial. As we have seen, this center also marks the temporal intersection of present and past. Actually, present and past are not en-

tirely adequate terms. Although *past* works reasonably well for the lower, well-dominated portion of the diagram, *present* is too limited to represent that part of time that lies above and outside the well. *Nonpast* is perhaps a less unsatisfactory term. Thus, the Germanic universe divides temporally into past and nonpast. This gives us some important information about some of the ways the Germanic peoples might have felt the passage of time. The past, as collector of events, is clearly the most dominant, controlling portion of all time. Man's world stands at the juncture of this past and the nonpast, that is, at that point, the present, in which events are in the process of becoming 'past'. The past is experienced, known, laid down, accomplished, sure, realized.[9] The present, to the contrary, is in flux and confusion, mixed with irrelevant and significant details. What we nowadays call the 'future' is, within the structure of this Germanic system, just more of the nonpast, more flux, more confusion.

Because man's world lies outside, although tangential to, the world of the past, man's time, like his space, structures itself according to the shape of the past but fails, within the created worlds of the tree, to realize this nature fully. Thus, just as significant space is discontinuous, so is significant time. It is point- or 'aorist'-oriented (Nilsson 1920 : 356–58). It becomes factual only with respect to occurrences of important, past-dominated actions; these occur either through the immediate intrusion of the past upon the present (through the upward-moving vertical lines of figure 4) or through the creation within the world of men of an appropriate moment for activity (through downward-moving lines of force). All such moments become equally 'past'. As with spatial distance, temporal duration is of little value; duration, like distance, reckons with horizontal, human relations that lack significant moment.[10] Significance is built through association with the power of the past and ultimately leads to a spatial and temporal unification of action with the generative structure of the well.

It is now possible to derive from figure 4 an analogical figure for Germanic time, figure 6. Figure 6 has rotated figure 4 ninety degrees counterclockwise; the past lies now to the right, and the horizontal intersection of figure 4 now appears as vertical. This allows the schematic time perceiver to stand upright and face right toward the past. Because this temporal figure will be somewhat strange for us, let us begin by imagining him as a man standing in
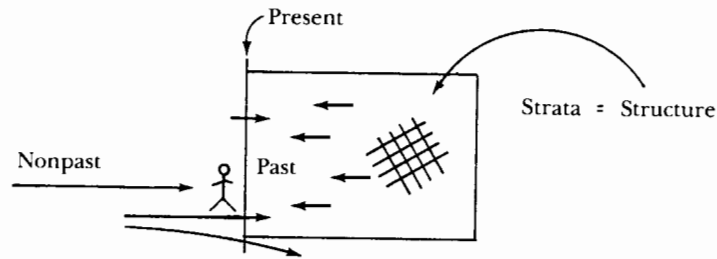
Figure 6

the doorway of an enclosure, a container or room. Inside it is stored the structure of all past events. The man faces in. Around him flow events. Some clearly fall outside the enclosure and disappear; others are momentarily becoming part of the structure within the enclosure. This is not unlike—to add analogy to analogy—water running into a large container through a neck in which the man is located. The flowing water analogy breaks down, however, because the force that initiates the flow of time lies within the container, not outside it as with the force of gravity. Events are being pulled in from within; eventually, the man himself will be pulled in at the moment of death.

This situation presents difficulties for men as they attempt to understand their position with respect to the nature of action, their own and all others'. Man stands outside the past and has no direct perception of it or of its force. Nor can he see all of its structure clearly; indeed, most of it is hidden. It does influence activities outside the well, but in ways that are not usually directly perceptible. Additionally, events of the present rush around men as if from behind them. Some of these events are insignificant, but some are important and past-influenced. Man's striving to understand and sort these out comes only from his ability to know, albeit dimly, the power of the past as it reaches out and around him to structure activities present or 'becoming'. To put it another way, man never attaches directly to the pull of events of the well as they reach out but only can be pulled with events as they return to the well. And these events, it can be seen, are never fully observable to the individual involved.

This temporal scheme makes two points about Germanic time that are not immediately noticeable to us. First, time is binary, not tripartite. It divides into past and nonpast, not into past, present, and future. There are no explicit references in early Germanic materials to a concept like the future. Events that seem to us to be future-oriented turn out, when carefully examined, to refer directly to the interaction of the past with events of the nonpast, of that which has occurred with that which is in the process of occurrence. Likely references in Old English to future-oriented activities, for example, are often prefixed with *fore-*. These, however, almost always clearly express the relation of the past to the present (as in our term *forefathers*). Terms such as *forecweðan* 'foresay' and *foresceawian* 'foreshow, foresee' seem occasionally to refer to prophecy and prediction; yet, these are limited in Old English to translations of explicitly Christian, Latin materials. Even here, the Old English versions of these texts seem to transform prophecy to the working out in the present of earlier, past speech, as in the following from Bede:

> Sunt etiam qui dicant quia per prophetiae spiritum, et pestilentiam qua ipsa esset moritura, praedixerit. (Bede IV, 19:104)[11]

> Sume men eac swylce sægdon, þæt heo þurh witedomes gast þa adle forecwæde, þe heo on forðferde. (Bede IV, 21 [19]: 318)[12]

> Some men also said that she through the spirit of wisdom forespoke [of] the plague in which she died.

The rendering of *prophetiae* as *witedomes* itself does much to enforce this because knowledge and judgment are themselves past-governed. Significantly, words with the prefix occur in contexts where a 'forespoken' event brings the past of its time of being spoken forward prominently into the present. The form *fore* in Old English clearly links spatial and temporal concerns.[13] Thus, the *forebecna* 'fore-beacons' of the quotation from A.D. 793 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, given earlier, are signal lights or spotlights of importance and immediacy marking events for prominence. They stand immediately in front of those who observe them. Such 'beacons' are, at once, visible and present yet rife with the significance of the past. The language stays clear of using such terms in present contexts to make vague, future-oriented references to 'things to come' —as the time scheme predicts.

The second point: within the binary time system, the past is constantly increasing and pulling more and more time and events into itself; it alone has any assured strength or reality. Because of this, time is ever-changing, growing, and evolving. It is agglutinative and open-ended, as is its container. This structure leads, temporally, to one obvious conclusion: The container will eventually become full. Upon such conclusion, we would expect a cosmic close, an end of the universe implicit in the structure itself. Indeed, this is the case in Germanic myth; Ragnarǫk, the end of the created worlds, is given a prominent position at the end of *Vǫluspá*. The events are grim for the created worlds of the tree: natural disaster, death, and the eventual collapse of Yggdrasil:

> Scelfr Yggdrasils   ascr standandi,
> ymr iþ aldna tré,   enn iǫtunn losnar.
>
> (*Vǫluspá* 47 : 11)

> Trembles the towering   tree Yggdrasil,
> its leaves sough loudly: unleashed is the etin.
>
> (Hollander 1962 : 10)

As the vision continues, the worlds of tree and well become intermingled:

> Sól tér sortna,   sígr fold í mar,
> hverfa af himni   heiðar stiǫrnor;
> geisar eimi   við aldrnara,
> leicr hár hiti   við himin siálfan.
>
> (*Vǫluspá* 57 : 13 – 14)

> 'Neath sea the land sinketh,   the sun dimmeth,
> from the heavens fall   the fair bright stars;
> gusheth forth steam   and gutting fire,
> to very heaven   soar the hurtling flames.
>
> (Hollander 1962 : 11)

The created worlds become fully part of the realm of the well. *Vǫluspá* does not end here, however. From this engulfing comes forth a new creation:

> Sér hon upp koma   ǫðro sinni
> iǫrð ór ægi,   iðiagrœna;

> falla forsar,   flýgr ǫrn yfir
>
> (*Vǫluspá* 59 : 14)

> I see green again   with growing things
> the earth arise   from out of the sea;
> fell torrents flow,   overflies them the eagle.
>
> (Hollander 1962 : 12)

It is at once a world new and old, the Æsir return with runes (section 60); with them, from the regions that earlier existed only in proximity to the well, is Baldr (section 62), and Níthhogg, the gnawing serpent of Hvergelmir, flies somehow forth into and over this new world (section 66).

It is clear that Ragnarǫk is not the end of time but one of, apparently, several temporal points in the cosmos that mark beginnings. These points are at once new and old. It is as if the container of the past had overflowed itself and had begun to fill another, larger container, which somehow is structured so as to surround and enclose the earlier one; it contains more, and as more time is accomplished, more and more time grows. The process apparently continues without end; at least, *Vǫluspá* gives no indication that the events it finally describes are to be considered as 'final' events.[14]

The account of Ragnarǫk in *Vǫluspá* attempts to unify the two aspects of temporality upon which we have so far touched: first, that aspect that expresses the nature of occurrence of events in the immediate 'now' of the world of men—that is, time that provides the medium of occurrence of events in the present; and, second, that aspect of temporality that relates all events in all worlds universally to each other regardless of moment of occurrence. Cosmic myths, at least to the extent that they deal with matters of time, always attempt to reconcile what seems to be a universal, human, temporal paradox. Man's direct experience of time cannot alone account for the obvious difficulties inherent in the two aspects here examined: time as process of immediate occurrence and time as universal carrier and incorporator of all events. Within man's created world (i.e. the worlds of Yggdrasil), events happen in some kind of sequence, and they happen only once. The experience of such events inevitably gives rise, however, to a human comprehension that such events are not unique or unitary: There are enough similarities among them for men to experience some (perhaps

more, perhaps fewer) events as repetitions or manifestations of cosmic agencies beyond the created world that overlay, structure, and predicate created experience. These aspects of events, their uniqueness as opposed to their order or repetitiousness, form what are probably the roots of all of men's temporal conceptions. 'All other aspects of time, duration for example or historical sequence, are fairly simple derivatives from these two basic experiences: (a) that certain phenomena of nature repeat themselves[;] (b) that life change is irreversible' (Leach 1966:125). Natural phenomena, the seasons, the heavens, animal life, follow each other cyclically. These operate on what Evans-Pritchard calls 'oecological time' (1940:94–138), and man's perceptions of these give rise not only to his time-reckoning systems but also to his conceptions of the structure of the cosmos beyond his understanding as likewise 'organic', natural, and directly governed by oecological forces; thus, the Germanic universe is in this sense 'natural' and to some extent cyclical. Because of man's created nature, the events of his life form what seems to be a linear temporal sequence. Man universally tries to render significant his own linear experience by placing it in some meaningful relation with the oecological cycle. The structures of these attempts are man-oriented and culture-created. They can be oriented toward either the more natural, repetitive cycle or the more human, linear experience—the natural being more static in its repetitiveness. These two structural extremes have been categorized by Lévi-Strauss as 'cold' (natural, static) and 'hot' (human, dynamic) (1966:217–44). The temporal thrust of 'hot' societies lies in their 'resolutely internalizing the historical process and making it the moving power of their development . . .[:] "cold" societies . . . make it the case that the order of temporal succession should have as little influence as possible on their content' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:234). We can sense that Germanic culture, as we have examined it here and in spite of its highly traditional nature and its ignorance of what Lévi-Strauss here calls the 'historical process', operates clearly within a position nearer the 'hot' pole of this temporal structure. The Germanic cosmos is a 'hot' cosmos rife with and gaining power from incorporative change; its 'nature', if we may use that term accurately here, is itself growth-oriented and not static, as Lévi-Strauss's argument about natural cycles would imply. It is in the nature of the Germanic natural 'cycle' to grow.

These temporal peculiarities of Germanic culture can be more clearly seen by comparing them with the medieval Christian's ideas about the organization of temporal events and his perception of the passage of time. These, in the main, would be essentially those described and analyzed by Saint Augustine in the *Confessions* and in Book XII of *The City of God*. His arguments, given in chapters 13–24 of Book XI of the *Confessions*, attempt to define and illustrate the nature of eternity and to contrast it with temporal events in the created universe. For Augustine, time, the perception of interrelated events in space, is a part of the created universe. This interrelationship of events does not supersede or rise above the limitations of God's creation because time, in this sense, has also been created by God. This earthly, limited, created time is tripartite, divided into a past, present, and future. All three of these 'times' are part of creation and, therefore, have the same real existence that any aspect of the creation has. The tripartite nature of created time permeates all of Augustine's arguments. A typical comment could be chosen from almost anywhere:

> quisnam est, qui dicat mihi non esse tria tempora, sicut pueri didicimus puerosque docuimus, praeteritum, praesens et futurum, sed tantum praesens, quoniam illa duo non sunt? an et ipsa sunt, sed ex aliquo procedit occulto, cum ex futuro fit praesens, et in aliquod recedit occultum, cum ex praesenti fit praeteritum? nam ubi ea viderunt qui futura cecinerunt, si nondum sunt? neque enim potest videri id quod non est. et qui narrant praeterita, non utique vera narrarent, si animo illa non cernerent: quae si nulla essent, cerni omnino non possent. sunt ergo et futura et praeterita. (*Confessions* XI, 17:246)[15]

Who is he that will tell me how there are not three times, as we learned when we were boys, and as we taught other boys, the past, present, and future; but the present only, because the other two are not at all? Or have they a being also; but such as proceeds out of some unknown secret, when out of the future, the present is made; and returns into some secret again, when the past is made out of the present? For where have they, who have foretold things to come before, seen them, if as yet they be not? For that which is not, cannot be seen. And so for those that relate the things past, verily they could not relate true stories, if in their mind they did not discern them: which if

they were none, could no way be discerned. There are therefore both things past and to come. (Watts 1912:247)

All of these 'times' seem real; we could not know them if they were not. There is in the passage, in addition to its assertion of the tripartite division, a statement of the essential directionality of created time: The present is made out of the future; the past out of the present. Of course, the thrust of the argument is not toward the distinctions just made. Augustine is defining eternity and trying to establish the basic difference between time and eternity, but this does not concern us here. What is important is that Augustine takes as his point of departure the apparently established and nonproblematical idea that time as we perceive it is divided naturally into past, present, and future.

The nature of eternity, the subject matter for most of Book XI of the *Confessions*, was not so well known or accepted; the length and complexity of Augustine's argument make this plain. It is important only that we understand that eternity is all-inclusive of creation and temporally all-present. Within it, all temporal change ceases: 'praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas' (*Confessions* XI, 14:238), 'As for the present, should it always be present and never pass into times past, verily it should not be time but eternity' (Watts 1912:239). Because man's soul is immortal, man perceives not only created time, but eternity:

Quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur: tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens et futurum, sed fortasse proprie diceretur: tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris. sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam, et alibi ea non video: praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio. (*Confessions* XI, 20:252)

Clear now it is and plain, that neither things to come, nor things past, are. Nor do we properly say, there be three times, past, present, and to come; but perchance it might be properly said, there be three times: a present time of past things; a present time of present things; and a present time of future things. For indeed three such as these in our souls there be; and other-
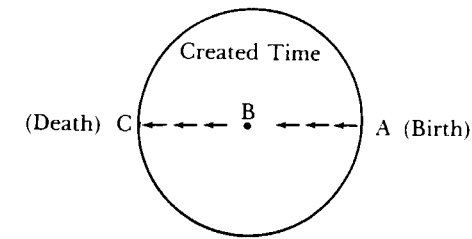
Figure 7

where do I not see them. The present time of past things is our memory; the present time of present things is our sight; the present time of future things our expectation. (Watts 1912:253)

There is an eternal unity that only seems to divide itself into the three perceptible times: The realities of these three exist only through their inclusion in the one. In Lévi-Strauss's terms, Augustine's eternity is clearly 'cold'.

To parallel the analogy we have already created for Germanic time, let us try to visualize Augustine's temporal concepts as a circle with a horizontally drawn diameter (figure 7). The outside of the perimeter of the circle would represent eternity and the mind of God, an entity that surrounds all that exists. The interior of the circle is then the created world of time and space. The horizontal diameter *ABC* might then represent any one of all possible lifetimes. Beginning at point *A* (birth) and ending at point *C* (death), the line touches the circumference twice; it comes from and rejoins the eternal. Temporal events (all moments within created time) lie along such diameters. At any instant, such as point *B* on the line, there will be, to the right (*AB*), the past, and, to the left (*BC*), the future. Point *B* represents the created present. As life moves from birth to death (right to left from *A* to *C*), point *B* (the present) moves from past to future. Life then moves from past *toward* the future; however, the flow of time, as Augustine points out, makes the present out of the future and the past out of the present. The orientation of individual Christian beings is toward the future. The medieval Christian looked *forward* toward the moment of his re-

joining the eternal, the closed fixity of salvation, God, and heaven. The idea of eternal fixity within the mind of God seems to be a peculiarly Christian concept, and Augustine's emphasis upon it seems to point to its peculiarity.

Several important differences between Christian and Germanic temporal conceptions now emerge. First, Christian time is tripartite; Germanic time is binary. If we attempt to describe Germanic time within the Christian temporal framework of figure 7, we can see that the present-past *AB* can be opposed in a binary way to the future-present *BC*. In so doing, we lose any reality for point *B*, the present. From the Christian point of view, this is nonsensical because the future is immediately seen to differ from both present and past. Second, because the Christian faces the future, he clearly sees its distinction from the present. For the Germanic man, whose orientation is toward the past, the 'future' is not a foreseeable or readily configured concept. Finally, we can see that Christian time is fixed and closed; the progression of 'times' within the created world is part only of that world; the whole cosmos is a static, atemporal one. The Germanic cosmos is dynamic and change-oriented. Time exists beyond the created worlds and is a configuring force of the whole.

Germanic time seems to us now rather strange. This is not entirely a matter of distance across centuries. It would have seemed strange to Augustine (perhaps *did* seem strange to him) as well. This strangeness derives from a variety of factors, of which two might interest us further. First, there is an aspect to the Germanic perception of time that suggests circularity or the cycle, but we must be careful with such concepts. Although there is an idea of completion and, through endings, new beginnings, as we have seen in *Vǫluspá*, this does not suggest a return to some essentially unchanged world. The Germanic system is not a static circle but a cycle of changes ever growing and accumulating through the process of change. Augustine knew of cyclic conceptions of time as well. In fact, his repeated insistence upon universal stasis is, in part, an argument against those

> qui mundum istum non existimant sempiternum, sive non eum solum, sed innumerabiles opinentur, sive solum quidem esse, sed certis saeculorum intervallis innumerabiliter oriri et occidere. (*City of God* XII, 12:52)[16]

that do not think that this world is everlasting. Either they believe that this is not the only world and that there are countless other worlds, or they believe, to be sure, in a single world but hold that in fixed cycles it rises and perishes times without number. (Levine 1966:53)

There is no reason to suppose that Augustine had in mind here the Germanic conception of time; rather, he is arguing against the kinds of temporal speculations that were disseminated through the Graeco-Roman world by Gnostic sects, those both 'Christian' and 'pagan' in orientation, to whose teaching Augustine's orthodox Christianity stood in opposition. Generally, for Gnostic sects, 'our lesser world, an aeon unique and finite in space and time, cuts but a small figure in comparison with that infinite succession of infinities whose images are multiplied like the repeated reflections in a succession of mirrors' (Doresse 1969:553).

Questions about the nature of time, and especially questions about time's infinitude, are important not only to Gnostic thinking but to the thought of the other Near Eastern sects, which were also widely known in Augustine's day. Whether he learned of them through the teachings of the Manichees, in which Augustine had more than a casual interest, or from some other Near Eastern sect is not clear, nor is it of importance here. This speculation has its origin in Iranian Zoroastrianism, whose teachings about time seem to have influenced just about every Iranian and Hellenistic sect to some degree. In Iranian beliefs,

> Finite Time is conceived as revolving in a circle and returning to its own point of departure. It would, however, be wrong to suppose that this circular movement of time is eternal: there seems to be absolutely no evidence for this in any Zoroastrian text. The Iranian theory of Time, therefore, is seen to have little or no affinity with the [aeon] speculations of the Hellenistic world . . . At a given moment, finite Time comes into existence out of Infinite Time, moves in a circle until it returns to its beginning, and then merges into Infinite Time, that is Timelessness. The process is never renewed (Zaehner 1972: 106–7).

These Iranian statements about time offer a position somewhere between Augustine and the Germanic concepts described

above. In Iranian beliefs, Finite Time is fixed and included within an infinite framework; Time, in the Avesta, is Zurvān, and 'the Avesta distinguishes two Zurvāns, *zrvan- akarana-* and *zrvan-darǝγō- χʷaδāta-*, that is "boundless Time" and "Time whose autonomous sway lasts for a long time"' (Zaehner 1972 : 57). In general outline, there is similarity here between Augustine's closed creation, with its apparent three times, and an eternal 'boundless' fixity that encloses it. There is little, however, in Augustine's thinking that conceives of created time as circular and returning upon itself. Nor is there in Augustine an idea of the reentry of one kind of created time into that which is also 'Time', but a time unbounded. It is Augustine's whole purpose to deny any kind of temporality to God. Unlike the Zervanite Zoroastrians, for whom Infinite Time (*zrvan- akarana-*) was the supreme deity, the eternity of Augustine's God can be construed as one of his attributes but not one of any primary importance. Augustine's God is not a God of Infinite Time but a God who embodies the idea of eternity. Time for Augustine is not a principle of one type created and another eternal. Augustine's time is finally a fantasy of the created mind and without reality beyond creation.

It is upon this very point, however, that Iranian and Germanic conceptions seem to be closest. In Iranian thinking, the principle of 'Time' exists within and without the creation; finally, it is 'boundless', and the creation brings forth the principle of time 'bound' or made finite. The temporal principle exists; that is, Zurvān exists, in one form or another, everlastingly. In this, the Germanic feeling about matters of time is very close to the Iranian. The power of the past and its operation through all of existence seem to provide the underlying principle with which the Germanic cosmos operates. It is here also, however, that the Germanic conception differs in a significant way from the Iranian. Germanic 'created time', that is, time as it operates within the worlds of the tree, is not in an essential way different from the larger, more powerful time that operates within the realm of the well. True, 'created time' within the created worlds of the tree is limited and partial, but its partiality is one of limitation by degree rather than limitation by kind. Men experience cosmic time directly but partially. Man's time and *wyrd*'s time are fundamentally the same. Man's time is part of *wyrd*'s time, but it is real and vital, and, except in degree, it is not significantly

different from cosmic time. In this respect, the Germanic conception is different from both Iranian and Christian speculation.

A second factor that contributes to the strangeness with which we perceive Germanic time develops from the peculiar way in which the Germanic temporal structure confronts its past. It is not the fact of a concern for past events and their influence upon the present—that is not uncommon—but the unique way in which the Germanic peoples figured this influence. There seems to be next to nothing of the idea of 'sacral' or 'primal' time, as defined by Eliade (1959a), in Germanic thinking. Eliade argues that, typically in 'archaic ontology', the privileged or sacred moment is created by

> the abolition of time through the imitation of archetypes and the repetition of paradigmatic gestures. A sacrifice, for example, not only exactly reproduces the initial sacrifice revealed by a god *ab origine*, at the beginning of time, it also takes place at that same primordial mythical moment . . . All sacrifices are performed at the same mythical instant of the beginning; through the paradox of the rite, profane time and duration are suspended . . . Insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures . . . there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of 'history'. (1959a : 35)

This seems much closer to Augustine's position than it does to any of the Germanic concerns mentioned so far. The sacraments of the Church are performed in such a context. Augustine's own argument is explicitly designed to abolish the 'history' of the tripartite temporal system in which his Latin forces him to write. Likewise, the act of the Soul's contemplation of God will lead man out of profane time into a perception of eternity. The only distinction to be found in Augustine is his relentless refusal to see the 'sacral' moment as temporal at all; its function is not to 'return' to a primal moment but to embody in a different sort of way a reality that is in no way temporal.

The Germanic privileged moment is different from both the Christian one and from that which Eliade describes; what Eliade has called 'duration' and 'history' form the essence of the 'sacral' moment in Germanic thinking. The Norns speak the *ørlǫg* and sustain the tree *hvern dag* 'every day'. These paradigmatic gestures do

not look back to some primal moment, to some original act that is to be reenacted or commemorated; rather, they empower and create the present! For Eliade, the past is primary; so, too, for the Germanic past. That past, however, is not distant, inaccessible, or purer than the present, nor is it in the process of deteriorating through duration or through the accumulation of time. The opposite is the case: The past grows and becomes more powerful through duration and the flow of time. It does not recede; it is unremittingly near and 'hot', in Lévi-Strauss's sense. Eliade's past is fullest in its primal state; the Germanic past is always fullest 'now'.

The conceptual differences between the early Germanic peoples and the early Christians probably facilitated the Christianization of the Germanic peoples yet created for them some far-reaching conceptual complications. First, it is possible to see, at least to some extent, why the Christianization took place with such relative ease. The Germanic world is open, inquiring, and receptive. Thus, the Germanic peoples manifested their exploratory acumen, on the one hand, in the expansion of Viking civilization with its concomitant destructive and terrorizing impulse and, on the other, in their receptivity to the demonstrated values of Christianity. This accepting quality is reported by Bede indirectly in the rather curious and, if not enlightened, at least apparently self-interested comments of Cæfi, the *primus pontificum* to the pagan Saxon king Eadwine at his conversion. Cæfi argues for conversion that, if the older gods to whom the people had prayed had had any power, he (Cæfi) should have noticed it because he had prayed more earnestly and intelligently than any other:

> Si autem dii aliquid valerent, me potius iuvare vellent, qui illis impensius servire curavi. Unde restat, si ut ea quae nunc nobis nova praedicantur, meliora esse et fortiora, habita examinatione perspexeris, absque ullo cunctamine suscipere illa festinemus. (Bede II, 13:282)

> Hwæt ic wat, gif ure godo ænige mihte hæfdon, þonne woldan hie me ma fultumian, forþon ic him geornlicor þeodde ⁊ hyrde. Forþon me þynceð wislic, gif þu geseo þa þing beteran ⁊ strangran, þe us niwan bodad syndon, þæt we þam onfon. (Bede II, 10 [13]:134)

> Indeed, I know, if our gods had any power, that they would

have aided me more because I more earnestly served and heard them. Therefore, it seems to me wise, if you might perceive better and stronger things which are newly announced to us, that we accept them.

If the gods have less power and are unable meaningfully to affect the lives of men and if Christ and his church can, then Christ and his church know more and are going to be more helpful, more informative about the nature of the universe beyond the ordinary. Of course, such a context does not see Christ as divine or as eternal; rather, the Christian church appears as yet another world of beings within all created worlds but, significantly, one that has greater, wiser touch with the universal sustaining power. One would surely be foolish to ignore such evidence. The Christian worship of Christ differs radically from the kinds of veneration that the Germanic peoples proffered to their gods, but such difference would not be at all evident within the context of conversion. Such postconversional problems were not noticeable, not even comprehensible, to the Germanic people.

Cæfi's comments about the conversion are followed in Bede's text by the famous analogy comparing human life with the flight of a sparrow, which curiously mixes Germanic and Christian elements.[17] Its tenor is to emphasize the dim, tangential nature of man's knowledge, and its conclusion mirrors Cæfi's: 'Unde si haec nova doctrina certius aliquid attulit, merito esse sequenda videtur' (Bede II, 13:284). 'Forðon gif þeos lar owiht cuðlicre ⁊ gerisenlicre brenge, þæs weorþe is þæt we þære fylgen' (Bede II, 10 [13]:136), 'Therefore, if this learning brings anything more wise and reasonable, it is fitting that we follow it'. In addition, something of the same change in the configuration of the created worlds is observable in skaldic poetry, which reflects the Icelandic conversion later. Here in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's verse, in place of the Æsir holding their daily tribunal at Urth's Well, appears Christ himself:

> Setbergs, kveða sitja
> sunnr at Urðarbrunni,
> svá hefr ramr Konungr remðan
> Róms banda sik löndum.
>
> (*Skáldskaparmál* 51:222)

> So has Rome's Mighty Ruler

In the Rocky Realms confirmed
His power; they say He sitteth
South, at the Well of Urdr.

(Brodeur 1929 : 195)[18]

It is also clear, however, from all that has been presented that the Christianization of the pagan Germanic peoples eventually must have created very great conceptual problems for them. The temporal reorientation toward the future, which the Christian conception stresses so strongly, involved a 180-degree wrench away from the past toward a future that did not even exist prior to Christianization. The doctrine of salvation and the idea of a closed, fixed eternity must also have been difficult. Sin, repentance, and absolution must have seemed very strange at first. Repentance and absolution involve a moment in which the sins of the past are confronted, repented of, and, in effect, washed away. The absolved individual at this moment enters a state of grace; the past disappears, and he is born anew. How the Germanic peoples must have struggled with the idea that the past could ever disappear! The continuing dominance of the past is present in all early Germanic literature. It is no wonder that the Germanic version of Christianity should also stress heavily the Old Testament with its genealogies and its emphasis upon retribution rather than upon the concepts of grace and forgiveness, which form so much of the emphasis of the New. Finally, *wyrd*, the term for the power of the past upon the present, lingers on long after Christianization. It alone of earlier Germanic concepts seems to have been so firmly rooted in the consciousness and language of the people that the religious and temporal reorientation did not supplant it quickly or easily.[19] True, the term comes to denote a somewhat ambiguous concept in Christian times; sometimes it seems to refer to the will of God, at others to something like Fortune (and, as such, subservient to God's will), but it was there, forcing itself meaningfully into the speech of those new Christians who struggled to reconcile it somehow with their recently acquired Christian orientation and belief.

Language

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V

H E spatial and temporal orientation that has been examined in essay 4 can be related to some grammatical aspects of the various historically documented Germanic languages. The Germanic languages, as a group, have no morphological mark for future tense in their verbs. 'In the course of their development, Germanic languages have never succeeded in producing a distinct future. The expression of time has remained limited to the opposition of the present (the forms of which also serve for the future) and the past' (Meillet 1970:68). The tense system of all Germanic languages has always been and still is morphologically binary. This binary division is pre-Christian, and the various syntactic forms utilized to express temporal futurity vary from language to language. All of these developed usages are post-Christian, although the elements used in the expression of the future, in general, had a place in earlier Germanic usage as well. Their earlier use, however, is universally related to what we might more accurately call 'modality' of action rather than 'time'. As Meillet's quotation notes, 'the present tense may be used in speaking of some future time [in Modern English]. This was the regular practice in [Old English], even in connexions where it would seem necessary to express the distinction between present and future [now]' (Jespersen 1961:21). The statement is true for all Germanic languages. Because the use of the morphological present to make reference to futurity is universal in the Germanic language family, it is useful to look in some detail, first, at the system of the verb as it probably existed in Primitive Indo-European, from which the Germanic verbs evolved; second, at the earliest constructable Germanic verbal system to see how the change in usage might be accounted

for, and third, at the changes that have since occurred within the various Germanic systems to discover what the evolving expressions of futurity might tell us about the changing nature of the concepts these languages denote. Where possible, it will be informative to examine the parallels between the linguistic system and the concepts of time and space already considered.

The binary Germanic tense system differs widely from the inflectional system of other Indo-European languages, as any beginning student of Greek or Latin quickly discovers. If all of these languages derive from a common linguistic source, what was this source like? From investigations into the development of the Indo-European language family, we may surmise that the parent IE verb 'had a structure quite different from that found in most of the attested languages of the Germanic group, even in those for which we have the most ancient texts' (Meillet 1970:66). On the other hand, 'it would be wrong to ascribe to Indo-European the complicated tense system of Sanskrit, Greek, or Latin. A good deal of this is secondary innovation' (Prokosch 1939:145). The formal system of the IE verb, as we attempt to reconstruct it, was quite different from any of the formal systems of any of the attested languages. The parent language operated with what we call 'roots', form structures that were altered by vowel changes (ablaut), augmentation, reduplication, prefixing, infixing, and suffixing—alone and in combination (Brugmann 1895; Meillet 1964:195–251). How this formal structure was organized into a verbal system, which associates formal criteria with distinctions of meaning, is not clear, as no attested language reproduces it. We have no examples of Indo-European usage, no direct models from which the meaning structure can be derived. Any reconstruction is, at best, tentative.

Verbal systems have traditionally been called 'tense' systems. Tense has traditionally been related to, if not equated with, considerations of time, and early reconstructions of the tense system of Indo-European tended to be dominated by temporal considerations. Gradually, these gave way to more complex systems in which both the temporal and the 'aspectual' nature of the verb were considered. With respect to present-tense forms alone, 'the formation of Desideratives, Inchoatives, Intensives, Iteratives, Frequentatives, Causatives and the rest is in principle absolutely the same as that of the so-called Primitive verbs connected with them. There is

a distinction, however, in the *meaning* of the present tense; in these [derived] verbs the present had a second special meaning in addition to that of time. [This second,] special meaning became a more or less fertile type' (Brugmann 1895:40). These 'derived' forms are aspectual in nature. Thus, temporal and aspectual categories tend to merge: 'The tenses of the parent speech served to denote differences in the "aspect" of the action, and to some extent also differences of time' (Buck 1933:238). Most recently, attempts have been made to dissociate the IE verbal system from temporal matters entirely:

> In [Primitive Indo-European], tense and the time of the action were not indicated by means of verbal affixes. Indications of the time of the action were given by means of particles or adverbs or were implicit in the aspects of verb forms. Sanskrit and Greek have preserved patterns in which particles [such as Skt. *purá* 'earlier' or Gk. πρό 'before'] indicate the time of action of the verb . . . such evidence and the system of verbal forms indicate that tense was not a grammatical category in [Primitive Indo-European]. (Lehmann 1974:139)

Here aspect dominates, and tense, with reference to temporal matters, has disappeared: 'Rather than tense, verb forms indicated aspect, that is, state of the action or process expressed by the verb . . . This characteristic of the PIE verb system may be determined most clearly in injunctive forms of Vedic . . . The difference in verbal stem and endings indicates the difference in the state of the action' (Lehmann 1974:139). Thus, by such a definition, it is incorrect to speak, as Brugmann does, of 'present' forms—this is temporal; rather we must speak of 'imperfective' forms. 'The imperfective forms developed into present forms in the [various IE] dialects; the perfective developed into the perfect of late [Primitive Indo-European], Sanskrit, and Greek' (Lehmann 1974:140). Lehmann sees aspect as primary and tense as derivative of it; Brugmann sees tense as primary and aspect as derivative of it. On the other hand, as Kuryłowicz (1964:90–135) has pointed out, aspect and tense are not mutually exclusive categories; no IE language lacks elements reflective of both categories. Ultimately, there is no real reason for insisting that the parent system itself was uniformly dominated by one or the other of these possible verbal categories. The lan-

guage may very well have operated with verbal categories distinct from both and from which the concepts of both tense and aspect evolved.

In spite of the problems inherent in trying to account for the functional categories of Indo-European, certain formal criteria do emerge. Ignoring the complications of the derivative forms that Brugmann cites, IE verbs fall regularly into three distinct form classes, which we call present, aorist, and perfect (although the distinctions between present and aorist forms are not so clear as could be hoped [Brugmann 1895: 36–39]). 'All we can be sure of is this, that [Indo-European] had verb *forms* that correspond to the Gk. present, aorist, and perfect. But to what extent *tense* function should be ascribed to these forms, is an open question' (Prokosch 1939: 145). As Prokosch suggests and as Brugmann makes clear at length, there are manifold complications here, but these formal categories will suffice for the beginning of an examination of the relation of the Germanic verbal system to its IE parent. If Indo-European had *formal* categories for what we call present, aorist, and perfect, we must make deductions about their functions from their attested usage in known IE languages. Three functional oppositions are likely to obtain in Indo-European: present: aorist, present: perfect, and aorist: perfect.

The opposition present: aorist appears to be one in which immediate contextual relevance is opposed to some kind of contextual otherness. There is little disagreement that present forms basically represent actions aspectually going on, imperfective at the moment of speaking, or, in temporal terms, actions simultaneous with the moment of speech, linked directly to the 'now' of the utterance. About aorist forms there is less agreement.[1] Aorists are generally defined as expressing 'momentary action, the point of beginning (ingressive aorist) or end (resultative aorist), or more generally action viewed in summary without reference to duration[, or] such action in past time' (Buck 1933: 238). Basically, aorists seem to be associated with ideas of 'punctual', 'momentary', or 'point' actions. To understand this punctual nature of the aorist, we must see it as defining actions that lie outside the immediate confluence of events within the central 'now' of the context of speech. The punctual nature of an event necessitates that its 'point' of reference be seen as something other than the immediate, which is entirely self-defin-

ing and in process. Aorists always suggest something of 'apartness', something not immediately relevant, something ancillary to or distant from the 'now'. Thus, the opposition present: aorist opposes, temporally, the 'now' of the utterance to actions that are *anterior* or *posterior* (i.e. not now, either before now or after now, or somehow else not now) with respect to the context of speech.[2] In terms of aspect, we may see it as opposing the immediate relevance of the present to the 'mediated' relevance of the aorist. Within the opposition, it seems likely that the aorist is the marked member (= *other*; either temporally or aspectually *not immediate, not now*); the present is unmarked, lacking any specific contextual expression limiting it.

The opposition present: perfect is one in which the immediate action of the context is impinged upon by actions with a dimension that extends beyond the contextual 'now'. There is general agreement that perfect forms express the idea of action in completion, but there is less agreement on what the nature of this 'completion' is. The completion presents action more as 'state' than as 'process', and, because of this, the IE perfect has been felt to be the most powerfully 'aspectual' category of the IE verbal system. For Buck, it represents the 'present state of the subject, resulting from previous action or experience' (1933: 239); for Lehmann, the PIE perfect indicates 'states resulting from previous activity' (1974: 141). Buck's state is more nominal and defining of the nature of the subject (actor) of the action; Lehmann's is more verbal. Both see perfects as somehow 'resultative'. The idea of result may be problematical because the concept, at least in our logical, cause/effect relationship, may very well have been foreign to the earlier stages of IE languages, as these essays have begun to indicate. Still, there is much to recommend these definitions in general. If a perfect form represents a fulfilled or completed action, we can say that it has somehow fully utilized the semantic space available for its occurrence. Such an idea has two defining factors: first, a fully realized quality and, second, a defined or defining context for occurrence whose semantic limits are either explicitly or implicitly known. Thus, in the opposition present: perfect, the perfect form will bring its fully realized or enacted element to the context of speech. As such, it impinges upon the 'now', thus providing a kind of mediation between actor and action, as Buck has implied. Within the opposition, it seems likely that the perfect is the marked

member (= *fully realized* and *impinging*), with its potential for occurrence being represented as having reached the fullest. The present is unmarked, lacking any specific reference to full realization.

The opposition aorist:perfect is the most difficult to account for because it has almost completely disappeared in attested IE languages. Even languages like Greek, which maintain reflexes of both IE forms, utilize them in ways apparently quite different from their earlier uses. Even so, we can see from what has already been discussed that aorists and perfects both express actions that have characteristics that delineate or define them as contained or somehow surrounded by limits. It is this limitation that allows aorists to express point-reference actions or momentary actions.[3] Granted the limits are vague, but their presence is essential to the unique kinds of actions aorists configure. Perfects, on the other hand, are explicitly and clearly limited, gaining their predicative power through their assertion of their limits as being fully reached. Thus, for the opposition aorist:perfect, we are dealing with discriminations among limited actions. The perfect is the marked member specifying (*fully realized*) within limits; the aorist is unmarked with respect to realization. The elements of impingement, which inhered in the present:perfect opposition, and otherness, which inhered in the present:aorist opposition, are of no significance here.

In the Germanic languages, these three oppositions have collapsed into one, present:preterite. Formally, the Germanic present derives from the present forms of the IE parent language; 'the preterit of the Germanic Strong Verb combines the two [other] forms into a mixed paradigm in which, roughly speaking, the singular is based upon the [IE] perfect, the plural upon the aorist' (Prokosch 1939:146). Within this paradigm, the former IE aorist and perfect forms exist in complementary distribution; they are never meaningfully distinct from each other. Functionally, it is not possible that the concepts associated with the opposition of these forms can operate any longer. If this were still the case, we would discover some functional distinction operative between singular (perfect-derived) and plural (aorist-derived) actions, but this is not the case.

In addition to its strong verbs, the group of Germanic languages has a second preterite formation, the so-called weak preterite, which is unique to the group and not traceable to any etymological source in the IE verbal system. There is a possibility of a

connection with participles ending in -*to*, but a source deriving from a suffix with an original IE -*t*, -*dh*, -*d*, or -*th* cannot be ruled out (Brugmann 1895:453–55). In a series of articles, Lehmann (1942, 1943a, 1943b) has made a strong case for tracing the Germanic weak preterite to the IE *-*dh*- determinative suffix: 'The value of the *dh*-determinative in Germanic is . . . in nouns formed from transitive roots that of a past passive modification of meaning, in nouns formed from intransitive roots that of modification caused by previous action, in verbs that of modification caused by previous action' (1942:132). Lehmann is careful to dissociate his findings of action modified by action from those of Benveniste, who had found in IE forms suffixed by *-*dh*-'l'expression de l'état (généralement de l'état accompli), susceptible par là d'introduire une référence au sujet et ainsi une modalité moyenne ou passive' (Benveniste 1935:210). We can see, however, that the remarks of both are very close, and, to the point here, both give us semantic accounts that come very close to the definition of the function of the IE perfect. We do not know at what point in the evolution of the Germanic languages the weak preterite began to occur, nor do we know when the collapse of the opposition aorist:perfect took place. Logically, however, 'if there was a parallelism between the strong and the weak preterite when the [forms underlying the] strong preterite still had [their earlier functional] meaning[s], the weak preterite may have developed from forms which had a similar meaning' (Lehmann 1943a:21–22). The *-*dh*- determinative supplies this meaning. It is likely that what we might call the uniquely Germanic preterite, which develops uniformly without distinction of number in both the Germanic weak and strong verbs, comes to express some function that does great violence neither to the mediate (*other*) quality of the IE aorist nor to the impinging (*fully realized*) quality of the IE perfect nor to the semantic elements associated with the IE *-*dh*- determinative.

A brief review of the tree–well model of the Germanic spatio-temporal system suggests that the inflectional pattern developed by the Germanic verb might very well be accommodated by a similar configuration. Its binary structure divides into a portion of activity (associated with the well) that is 'past'-dominated and a portion of activity (associated with the tree) that represents nonpast action. The nature of the well-derived past is, in part, ordered, known, and fully realized, yet powerfully active. Conceptually, this idea of

Time-space   Language
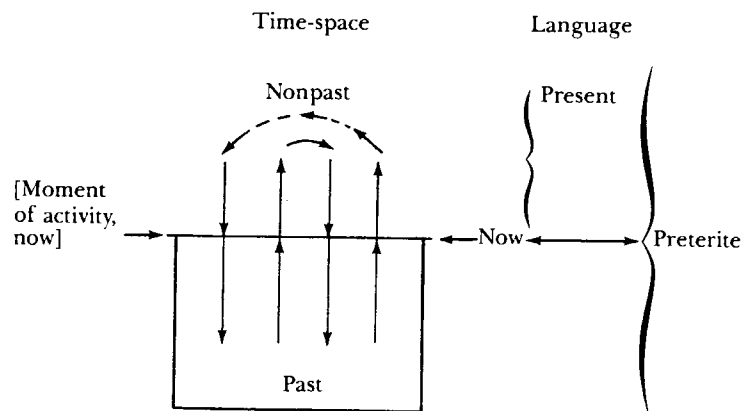
Figure 1

the 'past' is not at all wide of the aspect of fully realized impinging activity associated with the function of the perfect. It also has a strong feeling of 'state' or 'substance', which is related not only to the concept of the perfect but to forms utilizing the *-dh- determinative suffix. Both the perfect and the forms with *-dh- suggest actions whose force is built from their immediate activity's association with other related actions. This also is one of the definitive ideas associated with the Germanic 'past'. With respect to immediate, nonpast actions of the worlds of the tree, the well represents a kind of conceptual 'otherness', not unrelated to the function of the IE aorist. Thus, to some extent, the functional ideas that underlie the Germanic preterite are much like those defining the nature of the well of the past. This is rather too simple, however, to be entirely the case as we have examined it. We know that the nature of the past is such that it operates at once with respect to the 'other' realm of the well and 'immediately' within the worlds of men. It is the very shaping force that suffuses the whole of the Germanic universe.

If we are to relate Germanic verbal inflection with the Germanic cosmic structure, it will present us with a figure much like that of figure 1. Here, present-tense-marked actions lie exclusively outside the well, above the horizontal that marks the immediate present. Preterite-marked actions range over the whole of the dia-

gram, coming from and returning to the ordered structure of the well. The present of the opposition is, as we have seen, highly restricted with respect to occurrence. It seems to be the marked member of the opposition specifying and restricting itself to the immediacy of the nonpast. It seems likely then that the Germanic present-tense marking is something like 'unstructured', 'unrealized', 'immediate', or 'now'. Of course, the 'now' can be either a context of single point references, *this* moment only, or a more general contextual present, as in references to general truths as regular occurrences, but, in every case, present-tense-marked action is felt to be restricted to the immediacy of whatever the context being expressed is. This is still largely the way the present tense is used. On the other hand, the functional range of preterite-marked actions is not restricted to past time although, because of its opposition to the restrictive present, this is one of its significant uses. The preterite has become the unmarked member of the opposition. As a result, we should also find, logically, that there are instances in which preterite-marked actions refer meaningfully to events in nonpast contexts, but, from our analysis so far, these nonpast, preterite-marked actions should link importantly with other events, past events associated with the well.

How we are to account for the shift from the three oppositions of the IE parent verbal system to the single opposition found in the Germanic languages is not clear. At least two obvious changes must take place, however: The opposition aorist:perfect must break down, and an eventual marking of the originally unmarked present forms must take place. We can also see that the explicit markings (*fully realized* and *impinging*) for the perfect and (*other*) for the aorist also can no longer exist. The Germanic languages have one mark (*now* or *nonpast*) for the present and an unmarked preterite.[1] If the distinction between perfect and aorist broke down very early, it would most seriously affect the (*fully realized*) aspect of the perfect because it is this that is most central to its opposition with the aorist. Because both perfects and aorists were representative of actions within some kind of limitation, this change would then begin to define the emerging preterite as having some kind of 'outside impingement' or 'limiting other' quality. If the present forms then began, through implication, eventually to express *lack* of 'other-oriented control', this might tend to deemphasize and finally unmark semantically the newly created preterite forms standing in

opposition to the present forms. On the other hand, an early marking expressive of limitation in the present could equally lead to an unmarking of both aorist and perfect forms and their eventual refiguring as members of a single preterite. Either option is obviously too simple to account for all of the complications.[5] The results *are* as they have been described, however, regardless of the process of their evolution. Because, in all Germanic languages, present-marked forms came early to express actions explicitly marked as (*now*) or (*nonpast*), the range of expression of preterite-marked forms is unmarked, inexplicit, and unlimited semantically. They have developed a wider semantic range and can occur in more contexts than the more limited presents. Put another way: their 'meanings' are largely implied by context rather than explicitly denoted. This is one of the reasons why it has been so difficult for those of us who no longer share the earlier cultural conceptions to discover the power of earlier Germanic preterites and why, with the conceptual changes that the Christian conversion necessitated, there has been so little *obvious*, directly observable, or formal change between the earlier preterites and the preterites of our own day.[6]

There are factors observable in the development of Germanic verbs that seem to reveal something of the working out of the change from the earlier IE verbal system. One of the most striking of these is the development of the class of so-called preterite-present verbs in all Germanic languages. Forms of these are illustrated in Table 1. As the material of the table makes clear, the development of these forms is both widespread and uniform throughout the whole Germanic group. These 'present' forms are all derived from earlier preterite (ultimately perfect) inflections of strong verbs, which have now become functional presents and for which new 'weak' preterites (i.e. with dental suffix) have been produced. It becomes immediately clear from the glosses in the table that these verbs as a group refer to actions the occurrences of which clearly entail other concomitant actions. They are all representative of states or nonactive, situational conditions that provide contingent restrictions governing other, related activities. The states of knowing, availing, being able, owing, daring, and needing all exist in relation to powerful contextual control that structures any consequent activity. Thus, their presence in any context would suggest the presence in it also of factors beyond those of any immediate possibility for action by any immediate actor alone. They can

Table 1
Preterite-present verbs (3rd-person-singular forms)

	Gothic	Old High German	Old Norse	Old English
I	wáit (know)	weiz	veit	wāt
	láis (know)	—	—	—
II	dáug (profit, avail, impers.)	toug (impers.)	—	dēag
III	—	an (allow)	ann (love)	ann (grant)
	kann (know)	kan	kann	cann
	þarf (need)	darf	þarf	þearf
	ga-dars (dare)	gi-tar	—	dearr
IV	skal (be obliged, owe)	scal	skal	sceal
	man (think)	—	man (= remember, have in mind)	geman (remember)
			mun (have in mind, = intend)	—
	bi-nah (be permitted)	gi-nah	—	be-, geneah (be enough)
V	mag (be able)	mag	má [mega]	mæg
	—	—	kná (know)	—
VI	ga-mōt (find room)	muoz (have possibility)	—	mōt (must)
	ōg (fear)	—	—	—
(VII? or I)	áih (possess)	eigun [plural only]	[eiga, inf] á	āh

Sources: Forms are derived from Wright (1910: 161–64) for Gothic, Braune (1911: 297–300) for Old High German, Noreen (1903: 311–13) for Old Norse, and Campbell (1959: 343–46) for Old English.

be seen to represent easily the kinds of powerful control that we have seen the force of the past to exhibit. That such forces should have been perfect-derived and possibly preterite-marked in their early appearances in the Germanic languages does not seem strange. 'The semantic shift which gave rise to the preterite-present verbs is reasonably clear. In these verbs a meaning "action when completed" comes to be "the modification resulting from previous [better, here, 'related'] action", e.g. [Goth.] *wáit* "I have seen [better, 'I see *fully*']", > "I know"' (Lehmann 1943*a* : 25). With the breakdown of the opposition aorist : perfect, the (*fully realized*) element of such perfect forms will be downplayed, leaving its more directly present-related concept of impingement relatively intact. The present-oriented meaning will become primary. For verbs with semantic natures of this sort, the move to the realm of the functional present would be clear. The eventual development of a new preterite would complete the process.[7] Not surprisingly, these forms provide the modern Germanic languages with the syntactic sources of many of their most widely used auxiliary verbs. Likewise, others of this list still regularly govern substantive clauses or infinitive constructions or both. They still represent verbs dominating other verbs grammatically, actions dominating actions semantically.

Another important factor in the development of the Germanic verb would associate its evolving preterite forms with the related loss of the IE medio-passive forms and the eventual appearance of auxiliary passive constructions common to these languages. The Germanic languages quite early

> simplified the [IE] verbal system by eliminating the opposition of active endings and middle endings. In accordance with the relation of the action expressed to the subject, active or middle endings were used in Indo-European: the active [Gk.] *leípō* means 'I leave', while the middle [Gk.] *leípomai* means 'I leave for myself' or 'I am left'. Germanic knew this opposition. Gothic still used it in the present where the ancient middle endings express the passive: *bairiþ*, which corresponds to [Skt.] *bhárati*, 'he carries', has this same meaning; *bairada*, which should be compared with [Skt.] *bhárate* and [Gk.] *phéretai*, 'he carries for himself' and 'he is carried', means 'he is carried'. The other Germanic dialects have lost the middle inflection of

> the present. In the preterite, Gothic itself does not have the middle endings. (Meillet 1970 : 69)

This change or lack of development of medio-passive forms relates to the development in the Germanic languages of the opposition of present to preterite. The forms underlying the preterite at first express directly the idea of an enclosed (or *fully realized* and *impinging*) aspect from the IE perfect and the idea of a contextual (*other*) aspect from the IE aorist. On the other hand, the IE medio-passive seems to have represented the concept of mediation between subject and verbal action. Thus, as Meillet's examples point out, in each case the relationship between subject and verb in the medio-passive is indirect, nontransitive, and mediated by other elements that must act upon or in conjunction with the subject. These medio-passives have a rather wider range of function than passives in either present-day English or Latin. Formally, they are much like perfects; there are like inflections in Greek, Sanskrit, and probably Iranian for middles and perfects that 'go back to the same original series represented by [Skt.] *-a, -tha, -a*' (Kuryłowicz 1964 : 56). This alignment between middle and perfect forms

> must be interpreted on the basis of the resultative implications of the two forms. The middle . . . indicates that the result of action expressed by the verb has an impact for the subject ('I see with some impact on my . . . action'; also 'I see myself') . . . Since both the perfect and the middle in this way have implications based on the result of an action, their forms show a natural relationship. But, apart from their relationship in sharing resultative meaning, they should not be more closely aligned, as if the perfect were a preterite to a middle present. (Lehmann 1974 : 143–44)

Except for the emphasis on resultative action, which here would be better expressed as 'concomitant or structured action', the point is clear. It can be seen that something of the (*fully realized*) nature of the function of the perfect as it is falling together in Germanic usage with the contextual (*other*) of the aorist produces a preterite that functions as an 'impinging otherness'. The element of impingement comes very close to the concept of mediation as it had been expressed through the medio-passive. We might then suspect that, with only quite simple semantic readjustment, any opposition

between the new preterite and the medio-passive would tend to become functionally nullified: All evolving preterites would be by definition 'mediated', removed from the immediacy of the context by its 'impinging otherness', which separates the subject from the verbal action. On the other hand, the present could allow for opposition of mediated versus nonmediated action, as in figure 2.[8] This gives us some account of the formal categories we do find in Gothic, but only there; functionally, these allow for meaningful distinctions of active and medio-passive (nonmediated and mediated) forms only in the present, and none in the preterite, where the (*impinging otherness*) function has effectively subsumed the (*mediated*) function.

The diagram of figure 2 does not, however, represent the functional opposition of forms in Gothic. As has already been pointed out, by the time any Germanic language is committed to writing, the nature of the opposition present : preterite has changed. The preterite is the unmarked member, and the present has acquired a marking of contextual (*now*). Thus, at some still early but later stage than that reflected in figure 2, the Germanic languages could be more adequately represented by the diagram of figure 3. This also is not the functional equivalent of the Gothic system, for the nature of the mark that is unique to the medio-passive forms seems to have been changed, narrowed to something much more like what we now understand straightforward passives to be. That is, it has moved away from the 'medio-' function toward the 'passive'. Most simply, Gothic medio-passive forms express a lack of immediate agency of subject over the action expressed. Thus, we find regularly constructions like *dáupjada* 'he is baptized'; *jah þu, barnilō, praúfētus háuhistins háitaza* 'and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest' (Wright 1910: 191). In each case, the agent of the baptizing or calling is left unexpressed. Other kinds of constructions also originally 'middle' in form—like 'He weighs five pounds'—move out of the medio-passive inflection and into the active.

The functional oppositions of Gothic can, finally, be illustrated by the diagram of figure 4. Here, occurrences of passive forms signal directly the lack of relationship of agency between subject and verb. The figure suggests also that the new function of the passive now allows for a fourth semantic opposition, one in which the new, fully evolved Germanic preterite might also act in some

Figure 2

$$
\begin{array}{c|c}
\varnothing \begin{bmatrix} impinging \\ otherness \end{bmatrix} & \varnothing \begin{bmatrix} impinging \\ otherness \end{bmatrix} \\
\end{array}
$$

present active   present medio-passive

$$\varnothing\ (mediated)\ |\ +\ (mediated)$$

IE perfect ⎫
            ⎬ preterite   +(*impinging otherness*)
IE aorist ⎭

Figure 3

present active	present medio-passive
+ (*now*)	+ (*now*)
Ø (*mediated*)	+ (*mediated*)

preterite

Ø (*now*)

Figure 4

+ (*now*)	+ (*now*)
Ø (*no immediate agency*)	+ (*no immediate agency*)
present active	present passive

preterite

Ø   (*now*)

Ø   (*no immediate agency*)

functional opposition with the now more restricted semantic nature of the diminished medio-passive. It is in this opposition that the beginnings of the common, Germanic auxiliary passive construction can be found. Such constructions are common in Gothic. They occur not only in contexts that refer exclusively to 'past time' utilizing the preterite mark but also within the semantic territory allotted in figure 4 to the present passive. Thus, we find, paralleling the occurrence of present medio-passive constructions, forms like *gamēliþ ist* 'it is written', *aþþan izwara jah tagla háubidis alla garaþana sind* 'but the very hairs of your head are all numbered', and *gaáiwiskōþs waírþa* 'I shall be ashamed' (Wright 1910:191). In each case, the construction is built upon either the verb *wisan* or *waírþan* and a past participle, and each expresses the expected lack of agency. Such constructions occur also in the preterite: *qam Iēsus jah dáupiþs was fram Iōhannē* 'Jesus came and was baptized by John', and *sabbatō in mans warþ gaskapans* 'the sabbath was made for man' (Wright 1910:191).

The evolution of passive constructions formed syntactically through auxiliaries and past participles and employed equally in the present and preterite is the rule in all other Germanic languages.[9] With the common exception of the verb 'be called' (OE *hātan*, OHG *heizan*, ON *heita*) there are no longer any reflexes of medio-passive forms extant. Whether the development of the Gothic constructions outlined above is applicable to all other Germanic languages is a moot point. Because, however, all the other languages evidence occurrences of the etymologically same auxiliary verbs (Goth. *wisan*, ON *vesa*, *vera*, OS *wesan*, OHG *wesan*; Goth. *waírþan*, OIcel. *verþa*, OSwed. *varþa*, OS *werðan*, OHG *werdan*, OE *weorþan*) used with past participles in similar constructions, it seems unreasonable to deny the similarities of development.[10] For our purposes here, we shall want to examine the common semantic and grammatical nature of these constructions and relate them to the Germanic cosmic conceptual scheme.

These constructions use the past participles of both weak and strong verbs equally. These participles have developed from earlier IE verbal forms suffixed either by *-to-*, in the weak verbs, or *-no-*, in the strong verbs. The IE suffix *-no-* 'is found especially in verbal adjectives, which, like those in [*-to-*], were made from the verbal stem (not from a particular tense-stem) . . . They are chiefly passive in meaning. Besides these there are numerous substantives . . .

generally abstract in meaning' (Brugmann 1891:139–40). As for the forms in *-to-*, their meaning 'was generally passive . . . But the passive sense can hardly have been originally attached to the suffix itself . . . The idea of completion or being complete, and hence of being in a particular condition seems to have been the essential element in the meaning of the forms derived from the verbal stem' (Brugmann 1891:219). In general, the suffix *-to-* seems to have expressed 'l'accomplissement de la notion dans l'objet' (Benveniste 1948:167). In its participial forms, it refers to a kind of self-completion, self-accomplishment of the verbal action. As such, it is at once statelike and 'passive', as it were, by default. Any distinction, apparently very little, in these two IE suffixes has disappeared by the time they appear as participial markers in the Germanic languages. These participles, unlike the Germanic tense inflection, have shown no obvious merging with other IE inflection. Thus, they may very well adhere closely to the ideas their ancestors expressed. If so, these participles express, first, the semantic nature of their own individual action and, second, the idea of their particular participial nature, action completed, fully realized, laid out, known, expressed—perhaps even as 'fact'. The participle makes no predication, however; there is nothing in its nature that specifies any occurrence value for its action. Likewise, there is nothing in its semantic nature that specifies any kind of temporality. These participles—often called 'past, passive' participles—are neither temporally past nor agentively passive. They are, if anything, marked only for what we have been calling 'realized' action. It is not surprising to find the Germanic languages using them readily in both present and preterite; they are used in both auxiliary passive and 'perfect' constructions, as the Gothic examples above show.

The distinction between the auxiliary or 'syntactic' passive and perfect, always clear in Modern English through the complementary usage of forms of *be* for passive and *have* for perfect constructions, was not always clear in the Germanic languages and is not universally so today. In fact, the evolution of syntactically separate forms for perfect and passive constructions is quite a recent innovation. 'The three functions perfect passive, present passive, and state, are thus neatly distinguished [in Modern German]: *er ist geschlagen worden, er wird geschlagen, er ist geschlagen*' (Kuryłowicz 1964:57). But in Middle High German, although the past participle 'dient in verbindung mit dem verb. *wërden* zur umschreibung

für das mangelnde praes. und praet. des passivums, [und] in ver-
bindung mit *sîn* zur umschreibung für das perf ... [,] *ist* [*was*]
worden mit dem part. existiert noch nicht' (Paul 1904:131). Even
this syntactic distinction between perfect and passive was lacking in
the earlier stages of the Germanic languages. All of the languages,
however, made similar periphrastic constructions with their own
variants of Goth. *wisan* or *wairþan* but without anything like an
obvious syntactic split between them. We can see in figure 5, for
example, the curious spread of occurrences of translations of non-
present, passive (middle) inflections in the Greek New Testament
as they appear in the Gothic version of Ulfilas (Streitberg 1906:
182–83).[11] Although the Gk. perfect and pluperfect passives are
regularly translated with *wisan* and the past participle, *wairþan*
also occurs, but infrequently. With respect to the aorist, no clear-cut
line can be drawn; *wisan* is used a little more frequently than *wair-
þan*. The periphrastic construction with *wairþan* is regularly more
frequent in other Germanic languages, especially in verse, even
though the *verþa* and past participle construction is not, in general,
at all common in Old Norse, and *weorþan* and past participle con-
structions disappear relatively early from Old English. When one
examines Germanic literature for constructions that are by our
standards 'perfective' rather than 'passive', the percentages of the
number of *wairþan* to the total of both *wairþan* and *wisan* construc-
tions fall approximately as: OE *Exodus*, 5.5 percent; *Beowulf*, 21
percent; the Poetic Edda, 23 percent; Gothic Bible, 44 percent;[12]
Ynglingatal, 71 percent; *Judith*, 71 percent; *Daniel*, 74 percent;
Christ, 90 percent; *Heliand*, 100 percent (Mittner 1955:111–12).
The range of variation is enormous. Because it does not seem to be
a productive task to separate perfect constructions from passives,
the distinction between these two kinds of constructions should be
observable, if anywhere, somewhere else.

Distinctions among these contexts must be sought in the dif-
ferences between forms of *wisan* and forms of *wairþan*. These verbs
carry the tense of the context and, joined with the participle, predi-
cate the whole action of the sentence. Forms of *wisan* predicate
'state', and they have as their function the actualizing of the par-
ticipially contained, perfected, completed, or realized action within
the context, immediately (= *now*) in present-tense-marked forms of
wisan and not necessarily immediately with preterite forms. With
wairþan there is a difference because *wairþan* is semantically more

Figure 5

Nonpresent, Passive Constructions in the Gothic New Testament

		Wairþan	Wisan	
Greek:	Rendered as Gothic	*Warþ* (only)	*was*	*ist*	+ past participle
	Aorist indicative passive	69	42	50	
	Imperfect passive	7	17	—	
	Pluperfect passive	—	5	—	
	Perfect passive	4	42	50	

complex. I have avoided glossing *wairþan* because its usual transla-
tion, 'become', is wide of the mark. As has been laid out in great
detail above, forms of *wairþan* express not only becoming but turn-
ing and changing as well; more significantly, the verb is etymologi-
cally related to and expressive of Germanic conceptions of time
and space. It represents the power and influence of the past upon
the present. Thus, the earliest uses of *wairþan* would bring this
power explicitly into the contexts in which they occur. This con-
struction, *wairþan* and the past participle, is 'eine der wichtigsten
und bezeichnendsten Erscheinungen der germanischen Syntax ...
[es] hängt aufs innigste mit dem Geheimnamen der Wurd zusam-
men; es diente ursprünglich dazu, das Tabuwort des gefürchteten
Schicksals durch eine selbst tabuartige Umschreibung anzudeuten,
durch eine noch mehr oder weniger bewußte *figura etymologica* ver-
hüllend zu entüllen' (Mittner 1955:111).[13] Whether we will go this
far or not is a matter of our own beliefs as to the possibilities of the
speakers of a language being able to control the directions of their
grammars. In any case, there is no escaping the feeling that the
construction from its earliest occurrences expressed not only ac-
tions laid out, perfected, and in completion but actions that struc-
tured the contexts in which they occurred. They would bring fac-
tors from beyond the immediate to work and predicate events,
returning them, as it were, to the great universal store of events
from which all power came and in which all meaningful action re-
turned. Thus, with respect to occurrences of *wairþan* and the past
participle in the translations of the Gothic Bible, the contexts in
which they occur regularly express something beyond the mere

occurrence or the state of the action itself; they often seem to suggest 'daß etwas geschehen ist, manchmal geradezu die Entwicklung des Geschehens, ein eher allmähliches Sich-Wenden der Dinge' (Pollak 1964:45).[14] This 'working-out' of things is, within the Germanic framework here evolved, central to all significant action. No wonder the construction seems 'perfective'—it deals directly with actions so structured. No wonder the construction seems 'passive' —no effective immediate agency could be possible; the roles of mere individual actors would be ancillary to the play of cosmic forces.

A binary tense system of the kind laid out above is, among the attested IE languages, unique to the Germanic group. When we examine those languages that in all probability were located in nearest geographical proximity to what were likely to have been the areas inhabited by Germanic-speaking peoples, we can observe a number of important similarities and differences between the verbal systems of these languages and that of the Germanic languages.[15] These are what might be called the 'European' group of IE languages: Balto-Slavic, Celtic, Hellenic, Italic, and Germanic. As in Germanic, so in each of the others: the opposition perfect:aorist has been lost. 'Neither the form nor the function of the [IE] perfect find[s] correspondence in the Slavic' (Jakobson 1955: 19). 'In Baltic and Slavic all that remains of the perfect is the active participle, which is independent of the personal forms of the preterite, the latter being based on the aorist' (Meillet 1967:132). In Italic and Celtic, the forms of the IE perfect and aorist collapse to form new Italic perfects and the various Celtic 'past' tenses. Only the Hellenic languages maintain anything of the IE parent verbal oppositions of present, perfect, and aorist. Even here, the relationships have changed. Greek has evolved additional inflections and a new functional system predicative of tense or temporal distinctions lacking in the IE parent system.[16]

With respect to the building of 'past' tenses (those inflected forms of verbs that are most like the Germanic 'preterites'), the Slavic utilizes only the IE aorist. The Celtic and Italic, along with the Germanic, use both the IE aorist and perfect. The stem forms, however, that result from the collapse in Italic and Celtic of IE aorists and perfects differ greatly from those that form the Germanic strong preterite. In Italic, the merger of aorist and perfect forms is used to create the perfect stem of the verb (Buck 1933:

291–97; Palmer 1954:272–76). Thus, in Latin, the function is aspectual, with the present stem forming the *infectum* and the aorist-perfect forming the *perfectum* of any verb.[17] In the Celtic languages, the melding of IE perfect and aorist forms produces what is usually called simple 'past' or 'preterite' forms. In Welsh, for example, 'the past is in the vast majority of cases aorist in meaning, as it is predominantly in derivation. It may however have a perfect meaning, as some verbs have perfect instead of aorist forms' (Jones 1913: 316). In Old Irish, simple preterites denote past or nonrepetitive actions. As such, they are distinguished from Irish imperfects, which denote repeated action in the past (Thurneysen 1946:331– 32). This Celtic 'imperfect' is derived from an IE optative and, as such, is etymologically unrelated to the aorist-perfect-derived, simple preterite (Jones 1913:315).[18] Thus, those Celtic preterites that derive from the merger of IE aorist and perfect forms are just one among several 'past' formations utilized by these several languages. The functional distribution resulting from the interrelation of these various forms creates a much more complicated verbal structure than the single, unitary structure of the Germanic preterite. No other language of this European group exhibits a development of the IE aorist and perfect forms like that of the Germanic languages, nor do the 'past' tenses of any of these function like the Germanic preterites.[19]

In addition to the differences among Italic, Celtic, and Germanic in the development of IE aorist and perfect forms, both Latin and Irish have evolved formal categories for the expression of future time. Greek, likewise, has a formal future. Such formal categories are entirely lacking from the Germanic verbal system. The expression of future in attested IE languages is most commonly a derivation of IE 's-formations with desiderative and future force. A suffix -syo- is common to the futures of Indo-Iranian and Lithuanian, as Skt. *dāsyāmi*, Lith. *duosiu*; a suffix -so- to those of Greek and the Italic dialects, as δείξω, Osc.-Umbr. *fust* "erit" (from *fūseti*), and to the early Latin forms like *faxō*; while both of these are related to the reduplicated s-formations of the [Skt.] desideratives, as *pi-pā-sāmi* "I wish to drink", and certain Irish futures' (Buck 1933:278–79). The regular Lat. future in -bi- is unique to that language. Future forms, however, of whatever origin occur uniformly throughout both the Lat. *infectum* (simple future) and *perfectum* (future perfect). This, with its two parallel 'pasts' and

'presents', gives Latin its neat, binary aspectual and tripartite temporal structure. Of the Celtic languages, only Irish has a formal future.[20] It is of two types: strong, which is made of s-formations related to the Skt. desiderative, and weak, the so-called f-future, which, in spite of the apparent similarities, is unrelated to the Lat. -bi- future (Thurneysen 1946:396–415). Within the Balto-Slavic group, the Baltic languages have a formal future inflection based, as indicated above, on the IE -s- suffix.[21] The Slavic languages, on the other hand, lack any mark for the future. Formally, the Slavic verb is binary in its distinctions.

It is with the verbs of the Slavic languages alone that the Germanic verbal system shows any apparent, close relations. Even here, however, the relationship is more apparently close than actual. Except for the disappearance of the IE perfect in Slavic, verbal development (especially in its simplification) seems parallel to that of the Germanic languages. The Slavic languages have evolved other complications, however. Ignoring for the moment the element of aspect (already highly evolved in Old Church Slavonic), we can find complications in the Slavic 'past' tense itself. In addition to the aorist-derived past, Old Church Slavonic also had an imperfect past form, which is a Slavic innovation unrelated to imperfect 'durative' forms in other IE languages, such as Greek and Sanskrit (Meillet 1934:271–75). In this, Slavic is like Italic and Celtic, and unlike Germanic. The aorist-derived past and the imperfect 'both specify action presented as taking place prior to the moment of utterance. The *imperfect* specifies an action coordinated with a fact or act in the past: this point of reference may or may not be present in the context. The *aorist* has no such specification—it is merely an event in the past' (Lunt 1965:136). This division of the preterite in Slavic is unlike anything in the Germanic system.

The highly developed aspectual nature of the entire Slavic verbal system provides another element missing from Germanic verbs. Although the present tense of Slavic imperfective and perfective verbs are not formally distinct, their aspectual nature precipitates functional differences. Because of this, the present-tense-inflected perfective verb is effectively blocked from making immediate, present reference. Thus, such verbs so inflected in Old Church Slavonic become 'the most frequent means of expressing future action' (Lunt 1965:135).[22] Because aspect operates in conjunction with tense, the Slavic verbal system makes more functional oppo-

sitions than it at first appears to. Ultimately, the binary divisions everywhere observable in these verbs—imperfective:perfective, present:past, aorist:imperfect—provide an eight-way system of oppositions more complex than anything in the Germanic languages.

In their verbs, the morphologically most simple of all attested IE languages, the Germanic languages once again evidence the powerful, binary oppositions found in the culture's mythology, literature, and spatio-temporal conceptions. These oppositions are related in their nature and are unique among Indo-European cultural remains to the Germanic peoples. Yet, in each case, there are strong associations with other Indo-European cultures and to what appear to have been manifestations of the parent Indo-European culture itself. How well or how accurately the Germanic materials, artifacts and language, reflect the concerns of the parent culture may never be determined. Yet one might suggest that there are reasons to suspect that in some significant ways they might very well present us with cogent insights into some aspects of matters Primitive Indo-European. With respect to its phonology, Primitive Germanic was in all probability a highly conservative language. If, with Schwarz (1951, 1956), we can see Germanic culture deriving from a geographical position in northern Europe/southern Scandinavia, then early Germanic culture itself, like many isolated colonial cultures, may also have been 'conservative'. If this is the case, the changes in the Germanic languages may be the result of not so much an abandoning of earlier IE elements as a paring down to retain those aspects of the earlier conceptual structure felt to be essential. 'Our knowledge that [Germanic] was conservative in phonology may help us to a better description of PIE morphology; for if [Germanic] was conservative in one branch of grammar it may also have been so in others . . . There is no need to look for unusual cultural developments to explain the [Germanic] changes' (Lehmann 1953:152).

So far, we have examined the development of the Germanic present and preterite inflected tenses and have been concerned with how these relate to the Germanic binary spatio-temporal conception. We must remember, however, that, during much of the time in which the material used in this discussion was composed and written down, much pressure was being put upon this essentially Germanic temporal conception to change and to express tem-

poral ideas other than those endemic to the system itself. The early Gothic material is a translation of the Greek New Testament. Greek is a language in which formal expression of the future is regular. Later, when we come to examine material from West and North Germanic languages, other temporal pressure (i.e. Christian pressure essentially) is applied through Latin with its neatly tripartite tense structure. How the various Germanic languages handle such phenomena is clearly of interest to us here. How they cope with the reality of a formally expressed future once the Greek or Latin expression of the future becomes viable for them should point not only to the possibilities for such expression in each of these languages but, more importantly, to what finally happened grammatically as each strove to produce within its own linguistic structure an acceptable formulation of the concept of futurity.

Apparently, at the very beginning very little happened. All early Germanic texts yield the same information: "die zukünftige Handlung wird in der Regel überhaupt nicht besonders ausgedrückt. Wie in allen germanischen Sprachen genügt auch im Got[ischen] das Präsens zur Bezeichnung der zukünftigen Handlung' (Streitberg 1906:192). Thus, there seems to have been, in the earliest time, no conceptual distinction of present and future; both are equally nonpast. This phenomenon is not restricted to early Germanic languages; it is more or less viable in all of them still. In present-day English, for example, 'in using the present tense in speaking of future events one disregards, as it were, the uncertainty always connected with prophesying, and speaks of something, not indeed as really taking place now, but simply as certain' (Jespersen 1961:21). Although earlier occurrences of this usage in English would actually have stressed both the 'now' and the 'certainty' of Jespersen's formulation, his statement clearly expresses common Germanic usage. It forces into the present context the assurance, the presence of the action, and it was only and ever in such contexts where the present tense was used. One looks in vain for occurrences in Germanic languages of its use to refer to speculation or unlikely future actions. Such possibilities simply lie outside the Germanic conceptual frame.

In addition to the present-tense usage, the Germanic languages also uniformly utilize a series of auxiliary constructions to refer to what we call the future. These constructions are remarkably similar in all Germanic languages. They regularly use an in-

finitive form of the verb that directly expresses the action involved, and they predicate (i.e. make tense reference) through auxiliaries that are largely (although not entirely) of the class of preterite-present verbs examined above. The Germanic infinitives, like the participles already discussed, are nonpredicting verbal forms. They derive from an earlier IE neuter nominalizing suffix, *-no-, which was apparently inflected in the accusative (Brugmann 1895: 604; Kluge 1901:443-44; Prokosch 1939:204-5). These forms retain a closer affinity to the verbal than to the nominal system of these languages. As verbs, however, they lack inflection for mood, tense, person, etc., which are the paradigmatic marks of true verbal forms.[23] It is wide of the mark, however, to think of the infinitive as a noun-deriving form because the infinitive retains its verbal nature and can surround itself by nouns fulfilling roles of agency, instrument, etc. (most noticeable in the accusative and infinitive construction). In effect, the infinitive alone can express a fully formed sentence (with or without accompanying nouns) but one for which no predication value occurs; that is, the infinitive must be imbedded in or subordinated to some other tense-marked verb (Kuryłowicz 1964:158-70). This is much like what we have seen with participles, but the infinitive differs from the past participle in its lack of any special marking for passivity, completion, or perfectivity. Indeed, the infinitive presents as simply as possible the semantic content of the action of the verb stem. It depends entirely upon its accompanying tense-marked verb for any element expressive of predication value.

With respect to expression of the future, the infinitive occurs with any of a group of verbs that, from the beginnings of the Germanic languages as a group, have formed a widely distributed, evolving, auxiliary system expressive of 'modality'. These auxiliary and infinitive constructions express the actions in the infinitive and the modality in the tense-marked auxiliary (or main verb, if we wish to see the infinitive as essentially nominal). Verbs expressive of modality all predicate not actions directly but potentials for occurrence of the action expressed through the joined infinitive. The possibilities of occurrence range from merely 'possible', as in English *may, can*, for example, to 'sure, certain', as in English *shall, will*.[24] The actual semantic scope varies from language to language and from time to time as the languages evolve, and it is not important here to elaborate upon the various semantic adumbrations

that the Germanic languages severally and across time have pro-
duced. It is enough to point out that, from the very earliest times,
references to so-called future time were expressed through this
evolving system and that inevitably such reference utilized those
forms that lay, with respect to the whole range of modal potentials,
closest to the pole that specified 'assured' or 'certain' occurrence.
Thus, as Table 2 makes clear, the most frequently found forms are
those that derive etymologically from the primitive Germanic verb
underlying Goth. *skulan*. It seems likely that at some early date,
along with the more common reference by means of the present-
tense inflection, 'das Futurum . . . im Altgermanischen . . . kann
durch Umschreibung mit *skulan* zum Ausdruck gelangen' (Kluge
1901:452). *Skulan*, also still a full verb in all early Germanic lan-
guages, has as its primary semantic function the expression of obli-
gation, necessity, duty, etc. The constructions with infinitives are
likewise colored: in Old Norse, '*skulu* + infinitive . . . included a
notion of necessity, duty, or intention' (Gordon 1957:313), and in
Old English, in '*sculan* + inf . . . there is a sense of obligation'
(Campbell 1959:295–96). This was, apparently, everywhere the
case, and the present-day reflexes of *skulan* in many Germanic lan-
guages still express it to some extent: in Dan. *skal* 'have to', in con-
structions with Ger. *sollen*, and in early Mod.E biblical renderings,
such as 'thou shalt not', to cite but three obvious cases. When we
recall the names of the three Norse Norns —Urth, Verthandi, and
Skuld—we find in addition to forms related to *wairþan*, Urth and
Verthandi, the third derived from *skulan*. Even if the latter two
Norns, Verthandi and Skuld, are late arrivals on the Germanic
scene, we can see that their names suggest what seems to have been
the most likely source of their activities. The process of occurrence
(associated with Verthandi) is linked directly to Urth at its root and
is thus past-associated. Obligated or assured occurrence (associated
with Skuld through the verbal root of *skulan*) is, as we have seen,
also past-derived, as it was only through association with the gener-
ative forces of the activity of the past in the present that any mean-
ingful obligation or necessity could have been created. Thus, these
representations of assured, future-marked activities are not at
their origin different from any other important or assured activity
within the Germanic cosmos.

Other verbs utilized by the Germanic languages to express as-
sured occurrence of the actions of associated infinitives are not se-

Table 2
Forms used with infinitives to build auxiliary constructions
expressive of 'future time'

EARLY	→	MIDDLE	→	MODERN

*Proto-Germanic: *skulan*
↓
Gothic: *skulan* 'be obliged, owe'
           duginnan 'begin'
           haban 'have (to)'

Old Norse: *skulu* ———————————→ Swedish *skola*
                                  → Danish *skal*
                                    Danish *vil*

              munu 'have in mind, intend'———→ Icelandic
                                                munu

Old Saxon: *mugan* 'be able'
              skulan   Middle Low German: *moten* 'have (to)'
                          scholen ——————→*schal*
                          wellen 'intend, desire'—→*wil*
                                    Dutch: *zullen*

Old High German: *sculan* →Middle High German: *suln*   → *sollen*
                 wellen ————————————→ *wellen* → *wollen*
                                          wërden → Ger. *werden*

Old English: *willan* ———————→Middle English: *wil* ———→ *will* ⟩ *'ll*
                sculan ————————————→ *shal* ———→ *shall*
                bēon

Sources: Information is drawn, in part, from Kluge (1901), Streitberg
(1906), Wright (1910), Gordon (1957), Holthausen (1899), Lübben
(1882), Braune (1911), Paul (1904), Behaghel (1924), and Campbell
(1959).

mantically unlike *skulan* although they are not initially used as reg-
ularly or as frequently: Goth. *haban* 'have' and *duginnan* 'initiate,
begin'; OS *mugan* 'be able, have power'; OHG *wellen* 'have voli-
tion'; OE *willan* 'have volition', *bēon*; and ON *munu*. Forms like OE
bēon and Goth. *haban* and *duginnan* all express the presence or du-
ration of the action of the following infinitive (Streitberg 1906:
192–93). As such, they stress the proximity or real presence of the
following action without specifically predicating it, as in Mod.E 'he

is to leave tomorrow' or 'he has to leave tomorrow'. It is clear that the element of necessity is not far from these constructions; in each case, the action of 'leaving' is construed to be a real factor in the activity of the present. OS *mugan, as in nū mahtu sīðon . . . than findis thū (Holthausen 1899:146), suggests a similar semantic concept of presence. OHG wellen and OE willan both express volition or intention directly, and ON munu expresses the idea of 'having in mind'.[25] The relationship between munu and willan is significant because it represents directly the immediate connection of thought and action, word and deed, volition and necessity; that is, to think or will an action is the equivalent of insuring its occurrence (it is, likewise, only slightly removed from the idea of the bēot, the promise of an action which, through the speaking of the action, insures its occurrence). Not only this, but the conception underlying both munu and willan immediately links the concept of future or intended action with domination by the past. Actions conceived mentally are enclosed and contained within the mind and are produced by a calling forth, a rising out—indeed, a re-membering of actions already known.[26] Thus, the distinction between immediate thought and all past action is broken down; mental activity links act to intention; presence of intention links 'future' to past.

It may seem strange that the group of verbs considered above lacks reflexes of wairþan as an auxiliary of the 'future', for it seems, from everything so far considered, to have special significance in representing times not present. Anyone acquainted solely with Modern German will be doubly surprised. Yet, reflexes of wairþan do not occur in the earliest Germanic records as part of the system of forms used with infinitives to make 'future' reference. The verb is not absent from such contexts, however. In the Gothic Bible, for example, forms of wairþan occur alone (i.e. without an accompanying infinitive) not less than forty-eight times as translations of Gk. ἔσομαι (future tense forms of 'be') (Streitberg 1906:195). A similar construction occurs in Old Saxon, as in thes wirðid sō fagan man 'this [one] becomes/is determined to be/turns out to be (like) a joyful man' (Holthausen 1899:146). The contexts are what we might call revelatory, expressive of the accomplishment or discovery of that which is somehow, within the structure of things, uncoverable and knowable.

Forms of wairþan begin to appear in auxiliary constructions in

both Middle High German (wĕrden) and Middle Low German (werden) in the thirteenth century. The constructions differ significantly from those so far considered, however. In Middle Low German, for example, constructions with werden that seem to have future reference are not 'mit dem Infinitiv konstruiert, sondern, wie im Mhd. des 13. Jahrhunderts mit dem Particip des Präsens, z.B. ik werde gevende (dabo)' (Lübben 1882:91). In the period following, the present participle frequently appears without the -de suffix, giving it the appearance of an infinitive. It is then the case that in later Middle Low German both forms, with and without -de, 'in einem und demselben Satze steht: ik werde sendende und ik werde senden' (Lübben 1882:91). By the sixteenth century, the participle is the regular form employed in Low German. In general, however, reference to futurity is more regularly made in Low German with a form of moten, scholen, or wellen with a following infinitive. Even today, Low German dialects usually employ wil or schal, rather than werde, with an infinitive to refer to the future (Lübben 1882:92).

In Middle High German, in addition to the participial constructions described above, 'seit der zweiten hälfte des 13. jahrh. kommt wĕrden mit dem inf. auf, aber nicht wie im nhd. zum ausdruck des fut., sondern zur bezeichnung des eintritts einer handlung, darum auch häufig im praet: sô wĕrdent sie trinken[;] ĕr wart weinen' (Paul 1904:135). This usage is paralleled in Middle Low German, where occurrences of werden with the present participle in the preterite regularly express durative or inchoative aspects of the participially expressed action (Lübben 1882:92).[27] In Middle High German, the expression of future-oriented events with wĕrden and the present participle falls off rapidly, and by the fourteenth century futurity is regularly expressed by wĕrden and the infinitive. The construction then competes with other future-expressing constructions, mainly forms of suln and wellen with a following infinitive. By the middle to end of the sixteenth century the competition is all but over, with werden becoming the regular form employed, at least in the literary language, everywhere (Behaghel 1924:256–63; Moser 1971:225–26).

Forms of wairþan in West Germanic occur frequently and regularly in the preterite with both the present participle and the infinitive. The uses with the present participle are striking because we have already observed significant occurrences of wairþan with

the past participle. Because the present and past participles are the only two to develop in all Germanic languages, they act in opposition to each other. It is not my intention to pursue the exact semantic nature of the present participle here or to trace its development. If, however, the past participle is 'perfective', 'completed', and 'passive' in its nature, then, through the opposition, the present participle will be unmarked, permitting it to range in a manner unrestricted and unenclosed over whatever operates as the semantic territory defined by the grammatical category of participles. The 'unrestricted' nature of the present participle makes it rather like the infinitive, and it is not surprising to find the kinds of alternation observable in the above-mentioned West Germanic development.[28] It is, perhaps, possible to see the origin of these constructions with forms of *wairþan* and the past participle and *wairþan* and the present participle as an expression of, respectively, the operation of the enclosed activity of the past in the nonpast and the active operation of nonpresent activity within the past itself. The constructions with present participles are generally inchoative, suggesting activity beginning and moving up and out into the affairs of the present; constructions with the past participle are structured, contained, coercive upon events and move in and down. Both constructions are, in this sense, paradoxical, yet this paradox presents the central opposition of all significant activity and is basic to the Germanic spatio-temporal scheme.

It is, of course, true that all of the linguistic material cited above comes from periods in the development of all Germanic languages in which the process of Christianization is a more or less established fact. The changes from an earlier, purely Germanic to a later, Christian conceptual system will surely be reflected in the material we have examined. The attempt here made to link the expression of the future to an important aspect of an earlier expression of what must have been the past is hypothetical and cannot be directly demonstrated. The change that is likely to have taken place conceptually, however, does parallel significantly some observable elements of linguistic change, both semantic and syntactic. Still, such observable changes tell us nothing about what the speakers of these languages conceivably felt or consciously initiated. It is, in fact, most likely that they were as unaware of the changes in their languages as we are of our own, but such pressures for change, from both within and without the language itself, are still operative

and still influence the directions in which all languages develop. If the period in which we are able to examine the various Germanic languages is later than the one we are attempting to describe, it is necessary for us to examine the data to discover not so much what they express directly (for example, the idea of 'future' action) but from what existing point of view such innovative expressions derive. In this respect, the Germanic languages seem consistent with what we have been able to infer about the conceptual framework of early Germanic culture as a whole. Impulses for action, whether physical or verbal, seem to have had the same starting point.

Something More

ＡNYONE who has read this
far will surely have sensed that the word *shape* as it has been used
throughout these essays is not merely a metaphor. Everything that
has preceded has attempted to articulate a peculiar shaping im-
pulse to Germanic activity that creates configurational similarities
in their various manifestations within that culture. Shape is a
cogent term; it presents to us at once the relational aspects of an
entity that render it perceivable both as physical substance and as
conception. As a verb, it expresses directly the creative aspect of
human activity; as a noun, it gives us the realized forms themselves
as they have been created. Thus, *shape* expresses both process and
fact, impulse and act, form and substance. It is consonant with both
any concept and our perception of it. Underlying it are all of the
relations that organize and predicate human activity and that give
structure to the whole of a culture and render it both intelligible to
itself and observable to others. Man acts only within a context that
makes action possible; such contexts are recognizable and under-
standable through the configurational possibilities they present.
Such configurational possibilities lie both within the mind and
within the nature of things. The shaping structures all.

The essays herein are limited to a consideration of aspects of
early Germanic culture. Nowadays we are, more or less, predis-
posed to look at such so-called primitive or early cultures from ex-
actly those points of view that these essays utilize, and we expect to
find in such cultures the kinds of social, artistic, and linguistic uni-
ties that we have, in fact, found. Such discoveries should, however,
suggest some important questions: First, is such social unity observ-
able or discoverable in our own culture, or is our culture structured
according to an essentially different conceptual pattern? Of course,

Germanic experience is, by our standards, largely unlogical and prerational, but logic is itself a term that expresses the basic consistency of action with context, and it seems that no culture ever acts or has acted in ways that are inconsistent or illogical within its own structures. Thus, the structural impulse of our own times differs from that of the early Germanic peoples only in that our basic, shaping myth is a 'rational' one. If this is so, does our rational myth have its own significant 'shape'? Barring some significant evolutionary change in the structure of the human brain in this thousand-or-so-year period that might separate us absolutely from these earlier times, the distinctions we can note between the early Germans and ourselves are likely to be social and cultural, i.e. external, ones.

From most of the materials examined in the essays, we know that the Germanic peoples were in the process of reconfiguring their own cultural experience. With the conversion to Christianity, the Germanic peoples entered to a great degree into what we can now see to be the mainstream of European civilization. We still derive our cultural history and much of our conceptual patterning from this European, Christian source. As essay 4 has pointed out, the Christian cosmos was, like Augustine's, at first a closed, static one in which the passing linearity of human, worldly experience was opposed to the fixed circularity of eternity. With respect only to this early Christian model, the last 1,500 years of Western history document for us a gradual release from its rigidity. If the Middle Ages stressed the circular closure at the expense of the linearity of the immediate, what we call the Renaissance can be seen as a process of the rediscovering of or a new insistence upon the importance of the immediate linearity of man's own activity within this larger, circular closure. In time, the diameter of the circle has lengthened, and the perimeter of the circle has receded and receded, moving more and more toward imperceptibility. We have come to sense, with the continual lengthening of what was originally a diameter, that the immediate linearity of man's experience is, if not all that is knowable, at least all that is perceivable. Thus, the closed diameter has become essentially a line expressive of uncontained, 'open' linearity; more and more, linearity has come to express the 'whole' of human experience. It is in the nineteenth century that this linearity assumed its most powerful shape.[1] Popular ideas of 'progress', the developing dialectic of Hegel and Marx,

and the theory of evolution all stress configurational linearity. All are 'open' concepts; all are expressive of process.

It is probably not mere chance that early Germanic culture should have been rediscovered in the nineteenth century through its interest in the evolution of society and language. The rediscovery had curious ramifications, coming as it did at a time when what was felt to be a great forward movement in the history of mankind was perceived simultaneously to precipitate the beginnings of that now all-too-present feeling of the 'end' of Western civilization. Not only was the nineteenth century one of intellectual, technological, and social innovation, it was also a century of revivals: artistic, architectural, literary. A nostalgia for order, a desire for closure, pervades much of the social and artistic activity of the century. A few, like Darwin and Marx, found the new linearity of the century congenial; fewer still, like Nietzsche, were able to synthesize in a creative way the paradoxical tensions of the collapse of closure with the emergence of linearity. These paradoxes found their way into the century's expression of the earlier Germanic experience. The significant joining of openness and order of Germanic culture seems to have appealed both to the nineteenth century's desire for closure and to its impulse toward expansive change. The paradox expresses itself not only in the Icelandic expeditions and Norse translations of William Morris, which jostle meaningfully with both his enormous artistic production in virtually every field of applied arts and his eventual conversion to socialism, but also in Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a work in which early Germanic and modern concerns are curiously if not intentionally merged to a length that seems interminable, only to return at its end to its own beginnings in a manner so moving as to defy reason. The operas of the Ring are, rationally speaking, silly; so is all opera, but then, so is *Beowulf*, and so is all skaldic poetry.

The nineteenth century's linearity was deeply colored by an idea of directionality as well. This is, of course, inherent in the earlier concept of past, present, and future times, which Augustine himself articulated, and it has been a dominant element in all Western thought. Many nineteenth-century thinkers spoke of 'progress' or 'improvement' without serious doubt. The choice of terms like *evolution*, movement from → toward (rather than *chance* or *random change*), or *natural selection*, which likewise embodies within itself

the idea of natural, 'rational', organized sequence, results from this same underlying directionality. The idea of a 'natural' history, a concern of particular importance to all facets of nineteenth-century thinking, suggests not only a natural order but an order structured by temporal sequence. It is only in the twentieth century, which has fallen heir not only to the intellectual conceptions but also to the anxieties and paradoxes of the nineteenth, that rather vague doubts about change so conceived have moved meaningfully toward the center of our conceptual experience. With respect to the now greatly diminished diameter and circle figure, the twentieth century largely views what is left of the diameter only as a truncated line fragment, so small as to approach only the 'point' of the present, which is cut off from both linear past and future. The present alone seems to hold much conceptual validity. We are much concerned with isolation and fragmentation. We talk endlessly of creating possible courses of action for futures that seem to change daily; we strive to discover, write, and rewrite varieties of likely pasts. For us, change can be configured as a movement from point to point, present to present, which does not form a line or diameter but exhibits a sequence of apparently 'chance' changes, each change seemingly deriving from a process of actualization of one of a number of 'possible' potentials for change inherent in and codifiable through the structural elements immediately and dialectically informing any 'present' point. Here, rather than the linear evolutionary process governed by an overarching directionality, we have, in any point, a self-contained potentiality for movement subject at every moment to directional change.

If, as psychologists tell us, the development of modern man parallels the development of man's awareness of self-conscious action, we can see ourselves as existing within a modern present that is itself self-consciously motivated by its awareness of its own potentials for action. This is, of course, very close to the 'point'-oriented figure just derived. If this self-consciousness is itself 'mythic' in the sense articulated by these essays, what is the shape of this twentieth-century, self-conscious mythic impulse? If there is, indeed, a twentieth-century myth of the configuring sort, it lies with mathematics. Action is largely governed for us by the mathematical probabilities inherent in any situational present. Technological change now exists as a function of continual cultural redefinition: What do we do now? What do we do next (to get *from* now₁ to now₂)? Appar-

ently, such questions must be continually formulated and reformulated. Our attempts at answering such questions are ever increasingly more dependent upon statistical validity. Probable courses of action require definition within limits set by mathematical probability. The myth of modern science and its cultural derivatives, technology and statistics, are based upon a logical model that is mathematical in its essence. Our universe is defined by mathematical principle. Science and technology are dependent upon it absolutely, and we can no longer exist without them. More and more, we formulate the concerns of our society in their terms. For the early Germans, *wyrd* structured their world *ā . . . swā hīo scel* 'ever as it must'; for us, science can cure all our problems.[2] More than time separates Beowulf from the 'Six-Million-Dollar Man'; Beowulf died in attempting his greatest feat—we have the technology; we could have rebuilt him.

The idea of an expanding universe, which is consonant with the point-oriented, self-containing potentiality of the model derived above, is not entirely foreign to the early Germanic universal conception with which these essays have been concerned. Both are 'open' concepts. It is perhaps a perception unique to the twentieth century that lets us sense and retrieve something of this earlier model. Such a possibility seems to have been denied the nineteenth century. Perhaps, too, such 'open' conceptions necessitate cultural manifestations of the accumulative or cluttered kind that both we and the early Germanic peoples share. The value of 'striving', 'moving', or 'inquiring' is noticeable in all aspects of Viking culture as well as in modern scientific research. Still, we should not ignore the vast differences between our cultures. Germanic culture was past-dominated and significantly structured by attention to the factual presence of this past. We are, if anything, present-dominated. Our ideas of change derive from our ability to describe alternative presents from the potentials *of* the present. Our reason works through mathematical probability, not through our ability to contain a significant depth of past. We would no longer define Beowulf's early lack of promise through his inability to trace his genealogy beyond his own father. Rather, such inauspicious potential would derive from his failure to perform adequately on aptitude or IQ tests.

The change from nineteenth- to twentieth-century thought is not nearly so complete as the comments above might suggest. Es-

pecially in its most obvious everyday activities, twentieth-century culture still manifests itself, as did the culture of the nineteenth, within the earlier, Christian framework. The point-oriented present, with its concepts of relativity and statistical probability, we still 'know' imperfectly. These concepts do not provide us with the significant shapes necessary fully to structure essential, human experience. We do not know nor do we sense or feel what our mathematical myth looks like. We shape most of our daily lives in older, closed, Christian containers: the man sitting in his own home, watching his own television, driving alone in his own car, being buried in his own closed coffin inside his own cement burial vault exhibits for us the last shaping artifacts of the fully closed universe, the dead ends of our Western heritage. Our grasping at packages, whether they be automobiles or the tidy, 'convenience' foods in our super markets, shows us our own paradoxical striving to maintain a link with a fast-receding past. We unconsciously insist upon its structure as we simultaneously destroy it. Perhaps it is only in times of such conceptual crisis that earlier, threatened conceptual patterns become more nearly apparent and manifest themselves most obviously within a culture as if to establish and make permanent that which is most ephemeral and vulnerable. This may be what we have already observed in the early Germanic materials. The most powerful expressions of the essentially Germanic shaping impulse appeared 'late'. The Edda (in fact, everything we know about early Iceland), *Beowulf*, the cenotaph at Sutton Hoo, all occurred within an already-evolving Christian consciousness. Yet, they still express an earlier conceptual pattern that is uniquely Germanic in a way that renders our own automobiles still 'Christian'. Such cultural products demonstrate in a particularly significant way the phenomenon that Derrida (1967) has called intellectual 'nostalgia', a profound refusal to abandon—indeed, a powerful need to retain—modes of conceptualization and expression in the very presence of concepts that directly oppose them.

The cultural dichotomy that results from the twentieth century's desire to maintain nineteenth-century forms within its own conceptual structure is observable to a rather large degree in all twentieth-century arts. It manifests itself especially in literature. We still utilize many of the artistic forms of the nineteenth century, but we do so in ways that deny our own conceptual continuity with the nineteenth century's practice. Conceptually, the long, prose

narrative, the sequence of events structured by their relations in time, seems to have provided the nineteenth century with its most typical literary shape. The novel, however, which has not yet disappeared in the twentieth century, has become something other than the long, complicated prose narrative of the nineteenth. Its complicated and lengthy aspects remain, but the narrative is obsolescent. Since Joyce, the novel has come more and more to express the manifold complications inherent within an apparently arbitrary, isolated segment of human experience. It expresses the complexities of psychological posture, discontinuous in time and achieving significance not through the unraveling of the interrelated layers of plotted action but in as full an expression as is possible of its own complexities in their largest perspective. The popular novel clings to plot in just the way that we cling to our automobiles, but the modern, 'serious' novel is fragmented. Such fragmentation, however, has not achieved formal novelty. This modern 'novel' stands for the most part in an antithetical position to that of the nineteenth century and, in its posture, at once exhibits and denies the conceptual validity of its model. The aspect of fragmentation is almost always accompanied by elements that partake of probability or chance, but modern work like Gertrude Stein's automatic writing or Tristan Tzara's literally pulling poems out of his hat has not achieved a viable formal shape. Whether the self-conscious, self-containing and defining fictions of a Nabokov or a Borges do achieve such shape, we are too close to be able to observe.

Questions about language and the directions of its change, as these are related to the massive conceptual changes that have taken place in the last 2,000 years, are clearly so complicated as to defy adequate formulation. In some ways, language is more resistant to change than man's other cultural manifestations. Yet, as we have been able to observe, changes occurred in the Germanic languages that rendered them different from their Indo-European source. These changes too seemed consonant with the conceptual changes that allow us to define a particularly 'Germanic' people. Likewise, we have been able to find in the beginnings of the expression of a Christian (or, better, a non-Germanic) futurity the conceptual structure within whose diminished limits we still speak. It is possible now to see, although in an obviously overly simple way, something of the manner in which the expression of such futurity has itself changed, and the change parallels the derivation from the

earlier closed, Christian model to our own, modern, point-oriented concept. As the conceptual nature of Western civilization has moved from the tripartite 'times' of the earlier model, possibilities for action have also come to lie more and more with potentials inherent in the immediacy of any individual present. Thus, such potentials are now directed toward expression of possibilities for acting with respect to the particular structural relations of the present or to the intentions of or to the structures imposed upon a particular actor as initiator or container of any activity. The 'potential' expressed by modality, which in the early, historical Germanic languages made do for reference to the future, articulates now more the potential or orientation of the actor in the present (or any contextually defined acting point) for acting than the predication of a potential for occurrence of the action itself. The widespread development in all modern languages of periphrastic constructions (linked by tense to the 'now' of a context) is perhaps related to the evolution of self-consciousness and to the point-oriented structure that underlies much of our conceptualization.

It is interesting to note that traditional grammar, American structural grammar, and the earlier formulations of contemporary generative grammar all linked the expression of modality directly to the predicate, the main verb, or to the verb phrase of the underlying syntactic structure. More recent generative syntax and the various formulations of generative case- and semantics-based grammars have refigured the position of modality to one equivalent to or dominating the underlying nominal and verbal elements of a predication. It may now be the case, in Modern English at least, that modality may find expression either with the subject (a nominal modality of intention) or with the predicate (a verbal modality of possibility). Thus, we have the nominal *he'll go*, which assures us of the subject's intent, opposed to *he will go*, which stresses the fact of the occurrence of the action. The presence of these so-called contracted forms like *'ll*, *'d*, *'s*, from *he'll*, *he'd*, *he's*, and even such forms, unacceptable in writing, as **hec'n* ['hikən], from *he can*, form the rudiments of a new, nominal inflection of modal potentials that orient subjects toward action. This incipient inflection is spread uniformly across the nouns and pronouns of the language. We tend to resist seeing this as a manifestation of morphological change because the language still makes frequent use of the older verbal forms from which the innovating inflection

derives. Likewise, the written form of the language resists it and desperately tries to deny its presence.[3] Yet, as we speak, we know better.

We can see in this evolving morphological change a parallel to some of the earlier morphological changes that the earliest recorded Germanic languages exhibited. The development of the binary tense system in the Germanic languages was seen to be consonant with, even reflective of, the conceptual structure that seems to have uniquely defined a 'Germanic' branch of Indo-European civilization. As the Germanic peoples accepted Christianity and refigured their own world within that of European culture, their languages adapted their syntactic modal systems to reflect the tripartite Christian temporal scheme. Now, this temporal scheme has itself changed. With the development of modern point- or present-oriented self-consciousness, we can notice a wearing away of the inflected 'futures' in modern Indo-European languages. In those, like the Germanic languages, for which future inflection was not regular, the grammatical forms and categories used to approximate it are also changing. In English, these forms seem now to be in the process of creating an inflection of modal potential that is not only 'present'-linked but reflective of a consciousness in subjects of their own possibilities for acting. Such a change is at one with our own developing sense of the reality of the world in which we live.

Man has always seen the deepest secrets of his language as lying meaningfully with those aspects of his universe that most significantly structure his own existence. The feelings that language is magical or divine or that it lies with a meaningfully productive past derive from concepts of universal structure that express just such ideas. Language may be examined reverentially or scientifically; the terms are in no way mutually exclusive. Now, in the later twentieth century, linguists are greatly concerned with finding the logical structure that underlies human language. The nature of our own logico-mathematical conceptual structure demands this, and we, of course, are fast discovering just such structures. It seems unlikely, however, that such discoveries will in any way fully 'capture' the essence of our language, our thought, or our universal conception. Our language is more intelligent and our linguistic competence more complex than we know. We know only what we *can* know, and we have failed, as humans, ever of 'knowing' fully.

To achieve understanding beyond the complexities of our own language, in which we codify understanding, to be outside it, would predicate an existence we cannot now comprehend.

We know only what we *can* know. It is not, therefore, surprising that the medieval Christian mystics had visions of transport to realms beyond this world of such shape that they were repeatable and comprehensible to those who heard them. It is likewise no surprise that, on 20 July 1969, we discovered that the surface of the moon was a replica of the man-made mock-ups on Long Island. There is a continuous and continual dialog between man's surroundings and his understanding of them. Linguistic competence and performance (langue/parole), conception and perception, fact and process, action and intention mutually interact and shape each other. The dialog among these is dialectical and ever changing, but the phenomenon of the dialog is constant. In its change, what we know continually refigures what we can know, which in turn predicates what we know. That we fail of 'final' knowing is a fact of life. To know finally, to cease the dialog, is unthinkable. Our knowledge exists in our continually speaking to ourselves and to others. This shaping speech in all of its manifestations, in all aspects of human activity, creates the various forms with which we surround ourselves and which speak to us of their own presence. The shards of the dialog of the past remain with us, and, through them, we may enter into conversation with that past. Our ability to examine and reconstruct the larger shapes of which we have but partial hints gives our own speech a greater context and creates for us a greater present in which we, now, must act.

Notes

Foreword

1. The work of Crick (1976) has been instrumental in helping me to express concisely the process of my own thinking and to cast these essays in their final form. They were all originally written before I had read Crick's book, but the essays so obviously exemplify the underlying principle of his examination of 'semantic anthropology' that I found it easy to utilize his concept of 'description' and 'explanation' in organizing my remarks in this foreword. It will also become apparent to any reader acquainted with Crick's work that the conception of meaning outlined in the essays that follow is, to a very great degree, 'iconic' (Crick 1976:130).

2. A word of warning in advance: The description of the Germanic cosmos that follows operates with a series of fundamental binary factors, usually significantly opposed: past/present, fact/process, well/tree, etc. Lest these be misread, it should be stated here that they have little to do with Lévi-Strauss's structural concept of binary opposition. The whole structural methodology that Lévi-Strauss has so successfully employed in his own work is largely absent from everything that follows here. Although certain elements similar to those of Lévi-Strauss—like the presence or absence of particular semantic elements—are occasionally employed, they do not reflect the opposition of nature and culture that is central to all of Lévi-Strauss's investigations.

3. To anyone who has studied linguistic theory, even at the most elementary level, this argument will be an obvious one; for someone who has never studied linguistic theory, it may *seem* obvious: Of course, [b] is different from [d] and in just the way that the text says. Why is this worth remarking? The important matter here is in the fact of perception of difference rather than in actual difference in articulation. Not all differences are 'perceived' by speakers as differences. For example, the 'p' sounds in *spit* and *pit* are phonetically quite different in articulation: *spit* has [p]; *pit* has [pʰ]. (You can test it by placing your hand in front of your mouth and saying both words. You will feel a puff of air when *pit* is said; there is no such puff in *spit*.) Yet, native speakers of English hear these two sounds as the same because the aspiration (the 'puff') in [pʰ] is *not* a distinctive feature of English. (It *is* in some other languages.) We perceive only *distinctive* differences; we do not perceive those that are not distinctive, whether or not

they are, in fact, there. It is the phonological system of the language we speak that codifies these 'distinctions'. All languages have such systems, but the individual distinctive features differ from language to language.

4. The essays that follow do not appear in any necessary order. The first essay appears first largely because the concepts that are central to all of the essays are found most clearly and explicitly articulated in the mythic construct of well and world tree it examines. Its position, then, provides an informational convenience for the reader. The fifth essay, on language, appears last because it seems to be the most dependent in its argumentation upon the context built by the preceding four essays. Although all of the essays have been structured so as to mutually develop the central idea of the shape and influence of the past, they were originally composed in something of a different order. The idea of the essays began with the literary and linguistic materials found in the third essay, on *Beowulf*, and in the sixth essay, on language. The fourth essay, on time and space, followed and then the examination of myth, in the first essay. The rather heterogeneous collection of material in the two parts of the second essay came last. My own reasoning here developed largely backward from essay 5 to essay 1; for the reader, however, the logic is likely to seem to run in just the opposite direction.

I   Urth's Well

1. All quotations from the Poetic Edda are taken from the edition of Gustav Neckel, *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1962).

2. Translations are cited by the name of the translator unless they are my own.

3. All quotations from the Prose Edda are taken from the edition of Finnur Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1907).

4. The prefix is common in all Germanic languages. In addition to Old Norse it occurs in Goth. *us-, ur-*, in OHG and Ger. *ur-*, in OS *ur-, or-*, in Middle and Modern Dutch *oor-*, and in Old English, where it was quite common. It is now obsolete in English except for its persistence in *ordeal*. 'The primary sense was "out", as in Goth. and OHG *úrruns* "outrunning, exit, exodus". ON *órför* outgoing, departure; thence various derived senses, of which [Old English] had "out, completely, to an end", as in *orþanc* "thinking out" . . . . "skill", . . . *oriȝlda* "extreme old age"; . . . *orȝiete* "clearly perceptible, manifest", [etc.]' (OED). The relationship of the prefix to outer limits and extremities is further exemplified by the remarks in Grimm and Grimm (1936:2355–59), where it is related to Skt. *ud* 'hinauf, hinaus' (2355). Ultimately the prefix comes to express '[die] bezeichnung des ersten, anfänglich vorhandenen, ursprünglichen, unabgeleiteten, originalen, primitiven, unverfälschten, reinen' (2358).

5. This etymology is consonant with de Vries (1971), who traces the Dutch form *oorlog* to **uzlaga*: 'datgene wat uitgelegd is' (491). In Dutch, *oorlog* now means 'war, contention, strife'. The development moves, according to de Vries, from 'that which is laid out' to *noodlot* 'destiny, fate', i.e. 'that which is laid out by necessity'. Thus, 'wat het eerste aangaat, mag men er aan herinneren, dat de strijd als een godsoordeel opgevat werd en dus een noodlotsbeschikking was'

(491). From the 'necessity of strife' to simple 'strife' itself marks the development into Modern Dutch. The form exists, however, in Modern Danish and Norwegian in the phrase *til orlogs* 'in the navy' and in all the Scandinavian languages as a nominal prefix designating 'naval', as in Swed. *örlogsfartyg* 'warship', *örlogsvarv* 'dock', Dan. and Nor. *orlogsgast* 'seaman', Dan. *orlogsflaade*, Nor. *orlogsflåte* 'fleet'. These are close to Dutch 'war' but add the additional semantic element of 'water'. As the argument presented here will show, the idea of the strata of the *ørlǫg* will encompass not only 'implanting' or 'laying down' but a strong element of 'tension' and 'activity', and (possibly) 'contention'. The idea of 'water' is also present, so the development into these modern Germanic languages may not remove the word as far from its etymon as the present-day denotations may at first imply. There is no complete agreement on the etymology. In addition to the one given above, de Vries (1971:491) cites the possible relation of Dutch *oorlog* to Goth. *liuga* 'marriage', derived from Germanic **leug* 'established by pact', and to the Germanic form **lugja, *leugja* (related to ON *logn* 'calm' and *lón* 'calm sea near the shore'), developing the meaning in *oorlog* 'a condition in which calm is disturbed'. Although these derivations are from several points of view unlikely, they do exhibit some of the semantic material here presented that is not immediately noticeable in the word's contemporary usage.

6. The quotation from Isidore of Seville, cited above, follows as a note in Grimm's text, apparently as a document supporting Grimm's reading. Grimm's description of the meanings of the names is examined later.

7. See, for example, Nilsson (1923–24).

8. An alternate interpretation, of no great importance here, relates Nōna to the plural *Nōnae* 'The fifth or seventh day of the month' and is extended to refer to premature, five- or seven-month births. Decima would then correspond to a fully mature birth of nine or more months, and Morta (from *morari* 'to delay, tarry') would apply to a postmature birth.

9. Neither in this case nor in the passage from *Grimnismál* (29:63) is the text rendered in English with a verbal auxiliary. If one were used, we would expect to find *should* or *ought* ('what answer he ought to make' or 'what answer he should make') in this case. In the quotation from *Grimnismál*, if we try to replace *do* ('Thór does wade through / every day'), we are forced to choose *must* ('Thór must wade through / every day'). It is the only modal form that will not do violence to the passage.

10. Old Norse implies, as do other Germanic languages, what we call the 'future' in occurrences of nonpreterite, indicative inflection and in its verbs expressing modality; see essay 5. Of these, *munu* seems to be closest to our idea of future time, although even it does not approach anything like regularity in such representation. The Table below gives occurrences of *munu*, *sculu*, and *vilja* for the texts listed:

	sculu	munu	vilja	Number of stanzas in the text
Vǫluspá	4	15	1	65
Hávamál	63	50	9	165
Grímnismál	13	1	3	55

Sculu is quite common in *Hávamál*, a text expressing general information about the nature of things and instructions for acceptable behavior. It is least common in *Vǫluspá*, a more descriptive text. *Munu*, on the other hand, is relatively common in *Vǫluspá*; fourteen of its fifteen occurrences come in that portion of the text that discusses the vision of the end of the world. It seems to represent 'foreseen occurrences' without stressing the 'habitual' or 'continual', which is common in occurrences of *skulu*. *Vilja* always expresses volition or wish.

11. See the entry for *worth* in the OED.

12. That *urth-* is a participial form rather than a preterite-marked form is helpful but not essential. For more on participles and the nature of the preterite, see essay 5.

13. The mention of Skuld in *Vǫluspá* 20 and its repetition in *Gylfaginning* 15 are quoted above. The second mention of Skuld follows:

Sá hon valkyrior,   vítt um komnar,
gorvar at ríða   til Goðþióðar;
Sculd helt scildi,   enn Scǫgul ǫnnor,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gǫndul   oc Geirscǫgul;
nú ero talðar   nǫnnor Herians,
gorvar at ríða   grund, valkyrior.

(*Vǫluspá* 30:7)

The valkyries' flock   from afar she beholds,
ready to ride   to the realm of men:
Skuld held her shield,   Skogul likewise,
Guth, Hild, Gondul,   and Geirskogul:
for thus are hight   Herjan's maidens,
ready to ride   o'er reddened battlefields.

(Hollander 1962:6)

14. Dunning and Bliss (1969:71–72) gloss *wyrd*, explaining that 'the difference between the Germanic concept of *wyrd* and the Classical concept of "Fate" is largely etymological. [Lat.] *fatum* is the neuter past participle of *fari* "speak"; *wyrd* is related to the stem of *weorðan* "become". Whereas "Fate" is "what has been spoken" (by some superior power), *wyrd* is by etymology merely "what comes to pass"'. Shippey (1972:40) replies that '*wyrd* is at least remotely related to *weorþan*, "to become", and an acceptable translation is often "what becomes, what comes to pass, the course of events", not a supernatural and wilful Power, but more simply, the flow of Time'.

15. See the entry *burn* in the OED. The metathesis in *burn* is noticeable in some Dutch and German versions of the word as well.

16. Both the Parcae and Μοῖραι have attributes of weavers; the Μοῖραι are said to spin, measure, and cut the thread of life. Whether the Germanic peoples had the idea of the well and borrowed the idea of weaving from Italic peoples (and ultimately from Hellenic culture), or whether they and the Greeks and Romans together brought the idea forward from an earlier Indo-European source is not known, nor is it of utmost importance to the discussion at hand. For a detailed account of the latter view, see Branston (1957:56–66).

17. See also de Vries (1956a:270) and Gehl (1939:19–38, 241–55).

18. The potted-plant image, however, only partially represents the structure of the myth. Another aspect becomes clearer if we envisage the world tree as a plant enclosed entirely within an aquarium, which would function as the well. Here the source and sustenance are one and the same, but this image violates the separateness of the tree from the well; it is not within the well in the myth. No scientific or 'realistic' representation of well and tree will entirely and adequately express these interrelationships; they are ultimately beyond the sense perceptions of men, but attributes of the relationship can be known, visualized, and expressed.

19. 'Fjǫlsvinnsmál' is not part of the Codex Regius, from which the bulk of the Poetic Edda comes. It is one of two early poems preserved only in manuscripts dating not earlier than the seventeenth century (Hollander 1962:140).

20. This material is repeated, with slight variation, in *Gylfaginning* 39.

21. Heithrún is but one instance of a series of related occurrences of animals in Germanic myth who belong to a *Ziegengestalt* of Indo-European or pre–Indo-European origin. Significantly, these occurrences are linked with fertility or fecundity, much to the point of the association of well and tree. See 'Die Göttin in Ziegengestalt' in Schröder (1941:29–64) and Dumézil (1959b). The mead-hall, Valholl, is itself of some interest here. The mead that Heithrún supplies to the drinkers in the hall is related in the quoted passage to the drops that fall from the horns of Eikthyrnir into Hvergelmir. The dropping liquid is called 'dews' (*dǫggvar*) in *Vǫluspá* 19, and the elaboration of the passage in *Gylfaginning* 16 further identifies it as 'honeydew' (*hunangfall*). The dew/honeydew/mead relationship is clear. More important is the use in Germanic poetry of 'dew' as a kenning for blood (e.g. *valdǫgg* 'battle dew') (Neckel 1913:21–22). The name Valholl itself is probably derived from the roots *val-* 'battle' and *hel* or *hölle*, both expressing the idea of 'death'. Thus, a *valholl* is the littered battlefield after battle, a common image in Germanic literature (Neckel 1913:37–51). Folk etymology has been at work turning the tableau of the recently slain to a lively bout of blood/dew/mead drinking. The aspect of the well as enclosure, as it is closely associated with the tree and its dew, did nothing to inhibit the semantic change from 'battle death' to a 'warriors' hall'.

22. In spite of Olrik's reference to Semitic culture, his examples are almost exclusively Indo-European. Since Olrik's time, other kinds of repetitions have been discovered among non–Indo-European peoples. Fourfold repetitions are, for example, not infrequent. The Indo-Europeans seem to have been fascinated by the idea of trinity. The most recent Indo-European 'threes' are those presented in the work of Georges Dumézil, who has concluded that the earliest Indo-European social and religious thought divided the culture into three unifying functions: sovereignty, force (military might), and generation. The Germanic people, as Indo-Europeans, would tend to see events in threes, even where a particular mythic event was not essentially divided in this way. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the threefold division is itself very old, not a later addition, and that it has been subject to some wearing away as the Germanic peoples moved farther and farther from their Indo-European roots. The question of the degree to which Indo-European elements remain in Germanic reli-

gion and myth is at present unresolved. Those following Dumézil find a rather large Indo-European component observable there; those rejecting his views either do or do not find it for other reasons. It is obvious that there is *something* Indo-European in Germanic myth. The question remains: How much and to what effect? For detailed accounts of present-day opinion, see Polomé (1970*b*) and Strutynski (1973, 1974), who, in answering Haugen (1967), touches on other recent opinion and developments. There are good bibliographies of Dumézil's work in *Hommages à Georges Dumézil*, Collection Latomus (Brussels, 1960), 45:xi–xxiii; in Puhvel (1970), and in Littleton (1973).

23. Especially from stanza 58 to the end (stanza 66); see essay 4. Significantly, Níthhogg appears in the last stanza of the poem, as if the whole universe had now become part of the well. Some commentators on the poem, desiring to maintain the 'gloomy' concept of Germanic mythology, have maintained that these concluding stanzas are a later addition (ca. A.D. 1000) to the poem and thus are due to 'Christian influence'. There is also some question about whether the poem presents a coherent vision. For the history of such opinion and some account of the continuing controversy, see Turville-Petre (1953:56–65), Hollander (1963:101–6), and Nordal (1970–73:79–91, 103–18). There is no need to pursue the matter here. It is clear that there is nothing in the final stanzas of *Vǫluspá* that runs seriously counter to the mythic elements that the whole of the poem presents. Essay 3 examines the principles of structural coherence in Germanic composition in detail. The problem of 'Christian influence' is examined briefly there.

24. On possible sources of and analogs to the idea of the world tree. see Holmberg (1922), Eliade (1963:265–330, 367–87), de Vries (1957:380–97). Davidson (1964:190–96), and Doht (1974:124–56).

25. With respect to fluidity (the sea. water. associated divine or supernatural characteristics) in Celtic material, see Patch (1950), Jones (1954), Dumézil (1959c), and Littleton (1970). Doht (1974:142–52) provides Celtic and other Indo-European examples. A more detailed comparison of some aspects of Germanic and Celtic culture. particularly of burials and rituals, will be found in the two parts of essay 2.

26. He will develop 'the sense of an inward potentiality in the process of becoming' (Campbell 1968:140). Although Campbell is prepared to see *wyrd* in the traditional past/present/future relation (121) and although he is prepared to see it as gloomy and fated, leading to 'an approaching inevitable end' (140), his feeling for its activity as a potentiality in things seems quite close to the mark.

II The Prevalence of Urth
Burials: Rites and Artifacts

1. The ship suggests a kind of vehicular sacred space. Tacitus (*Germania* 9) comments that among some of the Suebi. Isis is worshiped through the symbolic artifact of the ship, although he attributes this shape to an importation: 'pars Sueborum et Isidi sacrificat: unde causa et origo peregrino sacro parum comperi nisi quod signum ipsum in modum liburnae figuratum docet advectam religionem'. All quotations from *Germania* are from the edition of J. G. C. An-

derson, *Cornelii Taciti de origine et situ germanorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938).

2. The account is widely known. It is given in Major (1924:135–39). Most contemporary histories of Viking civilization make some use of it, e.g. Jones (1968: 164–65, 425–30) and Brøndsted (1965:300–5). The most nearly complete version of the description is given by Smyser (1965:92–119), whose translation is quoted here.

3. All quotations from Adam of Bremen are from the edition of Bernhard Schmeidler, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte* (Hanover and Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1917).

4. In the Sutton Hoo find, it is found not only on the great gold buckle (Bruce-Mitford 1972:72–73, plate E) but also on the silver mounts for the maplewood bottles (33–34, plate H), and the gold shoulder clasp (plate F). Serpents and dragons are represented in various degrees of stylization on much of the jewelry of the find (70–79) and on some of the shield mounts (plates 4–5; Green 1963: plates XI–XIII). For the persistence of the motif of the intertwining serpent(s), and associated quadrupeds, as architectural decoration throughout Scandinavia and the British Isles, see Moe (1955). Mittner (1955:62) identifies the serpent (along with fire. gold, and weaponry) as one of the symbols in Germanic culture central to the interrelationship of this world with the realm beyond.

5. The symbol of the binding cord or chain is not unique to Germanic culture. The motif occurs widely in the artifacts and literature of the Celtic people, where 'a group of beings who cannot in themselves be regarded as bird gods. but who assume the form of swans or other aquatic birds. . . . are recognizable in this form by chains or necklets of gold and silver about their throats. These two motifs. i.e., the transformation of superhuman beings into swans. and the wearing of chains. or linking together by chains of the metamorphosed beings. are thought-provoking' (Ross 1959:41). One thinks immediately in this connection of the swans in Urth's Well: 'fuglar II fœðask í Urðarbrunni: þeir heita svanir. ok af þeim fuglum hefir komit þat fuglakyn. er svá heitir' (*Gylfaginning* 16:35). 'Two fowls are fed in Urdr's Well: they are called Swans. and from those fowls has come the race of birds which is so called' (Brodeur 1929:30). These, however. are not associated directly with the chain or binding motif. The symbolism itself is quite old and dates back among the Celts at least to Hallstatt Europe. It is also clear that the Celtic and Germanic peoples use the symbolism differently. For the Celts, the motif symbolizes metamorphosis. upward attainment, flight, freedom. and release. The Germans seem to have found in it submission. involvement. and the dominance of a greater reality over men.

6. References to the fertility or greenness of the realm beyond or the world of the dead are not uncommon in Indo-European sources. References to 'pasture land'. 'meadows'. and 'fertile' or 'plowed' ground are most frequent (Thieme 1952:35–61). In Germanic languages, ON *iða vǫllr* and OE *neorxna wang* may refer to very similar ideas (Krogmann 1954). Likewise. the same realm represents a place where reunion with parents and ancestors occurs (Puhvel 1969).

7. The evidence is quite extensive and quite scattered. See. for example. Shetelig and Falk (1937:175–76, 184–85, 277–84), Kirk (1956:123–31), and Bruce-Mitford (1972:40–41; 1974:132–38).

8. The 'icon' here created by the insertion of cutting, shearing, and plucking implements in urns represents, metonymically, well = urn and tree = hair = shearing implements. If the Germanic people did maintain the hair/vegetation relationship of their Indo-European ancestors, they have, once again, done so in a way to turn the original representation to their own advantage.

9. Concerning the symbolic importance of armor, see Major (1924), Clark (1965a), and Irving (1968:118–20).

10. In the Germanic pantheon, the functions of sovereignty and physical force are clearly represented by the two dominant Æsir, Odin and Thor, respectively. The attributes of the two gods are not clearly differentiated from each other, as Dumézil (1959a) and Haugen (1967) make clear. The idea of the leader, with his symbolic sword and shield, also represents both. See Chaney (1970:esp. 7–42) and de Vries (1956b).

11. The categorization is rather general. It ignores the remains of sacrificed animals and the equipment regularly associated with them (bridles, bits, leashes, etc.), nor does it take into account digging materials often found in close conjunction with ship burials. Some of these seem to have been left in the graves at the time of interment; others are likely to be the remains of grave-robbing activities (Sjøvold 1969). In spite of all this, however, the grave goods do seem regularly to break down into three major classes: weapons, articles of adornment, and utensils. Although there are obvious exceptions to this classification (and some of these exceptions are discussed below), the sheer bulk of materials overwhelmingly supports it.

12. The grave also included a wooden saddle. Two women's skeletons, obviously moved after burial, were also found. There was no male skeleton. The grave had been plundered, and the list of artifacts is probably not complete. The Tune ship, which also had been looted, contained no utensils except a wooden spade and a hand spike (Gjessing 1957:4).

13. In addition to Bruce-Mitford (1972, 1974), both Green (1963) and Grohskopf (1973) contain good illustrations of these grave goods. The Sutton Hoo burial contained, of course, weapons, articles of adornment, and two other items of apparent symbolic significance: a carved, whetstone scepter and an iron stand or standard. The most complete and best-illustrated account of the find is now to be found in Bruce-Mitford (1975).

14. Perhaps only one of the spoons has an authentic Greek inscription. The name 'Saulos' is clearly inferior in its workmanship to the 'Paulos' inscription; it may be an imitator's attempt to copy the name 'Paulos'. See Kaske (1967) and Sherlock (1972).

15. It is easy to make too much of pots. They are containers and are the first choice to 'put something in', whether it be some symbolic offering, cremated ashes, a memento, or whatever. Still, the repetition, variety, and obvious uselessness of many of the artifacts found in Germanic graves point toward impulses that, although not denying ordinary use, go beyond the simply functional. The symbolism of the container, for example, together with that of the shield and sword iconographically suggests the full interrelation of well and tree.

16. The mention of 'cost' is modern. We are likely to misread the Germanic concern

if we take it to mean 'of great monetary value'. Value is measured not only by expense of money or goods but by expense of energy and effort.

17. On hanging bowls, in addition to the reports of ship burials already discussed, see Kendrick (1932), Fennell (1957, 1960), and Haseloff (1958).

18. 'The Goths remained masters of the western steppe country from the second century A.D. until 370, when they were overthrown by the Huns[;] they were thus the Germanic tribe with whom the proto-Slavs had the closest and most lasting relations' (Cross 1948:15).

19. This practice is not restricted to the Italian peninsula but 'is an unmistakable pointer to the persistence of primitive beliefs, common to the whole Mediterranean world, [which] gave rise to the tendency in Etruria and elsewhere, especially in ancient Egypt, to build the tomb in the shape of a house' (Pallottino 1975:148). Hittite burial customs suggest similar elements: After ritual feasting upon loaves and wine, sacrifice of animals, and cremation of the body (a ceremony lasting thirteen days or longer), the cremated bones are laid out on a bed and buried in their 'stone-house' (Gurney 1952:164–65; Otten 1958:12–17). In the Greek Homeric texts, the dwelling places of souls after death are also regularly referred to as a house, houses, an entrance, or a town (Thieme 1952: 35–36).

20. The Celtic archaeological record is quite hard to read because it is rather early overrun by Roman civilization, and after the first century B.C. it is dominated by Roman influence. It is also problematical as to exactly at what point in the development of European prehistory we can speak of 'Celtic' peoples both as a cultural and as a linguistic group (Childe 1947:250–63). Archaeological evidence, however, indicates that by the late Bronze Age such a group did exist (Hubert 1932; Piggott 1965); even so, the burials of this period show a good deal of consistency with earlier burial practices. Whether this indicates an earlier presence of this cultural group or a predilection for borrowing ritual practices—a phenomenon not uncommon in later Celtic materials—is not clear. The problem of the interrelation of archaeological and linguistic evidence, with particular attention to Celtic material, is laid out in detail in Hencken (1955).

21. This contact is fairly recent, but there is much linguistic evidence pointing to widespread Germanic and Celtic cultural contact on the European continent earlier; for example, 'l'allemand *eisen*, le gothique *eisarn*, est le même mot que le gaulois *isarno-* . . . , que l'irlandais *iarn* et le gallois *haiarn* ["iron"]' (Hubert 1932:79). This suggests meaningful contact sometime early in the Iron Age. Other lexical items also point to early, close social contact; for example, Germanic *rik-* seems to have been borrowed from Celtic *rig-* rather than inherited from IE *rēg-* directly, as the Germanic languages retain IE *ē*; the Celtic languages early changed it to *i*. There is considerable speculation about this cultural relationship, and its exact nature is still an open question.

22. Ship burials and rituals in which ships figure in a central way occur outside Europe with some frequency. 'Ship-burial was practised from Scandinavia to Japan' (Girvan 1971:34). 'The "boat of the dead" plays a great role in Malaysia and Indonesia, both in strictly shamanic contexts and in funerary practices and laments' (Eliade 1964:355). Indonesian shamanic practice is often strikingly

similar to the Germanic burial; it associates the boat with a cosmic tree and opposes vertical ascent to horizontal journey (Eliade 1964:357–58). For another curious relationship between Germanic and Pacific culture (here, Maori and concerning animal motifs), see Davis (1962:321–29).

23. The distinction between death and immortality is a significant one for the Celtic peoples, who seem to have turned much of their inherited Indo-European iconography of the 'other world' or realm of the dead (see above, n. 6) to the expression of immortality within the world of men (Meyer 1919).

24. All quotations from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are taken from the edition of Charles Plummer and John Earle, *Two of the Saxon chronicles parallel . . .* , 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892, 1899).

Rituals and Everyday Life

1. Many recent commentators have noted the connection between the tree at Uppsala and Yggdrasil. The earliest of these I have found in Gehl (1939); it is repeated in de Vries (1956a, 1957) and in Schneider (1956). There are probably earlier references. Because de Vries's work is so widely known, it is likely that it has given impetus to repetition in more recent work; on the other hand, the idea is by no means obscure and has suggested itself to many commentators, for example Derolez (1962), Wrenn (1965), Schwartz (1973), and Doht (1974).

2. The ordeal by water would be particularly appropriate for the Germanic peoples, and it continued to be practiced by them even after their conversion to Christianity. Interestingly enough, references to occurrences of the ordeal by water are scarce among Scandinavian Germans (Nottarp 1956:69). The duel was widely practiced there, however (Ciklamini 1963). If, as Adam of Bremen testifies, the ordeal by water had been appropriated as a religious or cultural ritual in pagan Scandinavia, it is likely that individual ordeals would assume some other form. Apparently the duel served this purpose.

3. Roberts's conclusions are based on his analysis of data from contemporary African, Asian, and Pacific cultures, but their appropriateness to early Germanic culture is too striking to be ignored.

4. See Shetelig and Falk (1937:419–20), Polomé (1954, 1970b:57–58), Eliade (1963:239–364, 1959b:138–51).

5. The *templum* is merely a sacred place, not an artifact, as it clearly is in the account of Adam of Bremen, quoted above. Much has changed in the centuries between these accounts. Tacitus explicitly denies that the Germans built temples in the Roman manner: 'ceterum nec cohibere parietibus deos neque in ullam humani oris speciem adsimulare ex magnitudine caelestium arbitrantur: lucos ac nemora consecrant deorumque nominibus appellant secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident' (*Germania* 9). Thus, the *numen*, the representation of the earth mother, was probably not anthropomorphic but a 'rude symbol or a fetish in the shape of a stone or a block of wood' (Anderson 1938:190).

6. Nerthus shares the island (and thus water and enclosure) with the later Norse goddess Skadi. Quite probably, the name *Scandinavia* developed from the root meaning 'Island of Skadi'; *-avia* is the Germanic word *awi* 'island' (ON *ey*, Swed. *ö*, OE *ig*, Ger. *Aue*) (Schröder 1941:165). The name *Skadi* is itself interest-

ing in this context. There is a 'Verknüpfung mit [Lat.] *scateo, -ēre* (archaisch *scato, -ere*) "hervorsprudeln, überquellen", [Lith.] *skastu, skatau, skasti* "springen, hüpfen" . . . *Skaði* ([Germanic] * *Skáþe-*" oder * *Skaðe-*") würde dann ein Nomen agentis mit der Bedeutung "Springer, Tänzer"' (Schröder 1941:66–67). Here is not only the active, lively, moving water of the well but also a kind of capricious or uncontainable movement derived from it, which is associated with Skadi as a representative of the Ziegengestalt (Schröder 1941:29–64).

7. In the Oseberg ship were found not only a four-wheeled cart but three carved, ornamental sleighs and a common sledge (Shetelig and Falk 1937:282–83), (Gjessing 1957), and (Sjøvold 1969). There was also a carved sledge buried in the Gokstad ship (Gjessing 1957). On the Dejbjærg wagons, see Shetelig and Falk (1937:187–89) and Anderson (1938:188–89).

8. For what has actually been discovered of the remains of the sunken offerings of Germanic peoples, see Much (1967:214–17, 457).

9. Caesar's remarks are found in *Belli gallici*, I, 50 (all quotations from Caesar are from the edition of Bernard(us) Dinter, *C. Iuli Caesaris belli gallici* (Leipzig: B. G. Tübner, 1898): 'Cum ex captivis quaereret Caesar, quam ob rem Ariovistus proelio non decertaret, hanc reperiebat causam, quod apud Germanos ea consuetudo esset, ut matres familiae eorum sortibus et vaticinationibus declararent, utrum proelium committi ex usu esset necne: eas ita dicere: non esse fas Germanos superare, si ante novam lunam proelio contendissent' (31) 'When Caesar inquired of his prisoners why Ariovistus had not joined battle, he discovered the reason was that German custom required that their matrons must declare on the basis of lots and divinations whether or not it was advantageous to give battle, and the matrons had stated that the Germans were not fated to win if they fought before the new moon' (Hadas 1957:37).

10. Whether the runes represent a systematized working out of the full, unified structure of the cosmos, as Schneider (1956) suggests, or more limited, immediate factors in fixing or realizing events is an open question. In either case, the physical reality of the mark has power much greater than the mere recording of speech. Runic and nonrunic symbols are sometimes found together, for example, on an Anglo-Saxon incinerary urn from the Loveden Hill cemetery. It is inscribed with 'runes followed by . . . rune-like yet non-runic symbols and . . . circles with . . . interior cruciform patterns' (Wrenn 1965:40, [illustration] 51).

11. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Oseberg ship contained among its grave goods a pail of ripe, wild apples. In addition, various plant remains were scattered throughout the ship: wild apples, wheat, cress seeds, wood, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc. (Gjessing 1957:11–13). In Irish lore, Connla's Well was the source of knowledge. Above it grew nine hazels, and the hazelnuts, when dropped into the well, created inspirational bubbles (Rees and Rees 1961:161).

12. The inscription 'spells' no intelligible word. The markings may be symbolic; this may very well also be the case with the incinerary urn from Loveden Hill (Wrenn 1965).

13. See also Much (1967:119–22): 'Schon in der Bronzezeit spielte Gold bei den Germanen eine grosse Rolle' (119). For the amounts and kinds of gold and silver found in Viking hoards, see Marstrander (1954).

14. All quotations from *The dream of the rood* are taken from the edition of Bruce Dickins and Alan S. C. Ross (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966). Those from *Judith* are from the edition of B. J. Timmer (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966).

15. All quotations from *Beowulf* are from the edition of Fr. Klaeber, 3rd ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950).

16. There are hall scenes in which eating plays an important part; the bone-throwing sequence of *Hrólfs Saga Kraka* (section 23) is a good example. Such scenes are, however, in nearly every aspect, different from those here described, and the term *symbel* is not used in conjunction with them. Tacitus himself seems to have seen that the kinds of *convivia* described above differed from ordinary activities associated with eating. He describes everyday hospitality in a preceding section: 'Convictibus et hospitiis non alia gens effusius indulget, quemcumque mortalium arcere tecto nefas habetur; pro fortuna quisque apparatis epulis excipit' (*Germania* 21) 'No nation indulges more freely in feasting and entertaining than the German. It is accounted a sin to turn any man away from your door. The host welcomes his guest with the best meal that his means allow' (Mattingly 1970: 119).·Before giving his account of the drinking in section 22, Tacitus specifies that the imbiber first eats: 'lauti cibum capiunt' (*Germania* 22). Then follows the lengthy drinking.

17. The term *scir wered*, here glossed as 'a clear, sweet drink', may, in fact, be *scir-wered* 'adorned with radiance', a compound adjective (Crawford 1967:205). If this is so, the passage has the serving-thane pouring the ale-cup 'adorned with radiance' rather than pouring out 'a clear, sweet drink'. The context is, then, less complex than indicated, having two, not three, references to the drink.

18. Compounds with *win-* 'wine' also occur in the poem: *winærn* 'wine house' (654), *winreced* 'wine building' (714, 993), *winsele* 'wine hall' (695, 771, 2456). The nature of the Germanic drink is likewise ambiguous in Tacitus: 'Potui humor ex hordeo aut frumento, in quandam similitudinem vini corruptus' (*Germania* 23) 'Their drink is a liquor made from barley or other grain, which is fermented to produce a certain resemblance to wine' (Mattingly 1970:121).

19. See Cleasby et al. (1957:604) and Erades (1967). Excrescent stops after nasals are a common linguistic phenomenon: OE *numel* > Mod.E *nimble*, Lat. *humil-* borrowed into Middle English and becoming *(h)umble* 'humble', OE *þymel* > Mod.E *thimble*, etc. Erades also suggests its presence in the development of *assembly*: '[French] *assemblée*, originally a feminine substantivized pp. of *assembler* < [Popular Lat.] *assimulare* < *ad- simulare* "to put together" < *simul* "together"; root **sem* "one"' (1967:27). That the term is built from the root **alu* is itself significant because 'ale' seems to have been the generic term among the Germanic peoples for the intoxicating drink (Watkins 1970). If the etymology is correct, it expresses directly the significance of the *symbel*'s ritual: the confluences of the powerful waters of the well and their relationship to the occurrence of events. The centrality of ale drinking is everywhere noticeable. The power it suggests (indeed, the very power of *wyrd* itself) is felt in the Icel. verb *sumla* 'to be flooded, overwhelmed' and in phrases expressive of the activity of *wyrd* in *Beowulf*, such as: *hie wyrd forswéop / on Grendles gryre* (477–78) 'Wyrd swept them away in the horror of Grendel'.

20. The importance of the speech making and gift giving to the *symbel* is worked out in great detail in essay 3 and will not be considered here.

21. Excluding Grendel's Mother, who is hardly a woman in human terms, there are in *Beowulf* besides Wealhtheow, Hygd (Hygelac's queen), who presides over the celebration of Beowulf's return to the land of the Geats, during which an account of the haughty activities of another queen, Thryth, are related; Hildeburh (in the account of the affair of Finn); and finally an unnamed 'Geatish woman' who laments at the funeral of Beowulf. That is all.

22. On libations, Germanic and Indo-European, see Cahen (1921), Benveniste (1969), and Doht (1974).

23. All quotations from the *Odyssey* are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, with an English translation by A. T. Murray (London: William Heinemann, 1919).

24. The ritual insult seems to have been a common feature of the *symbel*. The whole of *Lokasenna* is a series of such insults. They occur too in *Beowulf* (499–528), where Beowulf's prowess is challenged by Unferth and (529–606) where Beowulf replies to the challenge and, in so doing, disparages Unferth's character. Curiously, the insults lead only to other verbal 'violence' rather than to physical attack. It is verbal prowess that seems central to the *symbel*.

25. 'Das Wort *Samuin* wurde in Irland als *sam-fuin*, "Ende des Sommers", gedeutet; eigentlich bedeutet *samuin* jedoch "Vereinigung"' (de Vries 1961:229). See also Le Roux (1961).

26. The degree to which the Irish accounts are expressive of widely shared mythological elements unique to all Celtic peoples is undecided, and perhaps undecidable. It is especially a problem with respect to the earlier continental Celtic peoples of whose religious beliefs we have few direct records. There is in Gaul, for example, the figure of Sucellos, the Good Striker or the God with the Hammer. Whether he is another manifestation of the same elements that compose the character of the Dagda is not clear. Powell (1958:122) finds the similarity convincing; de Vries (1961:94–96) does not.

III   Beowulf and the Nature of Events

1. Discussions of *wyrd* and related concepts occur in Phillpotts (1928), Timmer (1940–41 [1968]), Mittner (1955), Roper (1962), Dunning and Bliss (1969), Weber (1969), Smithers (1970), Shippey (1972), and Payne (1974). Despite the variety of opinion expressed, these essays are essentially consonant with each other, their differences being attributable for the most part to the limitations imposed by their particular points of departure. I find myself in general agreement with them all.

2. All quotations from *Widsith* are from the edition of Kemp Malone, *Widsith* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1962).

3. The language and content of the poem suggest composition in the sixth century after Christ with reduction to written form in the latter seventh (Chambers 1912:177–78; Malone 1962:112–16). See also Malone (1938).

4. The description of the Germanic poem as it is being evolved here is parallel to the description of the nature of the Homeric epic as given by Havelock (1963).

Indeed, *encyclopedia*, which I hit upon separately, is exactly the term Havelock uses to describe Homer's work (36–96). Although *encyclopedia* is useful, its use to describe the function of poetry in earlier societies obviously is not exact, especially 'if we use the term . . . in that bookish sense which is proper to it. For Homer [and, I would add, the Germanic singer/poet] continually restates and rehandles the *nomos* and *ethos* of his society as though from a modern standpoint he were not quite sure of the correct version. What he in fact is quite sure of is the overall code of behaviour, portions of which he keeps bringing up in a hundred contexts and with a hundred verbal variants' (Havelock 1963:92).

5. The point is apparently true of all oral formulaic literature. In the transmission and presentation of such literature, its power derives from 'the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it. The ideal is a true story well and truly retold' (Lord 1960:29). Whether any Germanic poem, as we now have it, is oral is a matter of dispute. See the discussion, history, and bibliography in Watts (1969).

6. All quotations from *Deor* are from the edition of Kemp Malone, *Deor* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966).

7. Most recently, the term used to describe this alternative structure of Germanic literature is 'interlace'. 'Events widely separated in time are juxtaposed and so connected as to reveal the ironies and portents difficult to perceive in a chronological account. The interlace produces symmetrical patterns in which the combinations have meaning and the recombinations have added meaning; on each part is felt the pressure of all the other parts. A natural tendency of criticism has been to unravel the threads with the result that the design is lost. Consequently, the poem is commonly said to be structurally weak. It must be read with attention to the whole pattern, however great the difficulty. What emerges is a structure of complex, knotted unity' (Leyerle 1965:96–97). See also Leyerle (1967). The term is a good one because it gives us a positive label rather than a negative one (*not* narrative) to describe the structure of the poetry, and it provides an interesting analogy with the use of interlace in Germanic artifacts. Yet, we still do not know very much about the way 'interlace' is used and *how* it informs the poetry. What does an 'interlaced' poem 'look' like? How do we grasp its full structure? How are we to perceive the 'knotted unity' of the poem? Howard (1976:199–226) has done much to answer these questions for the medieval Christian poem, but they still need investigation as they relate to Germanic poetry. It is very clear that Germanic poems do not 'look' like flowers.

8. The emphasis of 'immediate' is necessary because what might be called final or ultimate causes are everywhere present; indeed, final causes seem to act more directly upon events in Germanic literature than we perceive them to nowadays.

9. The semantic information signaled by the conjunctive forms *þā* and *þæt* is of great importance. It is treated in some detail in essay 4. The reading of the text given here implies that the forms are not essentially temporal or causal; simply reading the text as it has been outlined literally should do much to enforce this impression. Rather, the forms seem to be much more juxtapositional or spatial in the kinds of relations they express.

10. For another account of the variations in the three versions of this battle, see Stevick (1963). Brodeur noticed something of the same effect in the poem's

retelling of the events surrounding Hygelac's death: 'In . . . situations of different dramatic moment the same story is told, with different emphases; and thereby main plot and subplot are knit together . . . and the unity of the entire poem effectively established' (1969:221).

11. The materials described in *Beowulf* are related to actual Germanic grave goods and archaeological finds in, for example, Stjerna (1912), Lindqvist (1948), Bruce-Mitford (1952, 1972, 1974, 1975), Clark (1965a), and Wrenn (1962, 1965).

12. The mention of God tends to bother people because it suggests Christian intrusion into the poem. There is no question that there is in *Beowulf*, as we have already found, in essay 1, in *Vǫluspá*, some evidence of 'Christian influence'. Put more boldly, there is virtually nothing in the literary records of the Germanic peoples that does not show some degree of 'Christian influence'. The fact of the influence is not problematical, but difficulties arise when we try to define just what this 'Christian influence' is. In its simplest form, it is apparent in the mere mention of some 'Christian' matter: here, God, or elsewhere, in *Beowulf*, the mention of Cain; the doomsday-like description of Ragnarǫk in *Vǫluspá*, etc. This line of reasoning runs afoul, however, if carried to its logical conclusion: We will find ourselves discovering 'Roman' or 'Egyptian' influence, for example, in *Widsith* because that poem mentions both Caesar and Egyptians. This is not satisfactory; clearly, we want something more, some more pervasive religious or cultural evidence than a mention provides. Even a relatively extensive variety of material mentioned in a text will not directly and obviously provide a satisfactory semantic map for those of us who now read outside the conceptual framework that provided the impulse for the text's composition. To ask whether *Beowulf*, or *Vǫluspá*, is really 'Christian' or really 'pagan' or something else, without providing a clear account of exactly what particular semantic elements any of these terms consists of, becomes a futile exercise. The presently flourishing controversy about whether *Beowulf* is or is not 'Christian' or 'pagan' has only adumbrated this futility. If convincing points can be made on both sides of such a case (and they have been), it is likely that both sides are largely right and that the question they vainly try to decide admits of no decision; it is a 'question' that is in no essential way in contention. For information and bibliography about the pagan/Christian aspects of *Beowulf*, see Whallon (1965), Moorman (1967), Irving (1968:89–102), Brodeur (1969:182–219), and Baird (1970); for information on the similar controversy about *Vǫluspá*, see essay 1, n. 23, above.

It should be clear that the argument of all of the essays here has been to define as carefully as possible the nature of a 'Germanic' way of thinking and conceiving of reality. With respect to the 'pagan'/'Christian' controversy, Germanic thinking is earlier on largely 'pagan' and becomes through time more and more 'Christian'. Because 'Germanic' thinking is open and accumulative, its literary forms are also 'open'. 'It has been said that the *Vǫluspá* is not a single poem at all, but a scrap-book containing fragments on mythological subjects derived from various sources. If this is correct, it [is] wrong to summarize the *Vǫluspá*' (Turville-Petre 1953:58). If we wish to provide this 'scrap-book' with some ordering principle other than mere randomness, then the term is essentially the same as *encyclopedia* (the defining term used at the beginning of this essay) in all

aspects but completeness. Anything relevant to the subject matter being collected will be appropriate, irrespective of its 'pagan' or 'Christian' origin. Likewise, if we ask of a scrap-book or an encyclopedia what it was like 'originally', we will, I think, confront ourselves with a more realistic formulation about the 'original versions' of Germanic poems than most of our contemporary editing techniques have provided us.

13. This stands in curious contrast to the remarks of Tacitus: 'notum ignotumque quantum ad ius hospitis nemo discernit. abeunti, si quid poposcerit, concedere moris; et poscendi in vicem eadem facilitas. gaudent muneribus, sed nec data imputant nec acceptis obligantur' (*Germania* 21) 'No distinction is ever made between acquaintance and stranger as far as the right to hospitality is concerned. As the guest takes his leave, it is customary to let him have anything he asks for; and the host, with as little hesitation, will ask for a gift in return. They take delight in presents, but they expect no repayment for giving them and feel no obligation in receiving them' (Mattingly 1970: 119–20). The reciprocal exchange is similar, yet, in Germanic literature, gifts are not asked for; they are given freely. There is, likewise, a good deal of 'obligation' to all this. It is an obligation not to future activity, however, but to remember the past, which the gift contains, and to disseminate this past, as the regiving of such gifts suggests. To Tacitus, an outsider, as to ourselves, the practice seems to have been strange.

14. Whether or to what degree 'masts' were present in Germanic ships is still a moot point. See Stjerna (1912) and Girvan (1971). That a mast or mastlike element might be added to a Germanic burial seems quite likely. The orthogonal relationship of mast and ship is mythically a significant point, and when it does not obtain it is simulated. In Ibn Fadlān's account of the burial of the Rūs chieftain, for example, we learn that he is placed in the prepared pavilion of his ship (which, as far as we can tell, has no mast) and that he is 'propped . . . up with cushions' (Smyser 1965:99).

15. The form *frum-* (Lat. *prim-us*; Goth. *frums*, also *fruma*; Gk. πρῶτος; ON *frum-*), although not frequent in the text, occurs often enough to make its meaning clear. It always represents that which is first, primary, incipient, etc. As a noun, *fruma*, it suggests an initiator, a beginner, a creator. Thus, the dragon (2309) can be referred to as *se fruma*, 'the initiator' of the havoc to be wreaked upon the Geats; Grendel (2090) can be referred to as the *dǣdfruma*, 'the initiator of deeds' against the Danes. Likewise, Beowulf can refer to his father Ecgtheow as an *ǣþele ordfruma* 'a noble point-initiator'. Indeed, Beowulf can trace his lineage only back to his father, a fact that seems to account for the Geats' not finding Beowulf's early potential to be promising (2183–89) in spite of his impressive physical stature. The poem carefully contrasts Beowulf's difficulties with respect to lineage with Hrothgar's, whose *ordfruma* is Scyld himself.

16. The great works of Klaeber (1950) and Chambers (1959) form the modern extension of the text of *Beowulf* along Germanic lines, adding, as they do, more and more detail to the poem as it becomes known to us. It is unfortunate, however, that their work, so generous of detail, is so sadly lacking in alliterative style. Few would suffer Chambers's *Introduction* to be sung.

17. Beowulf is, at this point, *fǣge*. This contrasts directly with his earlier comment: *nǣs ic fǣge þā gȳt* 'I was not yet marked' (2141), which he makes to Hygelac in

his report of his battle with Grendel's Mother. The term always refers to some special marking or significance of an apparently ordinary actor, which places him within the flow of the powers beyond the normal. It regularly occurs in relation to actions that lead to death, especially an important or meaningful death, the ultimate significance. It is thus clearly related to the power of *wyrd* itself. See Gillam (1962) and Smithers (1970). In the present context, the *þēow* is *unfǣge* even though his action is important; nothing happens to him. He disappears completely; he has no reality beyond the ephemeral present; he is the unnamed instrument of his action. Beowulf, whose greatness is touched by the action, is 'marked', and he bears with him the full impact of all of the actions related to and deriving from the theft.

18. The action of melting and its relation to heat, especially 'heated' fighting, is a relatively common motif in Irish literature and folklore. See Puhvel (1969).

19. Beowulf is more nearly superhuman in his swimming than merely proficient. As such, he has more parallels in Celtic than in Germanic literature (Puhvel 1971). Still, swimming is anything but uncommon in Norse literature.

20. *Account* is used here to avoid the difficulties already noted in dealing with terms like *narrative*, *story*, and *history*. These are all too chronological in their structure to represent the Germanic account of actions. Such accounts are regularly composed of the details of actions that, at the moment of their recitation, are past or accomplished. Their value is the value of fact rather than of process. The presentations of such accounts in Germanic literature are usually highly stylized or ritualistic (as the text following makes clear). The same is true, of course, of the *bēot*.

21. The term *bēot* is not restricted in the Old English to reference to this kind of set speech. It has 'three chief meanings: (1) a threatening, menace; (2) danger; and (3) boasting promise. It seems that the third one is the most usual, and logically the meanings would seem to have developed in the order: promise—boasting—threatening—danger' (Einarsson 1934:980). All of these suggest contexts in which present events are structured by circumstances that have already taken place.

22. *Scop* or *sceop* (OHG *scof*; ON *skop*) 'singer, poet, entertainer' is a difficult form to trace etymologically. See, for example, Werlich (1967:361–74). It seems to have connections with both Mod.E *shape* (OE *scieppan* [class VI] 'fashion, create') and *scoff*. The idea of poet as maker or creator seems right to us; yet poet as derider or scoffer seems strange. In *Beowulf*, the scop is never explicitly connected with derision or scoffing. Still, the related form *skop* in Old Norse seems regularly to refer to mocking or railing. The only mocking or railing we have in *Beowulf* is the taunting of Beowulf by Unferth, Hrothgar's *þyle* (499–528). This fact, however, is not irrelevant to the matter of the scop. 'What the title *þyle* applied to Unferð (1165, 1456) meant, cannot be determined with certainty. The *þyle* ([ON] *þulr*) has been variously described as a sage, orator, poet of note, historiologer, major domus, or the king's right-hand man. The [OE] noun occurs several times as the rendering of "orator" . . . As to the *þulr*, the characteristics of his office seem to have been "age, wisdom, extended knowledge, and a seat of honor"' (Klaeber 1950:149). It also has connotations of discord and may be associated with Odin (Baird 1970). The same root underlies both *þula*, the term

used to describe the word-list poems like *Widsith*, and ON *þylja* 'to say by rote, recite, chant'. Although the 'singer' of *Widsith* refers to himself as a *glēoman*, 'lexical evidence shows that *þyle* and *glēoman* are synonymous: both are glossed alike, as *histrio* and *scurra*. *Glēoman* and *scop* are also synonymous, as the [*Beowulf*] poet's usage shows [line 1160, where he refers to the scop's recital of the Finn story as the *glēomanes gyd*]. Hence if *þyle* = *glēoman* and *glēoman* = *scop*, *þyle* = *scop*' (Eliason 1963:281). Thus, the individual performing this function for the Germanic chieftain would be at once a maker and singer of tales (*glēoman*), the keeper of the *þula* (the record of the order of the past), and the spokesman of its value, the counselor of the past (*þyle*), and the challenger of present actions (*scop*). As these are all aspects of one function, any one term descriptive of one aspect would imply all of the others, as the varied uses of these different terms suggest. It is also clear that the function of the individual re-creates within the world of men the essential activities of the Norns and the power of the past. The *glēoman*/ *scop*/*þyle* on the one hand collects and orders the actions of the past and, on the other, directly confronts the affairs of the present through counsel and challenge. If, as Eliason (1963) suggests, Unferth fills this function in Hrothgar's court, it is right for him to challenge Beowulf's *bēot*, just as Beowulf's actions are to be tested directly by the power of the past.

23. Deor also speaks of himself: 'ic hwile wæs Heodeninga scop, / dryhtne dyre; me wæs Deor noma' (36–37). He tells of his activities as the scop of the Heodenings before he gives his name. That fact is clearly of more importance. It seems clear also that the function of the kenning in Germanic verse is also to establish these far-reaching interrelationships among individuals, events, and things (Mittner 1955:7–81; Frank 1978).

24. This 'ale-drinking', 'ale-dispensing', or 'ale-giving' repeats the semantic elements of the etymology of *symbel* (*sum-alu*) 'ale-gathering' or 'ale-sharing'. See the second part of essay 2, herein; also Smithers (1951–52:67–75). Einarsson (1934), Irving (1966), and Klegraf (1971). These lines have caused interpretive problems, as the extensive bibliographies in Irving (1966) and Klegraf (1971) attest. The form *-scerwen* may denote either dispensing or sharing on the one hand or, on the other, denying or taking away. Smithers and Irving support both of these readings. If one divides the form into *scer-* and *-wen* (and lengthens to *wēn*), it denotes something like 'hope of a portion' (Klegraf 1971). All these interpretations will work here depending upon the density of irony one wishes to find in the passage. All ultimately amount to the same thing; all are appropriate to the *symbel* context.

25. Modern readers often find this ending abrupt and somewhat pointless, as if it had not quite got out all that it had to say. The poem seems not to conclude but simply to stop, breaking off, as it were, in midpoint. Yet it should be clear that a poem constructed upon such lines as those developed above can only move toward some concluding point that it can never embody. Such poems articulate only the fact of their own process of saying; they can say much, but never fully or finally. The Geats speak, the poem speaks, and we as readers, now, in an act of reading, engage in and perpetuate this speech, which *gæð ā swā hīo scel* . . .

IV Action, Space, and Time

1. This sounds very much like Lévi-Strauss's idea of 'mediation', and in some ways it is. A term like 'tension' operates much like Lévi-Strauss's mediating principle, but the way in which I have examined the structural aspects of Germanic culture differs greatly from both Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the Oedipus myth (Lévi-Strauss 1967:202–28) and his account of American Indian materials in the *Mythologiques* (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 1973).

2. This is to say nothing of Rydberg's concern about the orientation of the well and tree. He places Urth's Well at the top of the configuration because the root with which it is associated is said to lie *á himni* 'in heaven'. This leads him to a dilemma concerning the tree's apparent horizontal orientation in space. The problem is a result of trying to reconcile one kind of orientation in space (that of the well and tree) with another (our own). It clearly will not work, as Rydberg's own discussion (1906:395–406) makes abundantly clear. If the representation is to define space, it cannot be held accountable to other definitions.

3. Within the realm of the tree, however, are some worlds that, to a degree much greater than any of those so far considered, resemble in their configurational elements the realm of the well itself. There are, first and foremost, the created wells to which the Prose Edda explicitly refers: Hvergelmir, Mimir's Well, and the Well of Urth. Thus, Urth's Well, as it is described by the Edda and to the degree to which we are able to discuss it as a 'real' thing, is not a direct description of what we are here calling the 'realm of the well'. Instead, it is a portion of the realm of the tree, which, in its configuration, more greatly than any other portion of the created realm iconically embodies (or, better, performs the realm of the tree's closest approximation of embodiment of) the cosmic elements that sustain and structure the whole. The placement of these aspects of the realm of the tree is such that they are quite distant from other created worlds and, by implication, closer to the reality of the realm of the well. In conjunction with these created wells are other portions of the created world of which men know little: the world of the Rime-Giants (of which men know just about nothing) and Niflheim, the world of the dead. That the world of the dead would be located close to the realm of the well, which supports all 'creation' and which is 'past'-dominated, is itself not surprising. We must, of course, keep in mind that, although there are many configurational elements that associate Niflheim and the idea of the 'well' and many similarities between Hel, who controls the world of the dead, and the Norns, finally the world of the dead is a created world within the realm of the tree. There is traffic back and forth among the world of gods, the world of the dead, and the world of men; there is no similar traffic between the realms of the tree and well.

4. The use of the verb *brēgan* (*bregdon*) 'to terrify' in the passage is interesting. It suggests, in an oblique way, the verb *bregdan* 'to move to and fro, weave'. Both verbs have related nouns: OE *brōga* 'terror' (more common) and *brēgd, brēgda* 'fear, terror' (less common), and Mod.E *braid*, respectively. How closely might these apparently different roots have been related? Etymologically, their association is indefensible; one has a long vowel and the other a short one. This vowel distinction is not unique to English: OHG *brōgo* or MHG *bröögg* 'terror' against

ON *bragð* 'a sudden movement', OHG *brettan* 'to seize'. Still, the associations here made would indicate that such semantic distinctions would have been felt to be much less separate in the earlier culture than they now seem. Indeed, OHG *brettan* also means 'to frighten'. That such sudden, weaving movement would be not only significant but terrifying in its most powerful manifestations emerges from all of the considerations of these essays. Even if these verbs derive from separate roots, there would have been some probable impulse to associate them. With the eventual disappearance in late Old English of long vowels in closed syllables, their association might have become even more obvious. If we are dealing with folk etymology here, it is of a most profound kind.

5. This does not mean that the Germanic peoples did not understand geometric relations; indeed, they did. They would not, however, have subsumed the geometric and locational aspects of the world of men under a single term like *space*. In fact, we still do not do this fully, in spite of our language (Cassirer 1955: 83–104).

6. The translations 'then, thereupon, when, since, as' given by Klaeber (1950: 409–10) are typical. Choosing among these has bedeviled interpreters for years. Because the form *þā* is unchanging, its position in the sentence has suggested itself as a factor in deciding upon the choice of *then* or *when* (i.e. independent or subordinate marker, respectively). For the possibilities and difficulties of such translations, see Andrew (1940, 1948) and Bacquet (1962).

7. 'The position of the conjunction *ðæt* introducing a noun-clause in Old English is important. The rule is that it always stands immediately before its own clause, so that, if this is modified by other, e.g. adverbial, clauses, these are placed before and not, as in Modern English, after the conjunction' (Andrew 1948: 30). Just so: adverbial elements, process-modifying elements, occur apart from the factual substantiation marked by *þæt*.

8. Although most of the activities associated with halls in the Edda are seemingly entirely pagan in their nature, those in Old English literature have obvious Christian associations (Taylor 1966). We need think only of the central image of the hall as metaphor for the creation in 'Caedmon's Hymn' to sense this. To paraphrase Whallon (1965), however, the image of the hall as significant structure would not have suggested itself for use in structuring Christian conceptions if it had not already been identified with a closely associated, readily understood idea before the conversion.

9. The conceptions hidden behind such phrases as 'over and done with' or 'passed by' would not exist. Such phrases do not occur in the Germanic languages of this early period and would surely have been thought of as nonsensical had they been uttered. To the contrary, the past is all that *is* sure, knowable, or known.

10. This does not mean that the Germanic peoples did not understand the idea of duration or reckoning of times anymore than that their emphasis on discontinuous space denied their understanding of distance or geometry. They simply exist in different realms of experience. The flow of time, time reckoning, and duration are understood by all human cultures (Maxwell 1971). They are frequently felt, however, to be separate phenomena not necessarily overlapping (Pocock 1967). Time reckoning is itself apparently derivative of the experience of 'times' as significant occurrences of the kinds described here. The signifi-

cances, of course, vary. Although time-reckoning names sound *pars pro toto* to us now, they are apparently, in origin, the names of real, physical concepts deriving from significant actions—'planting' for spring, 'harvest' for fall, etc. (Nilsson 1920)—but these are not unified, and different kinds of reckoning systems for different kinds of significant events can coexist easily with one another within a single culture (Nilsson 1920; Malinowski 1927). That the Germans had a lunar calendar does nothing to inhibit the experience of significant events according to other, different systems. It is only in relatively recent times that duration (scientific time, clock time) has come to dominate much of man's activity. Even so, 'a little introspection will reveal to any of us that, so far as his own life is concerned, time is not reckoned on any scientific or numerical basis. It is reckoned by events. Our lives as we look back on them are punctuated not by dates but by salient events in our personal history' (Leach 1954: 126). We might add that geometrical space is likewise recessive in human experience, as anyone will testify who has tried to remember, without a good deal of objective refiguring, just what rooms on the second floor of a two-story house he knows well are over what first-floor rooms.

11. All Latin quotations from Bede are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, *Baedae opera historica*, with an English translation by J. E. King (London: William Heinemann, 1930).

12. All Old English quotations from Bede are taken from the edition of Thomas Miller, *The Old English version of Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people*, Early English Text Society, 95–96 (London: N. Trübner, 1890–91).

13. Its occurrences are frequent: *beföran* 'in front of, within the visible presence of', *före* 'in the presence, of anterior time, formerly', etc. All occurrences deal with relationships resulting from *confrontation* in time and space, and these are no more distinct in the earlier stage of the language than they are in Mod.E *before*. The 'relational' meaning was apparently present in the IE root **per*, but the relations derive variously in the different Indo-European languages. Although the spatio-temporal link is observably there, it is not uniformly past-oriented as in the Germanic usage (e.g. Lat. *per-* 'through', Gk. *παρα-* 'alongside, beyond'). The phenomenon is not restricted to Indo-European languages: 'Tiv words which might be translated "time" can be better and more accurately translated into English another way . . . for example, the word *cha* means "far" and is used of space, of time, and of kinship' (Bohannan 1953: 251). Such forms bespeak an anthropocentric, unified understanding of both time and space.

14. This lack of finality gives to the events of Ragnarǫk a quality that is essentially different from anything in Christian eschatology, in spite of the fact that some of the events recounted in *Vǫluspá* seem apocalyptic (in the Christian sense). For further comment, see essay 1, n. 23, and essay 3, n. 12.

15. All quotations from Augustine's *Confessions* are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, *Saint Augustine's Confessions*, with an English translation by William Watts, 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1912).

16. All quotations from *The City of God* are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, *Saint Augustine: the City of God against the pagans*, vol. 4, with an English translation by Philip Levine (London: William Heinemann, 1966).

17. The analogy has the sparrow fly into a warm hall from winter outside. The

emphasis upon the desirable warmth of the enclosure and the direction into it are surely Germanic elements. The extension of the analogy and, indeed, its main orientation are Christian. The flight as it is described is tripartite: flight into, flight inside, flight out. It seems clear that, if such an analogy was made at the time of conversion, it would not have been figured in exactly the terms in which it was reported to and by Bede. The Latin is in Bede II, 13:282–84; the Old English is in Bede II, 10 [13]:134–36.

18. The translation is not entirely adequate, but it does confirm the relationship between Christ and Urth's Well, which is its purpose here. Anyone who has tried will have discovered that translating skaldic verse clearly and fully is virtually impossible. It is hard, for example, to know the exact function of the *setberg* 'sit-mountain', 'saddleback hill' in the context. It is now generally taken to be the equivalent of *dómstað* 'tribunal' (literally, 'judging place'), which is elsewhere associated with Urth's Well (*Gylfaginning* 15:31). In this case, Christ now sits in judgment *setbergs banda* 'in the judging place of the gods'. One may construe *banda* with *løndum*, however, and get 'in the lands of the gods'. Thus, we must choose, in translating, either the former—'in the judging place of the gods . . . throughout [all] lands', or something like it—or the latter—'in the judging place . . . in the lands of the gods' (Lange 1962:231; Weber 1970; Frank 1978: 118–19). These readings ignore the possibility that *banda* might be construed with *Róms* 'of the gods of Rome' so that the reference to Christ becomes 'King of the gods of Rome'. He might also be the *Konungr . . . setbergs* 'King of the judging place'. Nor do these examples exhaust the possibilities. This says nothing of the problems we now face with the homonymy manifest in *hefr* ('he has' versus 'he lifts') and the possibility that *remðan* might be a participle of both *remma* 'to make strong' and of *hremma* 'to clutch' (with the loss of the initial aspiration), a phenomenon not widespread but also not unknown in Old Norse. Because etymological variants of *hremma* are used in other Germanic languages to make reference to the Crucifixion (Cleasby et al. 1957:283), it is not impossible that the text is suggesting simultaneously, in *hefr . . . remðan . . . sik*, that 'he has made himself strong' and 'he raises himself crucified'. But these are our problems, not the text's.

19. For a clear, illuminating account of the problems inherent in reconciling *wyrd* with Christian beliefs, see Payne (1968:78–108), where the occurrence of the term (and others related to it) are examined in King Alfred's Old English version of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.

V Language

1. Lehmann, who is committed to an IE aspectual verbal system, denies any significant systematic value to the IE aorist: 'As is commonly assumed in IE studies, an aorist should not be posited for [Primitive Indo-European] as a separate verbal category comparable to the aorists of Sanskrit and Greek. The aorist forms in these dialects have simply developed from PIE roots with punctual meaning. A characteristic shape of the root is in zero grade, as of *wid-* for the extended root *weyd-*. Suffixed only with secondary endings, the verb forms built on such roots had punctual, perfective meaning' (Lehmann 1974:144). If this is so, the op-

position present:aorist is just a variation of present:perfect, but see, below, Lehmann's argument for the distinctions of the opposition aorist:perfect. See also n. 6, below.

2. Usually IE aorist forms evolve into 'past' tense forms, representing time *anterior*. The IE *s*-aorist can be linked, however, with the *-syo-* desiderative suffix as a possible source of some future tense forms (e.g. in Baltic) in -*s*- (Brugmann 1895:189–200; 365–66), thus possibly providing a representation of time *posterior*.

3. This is in some opposition to the statements of Lehmann, who sees the nature of the aorist as one of punctuality or momentariness (1974:144). If perfects are neither punctual nor momentary, then they contrast with aorists in just these two ways. As 'punctual' has been defined here, however, i.e. as action within limits, there is no opposition between aorist and perfect on this point. With respect to the element of momentariness, it is difficult to define this as essentially distinct from punctuality without introducing the idea of duration, which, apparently, aorists lack. If, on the other hand, aorists are uniquely temporal in their semantic nature, then they would contrast with the more aspectual nature of perfects. This seems an even less desirable distinction.

4. As in the cases considered above, the use of such notations as (*now*) or (*nonpast*) must be read as a kind of shorthand for all of the relational qualities that a restricting mark brings to its occurrences. Thus, (*now*) makes reference to all aspects of 'present-tense'-marked forms. It should not be read to mean 'present time' or 'immediate context' or whatever. It merely encodes in a convenient, short form all the elements inherent in Germanic conception—language, time, space, etc.—that delimit the world of the tree as it stands in opposition to all of reality beyond it. As such, it is neither a temporal nor an aspectual mark; its nature makes it useful in reference to both—and more.

5. There is also the possibility that a good deal of this change took place because of a refocusing of the original IE verbal system upon temporal matters (Lehmann 1942, 1943a, 1974:144). There is no question about the importance of the relationship of the Germanic temporal scheme to the binary tense system, yet it seems unlikely that the Germanic verbal system can be accounted for purely on temporal terms. For a more detailed account of some of the complications deriving from the interrelation of temporal and aspectual matters, see Kuryłowicz (1964:90–135).

6. It is possible that the sequence of changes rather vaguely and tentatively outlined in the text above is simpler than the one suggested. First, as Lehmann (1974:144) has noted, the aorist may be not a formal or functional category of the IE parent language (see above, n. 1) but a secondary, later form derived from 'present' stems. This would leave the IE parent language with an operative opposition only of present:perfect. Likewise, it has been argued that the preterite of the Germanic strong verb itself can be derived solely from IE perfect stems (Polomé 1964). If both of these positions are accepted, then it is quite possible that the development of the Germanic preterite is much simpler than has been argued here. The Germanic preterite would develop only from the formal opposition of present:perfect. Functionally, the qualities of (*fully realized* and *impinging*) expressed by perfects would be the main source of the semantic

elements of the developing preterite (there would be no (*other*) element associated with the opposition *present:aorist at all). Thus, the rather complicated scheme of the collapse of the three-way opposition provided by an IE language with aorist, present, and perfect forms would not need to occur at all. In such a case, the Germanic languages never went through the changes noted in Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin. The 'Germanic' development, then, would be essentially a lack of adding complications rather than a process of simplifying an already more complicated parent language. There is a good deal now to recommend this development; recent investigations into the nature of Hittite and its relationship to other IE languages support the simpler model for the IE parent language. See Polomé (1978–79, 1979) for the arguments and relevant bibliography.

This simpler development would not affect the argument presented in this essay in a serious way. The Germanic preterite would lack any effective semantic quality for 'otherness' or 'remoteness', which the opposition of present:aorist should have lent it. Likewise, it would express much more forcefully the (*impinging* and *fully realized*) quality associated with the perfect. This would make the 'feeling' of such a preterite less remote and more directly present in the reality the language denotes than the argument here presented has asserted. For the greater part, such a development for the Germanic preterite would provide an even stronger case than the one here made. In the same way, the argument, following in the text, for the loss of IE medio-passives in Germanic would need to be refigured as an argument for the lack of development of such forms. The 'mediating' quality of medio-passives would never fully develop a meaningful opposition with the 'impinging' quality of the perfect in any Germanic language. The eventual decay of the few forms in Gothic would, however, follow essentially the same pattern as that given in the text.

7. This, unfortunately, does not tell us much that is significant about the relative chronology of the changes in the evolving Germanic verbal system. It does, however, seem that such a movement of perfect to present would be accommodated by an unmarked present more easily than if the occurrences of present-marked forms were highly restricted. Still, the semantic nature of the restricted present is probably close enough to that of such changing perfects to accommodate the merger.

8. In figures, the presence of a + before a parenthesis indicates the presence of the parenthetical element; a Ø indicates that the parenthetical mark is absent, leaving the space unmarked for this element.

9. I ignore here the later formation of the morphological -*sk* passives in the North Germanic languages.

10. The OE infinitive corresponding to Goth. *wisan* is *bēon* 'be'; its paradigm is mixed in the language with the forms *wæs* 'was' and *wæron* 'were', etymological relatives of Goth. *wisan*, as part of it. In what follows, unless otherwise specified, the Goth. forms *wisan* and *wairþan* will be regularly used generically to refer to all instances of forms like 'be' that are related syntactically and paradigmatically to these verbs, whether these are etymological or not.

11. Streitberg's figures have been challenged by Pollak (1964). With respect to the translation of Gk. finite perfect passives, Pollak's recounting of translations into

the Goth. indicative produced a total of seventy-four Goth. constructions with auxiliaries: sixty-seven with *ist* and the participle, two with *was* and participle, and five with *warþ* and participle (1964:36). Thus, there are considerably fewer preterite forms of *wisan* than Streitberg found. The difficulties of accounting for such translations are many. Not all of the Gk. passive constructions, for example, are rendered as passives in Gothic; some Gk. passives are rendered as Goth. present medio-passives. Not all 'perfect' constructions in Greek are finite perfect formations; the construction with $\dot{\eta}\nu$ and a participle is not uncommon, etc. Depending upon how many or how few of these are counted, the totals will vary. Still, the disappearance of forty of Streitberg's *was* + participle constructions is a serious variation. Pollak's figures (1964:41), paralleling Streitberg's for the Gospel according to Saint Luke *only*, are as follows:

		wairþan	*wisan*	
Greek	rendered as Gothic	*warþ* (only)	*was*	*ist*
aorist indicative passive		12	5	6
imperfect indicative passive		1	8	—
pluperfect indicative passive		—	2	—
$\dot{\eta}\nu$ + participle		—	7	—
perfect indicative passive		—	—	11

Except for the disappearance of *was* + participle as a translation of the Gk. perfect indicative passive, the pattern is much like Streitberg's.

12. It can be seen immediately that the figures given here differ from those of figure 5, in which the *wairþan* and past participles make up approximately 28 percent of the total (25 percent by Pollak's figures: see above, n. 11). This may be due to at least two factors: first, Streitberg counts only those Gothic constructions that can be traced to inflected passives in the Greek original; any additional constructions not so traceable would not be counted. Second, Mittner is counting only those Gothic constructions that seem to be 'perfective', a difficult task at best.

13. Although I have made great use of Mittner's book here, I am not in complete agreement with his position. He places, as do many other commentators, *wyrd* in an almost entirely antithetical and hostile position to the affairs of men: he stresses its relation to destruction and death. I cannot deny this; it surely has this function. It is not the whole case, however, and to ignore the positive, generative aspect of *wyrd* is to skew if not warp the full role it plays in the Germanic cosmos. As *Beowulf* tells us: 'Wyrd oft nereð / unfægne eorl, þonne his ellen dēah!' (572–73). This is *wyrd* not merely withholding its destructive hand but acting positively through the strength and valor of a great man. Likewise, we would do God a disservice to grant him his Deluge and deny him his Rainbow.

14. If this is the case, occurrences of *wairþan* and the past participle bring to their contexts semantic elements additional to those present in constructions with *wisan* and the past participle. These are not unrelated to questions of verbal 'aspect' and its possible presence in early Germanic languages. As a matter of fact, Pollak (1964:55–60) has found in Gothic an interesting correlation between the contexts where *wairþan* occurs and those where verbal forms prefixed

with ga- are present. Both are relatively frequent in translations of Gk. aorist contexts. What the nature of this 'aspect' may have been is unclear, and there is not much evidence for it outside Gothic. Some have argued that it is like the perfective:imperfective opposition of Slavic (Streitberg 1906; Senn 1949); others argue against it (Scherer 1954). Regardless, the many cases in Gothic of verbal pairs, ga- prefixed versus unprefixed, argue that at some time some kind of meaningful opposition between these forms must have obtained.

15. The relationships among IE languages located in Europe have provided scholars with a fertile field of exploration ever since the formulation of the IE family. Most of these relationships have been evolved from phonological and lexical correspondences among the various languages, and opinions about their relationships have varied greatly with time. The earliest conceptions found Baltic and Slavic (*satem* languages) significantly opposed to Italic, Celtic, and Germanic (*centum* languages). By the end of the nineteenth century, lexical and grammatical (e.g. the dative inflection in -*m*) correspondences suggested a closer relation between Germanic and Balto-Slavic than had been apparent earlier. Germanic was seen to be more 'Eastern' than originally conceived, and Italic and Celtic were envisioned as more 'Western'. After 1908, when Meillet (1967) was first published, the idea of an Italo-Celtic unity, much like that of Balto-Slavic, gained currency. Germanic, then, began to play an important role in the attempts to fix chronologically the split of the apparent Italo-Celtic unity into its two attested, separate language groups. Earlier opinion placed Germanic in an important relation with the Italic subgroup (Porzig 1954), but there are also important lexical relationships peculiar to Germanic and Celtic (Hubert 1932: 76–83; Porzig 1954; Krahe 1954). As a result of all of this investigation, evidence accumulated that an Italo-Celtic unity, opposing it to the other IE dialects, was unlikely and that all of the relationships among languages were far more complicated than originally anticipated. Most recently, there has been renewed interest in the relationship of the Baltic and Slavic languages to Germanic and in establishing the validity of the lexical isoglosses among these and in classifying the time–depth relationships (especially of lexical borrowing) that, as yet, are not clearly or accurately known (Chemodanov 1962). The process of classification continues. For a more complete, documented account of the history of this research, see Polomé (1970a, 1970c), from which much of the attenuated account above has been drawn.

16. In addition to the aorist, Greek has an evolved imperfect, for example. The aorist and imperfect are in opposition in their reference to events in the past. Thus, the nature of the opposition present:aorist has changed, and, if nothing more, it has taken on a temporal element; most simply, this would suggest that the 'otherness' of the aorist has become further specified as 'otherness of the past'. This is not entirely the case, however. In general, commentators have found that, with respect to events in the past, the imperfect form expresses 'directness and vividness: it brings the event before the eyes in progress . . . The aorist, on the other hand, contains a colourless reference to the event as a unit of history' (Palmer 1954:266). This 'colorlessness' of the aorist would suggest an even further reduction of its essential semantic nature. Palmer's comment is a

typical one. Diver (1969), however, in his analysis of Homeric narrative, has found just the opposite to be the case. The active aorist is found to be the form regularly used to predicate the more central, most relevant events of the narrative, and the imperfect occurs in actions expressive of less relevant, peripheral activity. This suggests an entirely different semantic character for the aorist. When we recall the Gothic translation of the Bible, discussed above, it was in 'aorist' contexts in which not only the *wairþan* passive occurred but also the ga-prefixed verb forms; both of these are semantically complex Germanic constructions. Perhaps our accepted explanations of the Gk. aorist need reconsideration.

17. Not all Lat. perfects derive from the merger of IE perfect and aorist. Lat. reduplicated perfects (e.g. *ce-cinī*, *pe-pulī*) are IE perfect in origin. Those with vowel lengthening (e.g. *vēnī*, *lēgī*) are either perfect or aorist in origin; the type is uncertain. The perfect in -*sī* is from the *s*-aorist (e.g. *dīxī*, *clepsī*). Perfects in -*vī* or -*uī* (e.g. *flēvī*, *monuī*) are unique to Latin and are not found in Oscan or Umbrian, which also merge aorist and perfect forms (Buck 1933:291–95). In Germanic, it was only the preterites of strong verbs that derived from the merger of the IE aorist and perfect forms. Greek, too, which had maintained something of the IE perfect:aorist opposition, has perfects (e.g. the *k*-perfect) that do not derive from IE perfects.

18. These imperfects occur regularly in the Celtic languages and have a variety of functions: customary or repeated action in Irish; in Welsh and Cornish, conditional action (Lewis and Pedersen 1937:268). Additionally, Welsh has a pluperfect form, which is, like the imperfect, conditional ('would have', 'could have') in function (Jones 1913:316).

19. Another way in which the Celtic (Irish), Italic (Latin), and Greek verbal systems differ from the Germanic lies in their maintenance and adaptation of the IE medio-passive voice, which, among the Germanic languages, was preserved only by Gothic, where, as we have seen, it was in the process of disappearance. The IE medio-passive 'is represented by the [Gk.] and [Skt.] middle, a type common to Greek and Indo-Iranian' (Buck 1933:237). The Italic and Celtic deponent-passive deriving from 'a system of -*r*- forms with middle or passive meaning is found in Italic, in Phrygian, in Hittite and in Tokharian. The -*r*- element is in some cases clearly added to verbal forms identical with the middle forms known from [Greek] and [Sanskrit]' (Lewis and Pedersen 1937:310). The Celtic languages have a further-developed distinction of active:passive and active:middle, although it is not maintained throughout the entire conjugation of the verb. This 'distinction between passive and middle forms is a Celtic peculiarity not shared by Latin, Hittite and Tokharian (the -*r*- forms of the Celtic passive are identical with Hittite middle forms; with [Irish] -*berar*, -*carthar* we may compare Hittite *e-ša-ri* "he sits", *i-ia-at-ta-ri* "he goes", stem *eš-*, *i-ia-*)' (Lewis and Pedersen 1937:310). Nowhere in the Germanic verbal system is there any longer evidence of a formal opposition of active to passive or active to middle.

20. In Welsh, 'the pres. ind. is often future in meaning . . . ordinarily the present meaning is expressed periphrastically' (Jones 1913:315). In Breton, 'it is the pres. subjunctive that has a fut. meaning' (Lewis and Pedersen 1937:268).

Thus, Irish approximates something like Latin's temporal structure; the Brythonic languages are more like the Germanic group in their lack of distinct forms for future time, but their preterite structure is entirely different.

21. These forms provide the regular expression of futures in Lithuanian and Latvian. In Prussian, there is only one extant pure s-future form, *postāsei* 'become'. The regular expression of future in Prussian, much influenced by German, is made by the auxiliary *wīrst* and a following infinitive or active participle (Stang 1942:202–4).

22. See also Regnéll (1944:89–98). This is still the case for the expression of future time perfective in Modern Russian. In Old Church Slavonic, future time was frequently expressed periphrastically with present forms of the verb *xotěti* 'to want' or *načęti* 'to begin' and an infinitive. There were special forms (as in *bǫdǫtb* '[lit.] they are') for the future of 'to be' (Lunt 1965:135). This underlies Rus. *budu, bud'esh'* . . . , which, in conjunction with the infinitive of imperfective verbs, now express future time imperfective.

23. The North Germanic languages developed an infinitive that was specifically 'preterite' in its nature. It is 'identical in form with the 3 pl. pret. ind. The auxiliaries *skyldo, mondo, vildo* are especially frequent as substitutes for the future after a preterit in the principal clause: *hann kuazk (= kuaþ-sik) koma mondo* "he said, he intended to come, he would come" (Prokosch 1939:205). 'In ordinary prose use occurred two past infinitives: *mundu* and *skyldu*. In poetry occurred other past infins., but with the exception of *knáttu*, they were not frequent' (Gordon 1957:314).

24. For further information on the modal auxiliary systems of Modern English, and about modality in general, see Joos (1964), Diver (1964), Twaddell (1965), and Ehrman (1966). For earlier stages of the language, see Mustanoja (1960) and Tellier (1962).

25. Concerning ME *mun*, which has come to mean either 'must' or 'may' in Mod.E dialects, the OED suggests that 'the prehistoric sense was doubtless "to intend" ([IE] root *men-:mon-:mn-*to think . . .); [Old Norse] has a slightly differentiated form (inf. *mona, muna*) with the sense "to remember"'. See also Table 1, herein, on the preterite-present verbs.

26. It is important to keep in mind that in most Germanic languages verbs of remembering are impersonal in nature (e.g. Ger. *sich erinnern*; Dutch *zich herinneren*; Swed. *minnas, erinra sig*; Goth. *andþagkjan sik*). It is as if such activity were occurring without the agency of the rememberer; if this was initially so, the link between volition, intention, remembering, and the activity of the past is even stronger. This particular phenomenon is not unique to the Germanic languages (e.g. Lat. *recordārī*, French *se rappeler*). See Buck (1949:1228–30).

27. The construction is not limited to West Germanic; there is 'ein selbständiges Beispiel im Got.: Joh. 16, 20 *saurgandans wairþiþ (λυπήσεσθε)*' (Behaghel 1924:260).

28. 'The counterpart of the inf., which is by its origin a verbal abstract noun, is the participle, going as a rule back to a verbal adjective . . . The result of the development *verbal adj. > part.* is the same as in the case of the inf.: a derivative is incorporated into the inflectional system of the basic verb' (Kuryłowicz 1964:167). IE forms in *-nt-* underlie the Germanic 'present' participles (Brugmann

1891:394–404). Whether the present and past participles were originally differentiated in function in Indo-European or different inflectional paradigms of the same verbal adjective is unclear (see Kuryłowicz 1964:166–69).

Something More

1. The term *nineteenth century* is not to be taken as expressing only that time period running from A.D. 1800 to A.D. 1899, nor are the terms *Middle Ages* and *Renaissance* similarly time-bound. They are used merely to code dominant patterns or habits of mind. In this sense, we should be aware that there are still people, alive and well in our own day, living in the Middle Ages. More are living in the Renaissance, and probably the majority of us still live in this nineteenth-century world in spite of the fact that what will later be called the twentieth century is now greatly reconfiguring the nineteenth. We should be aware also that in none of these 'periods' are the dominant or defining characteristics, as it were, alone. As essay 4 has made clear, Augustine's articulation of the dominant perceptual structure of the Middle Ages was formulated in clear opposition to other patterns of perception that, in his time, offered serious and significant competition to what we now see as an essentially Christian mode of thinking. The elements of what I am calling here the nineteenth century obviously begin much earlier in our history than A.D. 1800, but they do seem to have reached their most widespread and dominant shape following that date.

2. This reductive statement, as popular for us as 'progress' was for the nineteenth century, is not so simple-minded as some of us might be, perhaps, inclined to think. No one who has listened even to only the first two hours of any presentation by R. Buckminster Fuller can fail to have some, if not all, of his doubts removed.

3. Here, perhaps, we can observe one of the ways in which written language differs greatly from the spoken and insists upon its own permanence in its apparent opposition to the ephemeral present. There is, as Derrida (1967, 1973) has pointed out, in Western alphabetic writing, a reification of the whole idea of directional linearity.

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Index

This index comprises most of the proper names, linguistic forms, and major concepts appearing in the argument of the text. Proper names of places and characters that appear incidentally in quotations (for example, the names of most Germanic tribes) are not included. Formal entries are regularly followed by an indication of the language or language group from which they come. The listing follows the practice of the English alphabet. All diacritical and nonalphabetic marks are ignored. All forms in Greek are alphabetized as if transliterated. With respect to special fonts: *æ* and *Æ* = *ae*; both *þ* and *ð* = *th*.