

The Wife's Lament

The Exeter Book, Part II. Edited by W.S. Mackie. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 152, 154.

Ic þis giedd wrece bi me ful geomorre,
minre sylfre sð. ic þæt secgan mæg
hwæt ic yrmþa gebad, siþþan ic up weox,
niwes oþþe ealdes, no ma þonne nu.
A ic wite wonn minra wræcsiþa.
ærest min hlaford gewat heonan of leodum
ofer yþa gelac; hæfde ic uhtceare
hwær min leodfruma londes wære.
ða ic me feran gewat folgað secan,
wineleas wræcca for minre weapearfe.
ongunnon þæt þæs monnes magas hycgan
þurh dyme gepoht þæt hy todælden unc,
þæt wit gewidost in woruldrice
lifdon laðlicost; ond mec longade.
het mec hlaford min her heard niman;
ahte ic leofra lyt on þissum londstede,
holdra freonda; forþon is min hyge geomor.
ða ic me ful gemæcne monnan funde,
heardsæligne, hygeomorne,
mod miþendne, morþor hycgendne,

bliþe gebæro. ful oft wit beotedan
þæt unc ne gedælde nemne deað ana,
owiht elles; eft is þæt onhwofen,
is nu swa hit no wære
freondscipe uncer. sceal ic feor ge neah
mines felalcofan fæhðu dreogan.
Heht mec mon wunian on wuda bearwe,
under actreo in þam eorðscræfe.
eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad;
sindon dena dimme, duna uphea,
bitre burgtunas brerum beweaxne,
wic wynna leas ful oft mec her wraþe begeat
fromsiþ frean. frynd sind on eorþan,
leofe lifgende, leger weardiað,
þonne ic on uhtan ana gonge
under actreo geond þas eorðscrafu.
Þær ic sittan mot sumorlangne dæg,
þær ic wepan mæg mine wræcsiþas,
earfoþa fela; forþon ic æfre ne mæg
þære modceare minre gerestan
ne ealles þæs longapes þe mec on þissum life begeat.

a scyle geong mon wesan geomormod,
heard heortan gepoht; swylce habban sceal
bliþe gebaro eac þon breostceare,
sinsorgna gedreag; sy æt him sylfum gelang
eal his worulde wyn. sy ful wide fh
feorres folclondes þæt min freond siteð
under stanhlife storme behrimed,

I sing this wretched song of my absolute sadness,
my journey into exile, that I might tell
what hardships I have dwelt in since I grew up,
new or old, never more than now.
Always I have suffered torments, miseries and wretchedness.
First my lord departed hence from his people
over the waves' destructive uproar; I could not sleep for fear
of where my lord might be on Earth.
Then I departed on my journey, to follow and seek to serve,
a friendless wandering exile, my poverty caused
by men who undertook to think and plan, my lord's own kin,
that he might separate us through secret counsel,
that we two might live far apart in this worldly realm,
where I live most horribly, grieving and longing
since my lord commanded me here to this hard dwelling.
I have few that are close in this place,
few loyal friends; therefore my heart was sad
when I found my equal, my companion
unhappy and miserable,
hiding his intentions, planning murder.

Happy in our outward manner, we very often boasted
that nothing could divide us except death alone,
nothing else—now all that is changed;
now that is as if it had never been...
Our love, our friendship... I shall for now, and for long,
My dearly-beloved's feud endure.
He called me to remain in this forest grove,
under this oak-tree, in this earthen-hovel,
this ancient cave, in which I am tortured with longing.
The valleys are dark here, the mountains high,
the towns blasted by overgrown thorn-bushes,
joyless dwellings. Too often I am cruelly afflicted here
because of the departure of my lord. Earthly friends,
do you live and love, occupy beds, or graves,
while I walk alone at dawn
under oak-trees, and through this earthen-hovel?
There must I sit the long summer day;
there must I weep and mourn my wretched exile,
my many hardships that will not ever let me
give rest to my sorrows and my griefs,
nor all the longing that afflicts me in this life.

Always may the young man be burdened, be sad at heart,
have hard and bitter thoughts in mind; likewise, if he shall have
happiness and cheer, let him also have sorrow and grief,
enormous and in multitudes. Keep him dependent on himself
for all his worldly joy, surrounded by foes, stained by enmity
in distant lands and by strange folk, since my lover sits
under rocky cliffs, surrounded by storms,

wine werigmod, wætre beflown
on dreorsele, drogeð se min wine
micle modceare; he gemon to oft
wynlicran wic. wa bið þam þe sceal
of langoþe leofes abidan.

my despondent friend, floodwaters rising around him
in a dark and dreary house, where he endures and suffers
much heartfelt-sorrow, since he too often remembers
a more joyful dwelling. Woe shall be to all of us
who wait in longing for one we love.
(Trans. M. Bryson)

Wulf and Eadwacer

The Exeter Book, Part II. Edited by W.S. Mackie. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 86.

Leodum is minum swylce him mon lac gife;
willað hy hine aþecgan gif he on þreat cymeð.
ungelic is us.
wulf is on iege ic on oþerre.
fæst is þæt eglond fenne biworpen
sindon wælreowe weras þær on ige;
willað hy hine aþecgan gif he on þreat cymeð
ungelice is us.
wulfes ic mines widlastum wenum hogode;
þonne hit wæs renig weder ond ic reotugu sæt.
þonne mec se beaducafa bogum bilegde,
wæs me wyn to þon, wæs me hwæpre eac lað.
wulf min wulf wena me þine
seoce gedydon þine seldcymas
murnende mod nales meteliste
gehyrest þu, eadwacer uncerne earne hwelp
bireð wulf to wuda
þæt mon eape tosliteð þætte næfre gesomnad wæs
uncer giedd geador.

My people treat him like a sacrificial gift,
And they will devour him if he comes threatening war.
We are so different.
Wulf is on one island; I am on another.
His island is fortified, surrounded by fens.
This island is filled with slaughter-crazed men.
And they will devour him if he comes threatening war.
We are so different.
Wulf tracks my hopes like a bloodhound,
When I sit, crying, in the rain
He clasps me within his warrior's arms,
Such joy to be held, such pain to be let go.
Wulf! My Wulf! Pining for you
Makes me sick; your rare visits
Have starved me more than lack of meat.
Do you hear, Eadwacer? Our poor whelp,
Take, Wulf, to the woods.
That man easily tears what was never made one:
Our song together.
(Trans. M. Bryson)