The Heroic Ethos in the "Slovo o polku Igoreve":
A Comparative Study in the Light of Early Western European Epic

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of heroism and its literary expression in the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* and its Western European counterparts. The need for such a study was dictated by the *Slovo*'s unique position within the corpus of Russian medieval literature and its hitherto virtual exclusion from major studies of European literature of the same genre. The principal aim is to draw the *Slovo* into the sphere of European heroic tradition by establishing a case for the existence in Kievan Rus' of a native heroic tradition whose literary manifestations hold certain features in common with western heroic literature. Although the non-Russian texts used here represent different historical periods, the criterion which renders them useful for comparison with the *Slovo* is that they reflect similar social and cultural conditions, a stage of literary development somewhere on the threshold between the pagan heroic age and the relatively recent Christian ethos. Despite the absence of other Russian works closely resembling the *Slovo*, the chronicles, military tales and ecclesiastical writings of medieval Rus' have yielded much that is useful to this study, as have also the oral traditions of Russia and her neighbours. The five chapters comprising this thesis are devoted to the following: defining heroism and identifying the qualities which make a hero; the influence of both Christianity and paganism on the heroic world view and its literary expression; literary concepts of time, history and geography; the conventional roles of the supporting cast surrounding the hero; and the recurrent images, themes and motifs in heroic literature not already dealt with in full. Many of the conclusions drawn from this study have also served a secondary aim by repeatedly demonstrating, on the basis of literary and ideological criteria, that the *Slovo* can only belong to the pre-Tatar period.
Acknowledgements

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Special thanks go to all the staff at the Computer Centre at QMW College (Hampstead Campus) for their invaluable assistance in the production of this thesis.

Finally, I must acknowledge the unsung heroism of my family and friends for all their practical and moral support, and for so patiently enduring the company of warriors for so long.
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**Abbreviations**

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akv.</td>
<td>Atlakviða</td>
<td>NS:</td>
<td>New Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN SSSR</td>
<td>Akademii nauk SSSR</td>
<td>OE:</td>
<td>Old English</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>OF:</td>
<td>Old French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASPR</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</td>
<td>OHG:</td>
<td>Old High German</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atm.</td>
<td>Atlanáli</td>
<td>ON:</td>
<td>Old Norse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beo.</td>
<td>Beowulf</td>
<td>OR:</td>
<td>Old Russian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brun</td>
<td>The Battle of Brunanburh</td>
<td>OSP:</td>
<td>Oxford Slavonic Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byz.</td>
<td>Byzantium/Byzantine</td>
<td>OSI:</td>
<td>Old Slavonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CdR</td>
<td>La chanson de Roland</td>
<td>OT:</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cid</td>
<td>El poema de mio Cid</td>
<td>PMLA:</td>
<td>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devg.</td>
<td>Devgenievo deianie</td>
<td>PRLA:</td>
<td>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>Finnish Folkloristics</td>
<td>PSRL:</td>
<td>Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFC</td>
<td>Folklore Fellows Communications</td>
<td>PVL:</td>
<td>Povest' vremennykh letopisiev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gmc</td>
<td>Germanic</td>
<td>SEEJ:</td>
<td>Slavonic and East European Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guði</td>
<td>Guðrúnarhvót</td>
<td>SEER:</td>
<td>Slavonic and East European Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haml</td>
<td>Hamðismál</td>
<td>SGGK:</td>
<td>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hist.</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>SP:</td>
<td>Slovo o polku Igorеve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyp.</td>
<td>Hypatian Chronicle</td>
<td>SPb:</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iliad</td>
<td>Iljad</td>
<td>Syn.:</td>
<td>Synodal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KB</td>
<td>Kírillo-Belozerskii</td>
<td>TODRL:</td>
<td>Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.</td>
<td>Leningrad</td>
<td>Und.:</td>
<td>Undol'skii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laur.</td>
<td>Laurentian Chronicle</td>
<td>Walth.:</td>
<td>Waltharius</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>Zad.:</td>
<td>Zadonskhchina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maldon</td>
<td>The Battle of Maldon</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae historicorum</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHG</td>
<td>Middle High German</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLQ</td>
<td>Modern Language Quarterly</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>Modern Language Review</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNSS</td>
<td>Mezhdunarodnyi s'ezd slavistov</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nibel.</td>
<td>Das Nibelungenlied</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPL</td>
<td>Novgorodskaiia pervaia letopis'</td>
<td>ZhAN:</td>
<td>Zhiltie Aleksandra Nevskogo</td>
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Short titles of collections and monographs are given once these works have been cited in full, then used throughout in the notes. Abbreviations of article titles are designated by ellipses at the end.
A Note on Transliteration

The transliteration in this thesis is based on the Library of Congress system. On the whole, Russian proper names have been transliterated faithfully except in certain cases where familiar anglicized versions already exist: for example, Igor (without the final soft sign), Alexander, Phillip, Stephen, Obolensky, Zhirmunsky, Moscow, etc.

While the letter ǎ is used in quotations of old Russian texts where it has been retained, it has been dispensed with in transliterated passages for the sake of simplicity (being rendered as 'e' rather than 'ë'). The symbol for the hard sign (') has been retained in transliterated quotations, but omitted from book titles, headings and names in cases where it is no longer used.
Despite the already enormous body of scholarship devoted to the *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, which has been further augmented following the recent 800th anniversary of the campaign which inspired the work, very little space has been devoted to establishing whether this work is a product of an early heroic ethos based on the kinds of ideals which engendered what is loosely termed 'heroic epic' in Western Europe. Its 'heroic' nature goes largely unquestioned by most scholars who, by and large, content themselves with drawing random, often superficial, parallels between the *Slovo* and, for example, works such as the *Chanson de Roland*, *Beowulf* and Norse poetry. Since isolated comparisons such as these may give a slanted or even distorted view, sometimes leading to erroneous conclusions, a more holistic approach is called for, to determine once and for all the *Slovo*'s place, if indeed it is found to have one, in the European heroic tradition.

More than anything else it is the *Slovo*'s unique status in early Russian literature, the absence of anything of a similar genre with which to make a close comparison, that makes it so difficult to disperse the cloud of unknowing which has bedevilled scholars for nearly two centuries. An overwhelming proportion of extant literature produced in Rus' and Muscovy from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries is ecclesiastical or, as in the case of the chronicles, of ecclesiastical provenance. It by no means follows, however, that the Church dominated secular life to any inordinate degree. The exceedingly low survival rate of secular, and especially heroic, literature from the two centuries preceding the 'Tatar invasions' (from 1223) may be ascribed above all to the early cultural development of Rus'.

First, unlike Western Europe, Rus' came late to Christianity, hence also to literacy, in around 988. It would have been some time before learning ceased to be the exclusive prerogative of ecclesiastics who, in their turn, were likely to suppress overtly secular literature. Secondly, it may be supposed that heroic lays continued to be transmitted orally well after the advent of book literature. However, once these stories ceased to be topical or popular and were withdrawn from currency, they tended to become irrevocably lost; those that did manage to survive would have undergone so many alterations over the years (like the *byliny*), that they would have ended up being scarcely recognisable.

That the oral tradition of the eastern Slavs remained strong until quite recently is attested to by the great number of heroic folk epics recorded from northern Russian singers in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the Russian *byliny* clearly reflect early Russian history, culture and ideas, they must be approached with caution, for they reflect primarily the ideals and aspirations of the peasant singers who, after the class of professional singers (the *skomorokhi*) was finally suppressed in the seventeenth century, continued to preserve them. This is especially evident in the *bylina* of *Vol'ga i Mikula* which tells of the clash

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1 For clerical disapproval of all things secular in early Rus' see E. V. Anichkov, *Iazychestvo i drevniaia Rus'* (*Zapiski istoriko-filologicheskogo fakulteta imperatorskogo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta*), 117. SPb., 1914, Ch. 2 (26-57) & Ch. 9 (205-24). Also the *Povest' vremennykh let* (D. Tschikewskij, ed., *Die Nestor-Chronik*, Wiesbaden, 1969, 165 (ll. 19–22)–166 (ll. 1–8). Henceforth all references to the *PVL* will be designated by page numbers and, where relevant, line numbers in the body of the text). Literacy *per se* was fairly widespread among the urban laity in Rus' between 1050 & 1200, although the bulk of evidence is confined mainly to letters of a commercial, legislative or personal nature (S. Franklin, 'Literacy and documentation in early medieval Russia', *Speculum*, 60, no. 1, 1985, 1–38).

2 A parallel situation may be found in France where, although the *Chanson de Roland* was written down in ca. 1100, French heroic epics were still largely orally diffused during the 12th c. (D. J. A. Ross, 'Old French' in A. T. Hatto, ed., *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry*, 1, London, 1980, 83 [henceforth *Traditions*]

3 In A. N. Nikiforov & G. S. Vinogradova, eds, *O neshkie byliny zapisannye A. F. Gil'ferdingom letom 1879 goda*, II, 73 [henceforth (Gil'ferding)]
between prince Vol'ga and the ploughman Mikula, who is also a freeman. Although a peasant, Mikula possesses the qualities of an epic hero—uncommon strength, fine accoutrements, a certain cheeky daring—and, confronting Vol'ga as an equal, eventually establishes his superiority over the prince. Through its glorification of the peasants' life, work and personal qualities, this bylinya clearly expresses the secret aspirations of the serfs and the peasantry. In the case of Il'ia Muromets, the best known of all the bogatyri, the hero evolves from a bogatyry at the court of Kiev in the oldest byliny into a staryi kazak and krest'ianskii syn, a peasant hero dedicated to the national cause, in a number of byliny dating from around the seventeenth century. Whatever remote traces the byliny contain of early heroic ideals to which the nobility may have subscribed, these have been obscured and modified over the centuries through changing social conditions and standards, an imperfect understanding of history and chronology, as well as the accretion of folk-tale motifs.

Thus, apart from a few translated works dedicated to military exploits (Josephus Flavius's History of the Jewish War, the Alexandria, and the Byzantine popular romance, Digenis Akritas), the only surviving secular works of Russian provenance that predate the Mongol invasions and demonstrate to any extent current notions of what constitutes heroism, are the Povest' vremennych let, the Pouchenie of Vladimir Monomakh (contained in that chronicle under the year 1096) and the Slovo o polku Igoreve. Since the first two provide only sketchy or indirect intimations of an heroic tradition among the early Russian aristocracy, it rests with the Slovo, as the most concentrated literary manifestation of this tradition, to complete the picture.

First, however the question of its authenticity needed to be resolved. The singular nature of the Slovo, whose only manuscript version perished in 1812 when Napoleon's army set fire to Moscow, has inspired a long history of speculation and controversy. This, as Acad. D. S. Likhachev rightly stresses, is not yet at an end, although nowadays most scholars accept the Slovo as a genuine monument of Kievan literature.

It first appeared, together with other secular works, in the Khronograf, one of a collection of old Russian manuscripts purchased in the early 1790's by Count A. I. Musin-Pushkin from archimandrite Ioil' (Ivan Bykovskii) of St. Saviour's Monastery in Iaroslavl'. In 1800

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4 His peasant origins are particularly developed in Istselenie Il'ia Muromtsa, in N. Onchukov, ed., Pechorskie byliny, SPb., 1904, 53.

5 E.g. Tri posadt' Il'ia Muromtsa (in A. F. Gruzinovskii, ed., Pesi sobraniny P. N. Rybnikovym, II, M., 1910, 142 [henceforth (Rybnikov)]), in which Il'ia, confronted by the choice of following one of three roads, goes down all three and succeeds in passing each of the three tests to which he is subjected. This kind of trebling recurs frequently in the folk tale (see V. Ia. Propp, Morphology of the Folk Tale, 2nd ed., American Folklore Society (Indiana University Research Center for the Language Sciences), Austin-London, 1971 (trans. L. Scott), 74; on the 'Law of Three' in folk-tale, epic and saga, see J. de Vries, 'Betrachtungen zum Märchen, besonders in seinem Verhältnis zu Heldenrage und Mythos', FFC, 63–64, 1954–55, Helsinki, 1954 (no. 150), 142ff.) On the road leading to marriage, Il'ia encounters a beauty who is really a sorceress in disguise. The seductive enchantress and the hero's three tests are a widespread folk-tale motif, also occurring regularly in later medieval romance (as, for instance, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and other poems in the English Arthurian cycle).

Musin-Pushkin, in collaboration with N. M. Karamzin, D. N. Bantysh-Kamenskii and A. F. Malinovskii, published the text of the *Slovo* with a translation. Although these men were among the most knowledgeable scholars of Russian antiquity in their day, the study of early Russian grammar, lexicography, orthography, history and ideas was as yet in its infancy, and knowledge in these fields was patchy and often misleading. The 1800 edition and translation, therefore, contained many inaccurate and sometimes wildly erroneous readings, giving rise to what are now known as the *temnye mesta*, although the real lacunae probably existed in the minds of the early editors.7 Unfortunately, these men, together with a few other experts, were the only persons actually to see the manuscript, which they dated as a fifteenth or sixteenth century transcription, before its destruction. What remained then was the *editio princeps* of 1800, until the discovery and subsequent publication in 1864 of a copy of the *Slovo* made by Musin-Pushkin for Catherine II, an extremely defective rendering of the work that was to give rise to a great deal of scholarly polemic in times to come.

During the course of the first half of the nineteenth century doubts began to be raised concerning the *Slovo*’s authenticity, first of all by M. T. Kachenovskii in 1812.8 Most of the dissenters thought it to be a work of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, claiming there were too many anachronisms and linguistic quirks, and that the narrative was illogical. But their scepticism did not gain any ground since it was not considered to be based on serious argument.9

In 1852 the *Zadonschchina*, which celebrates the victory of the Russians under prince Dmitrii Donskoi over the Tatars at Kulikovo Field in 1380, was discovered and published.10 Although in many ways artistically inferior to the *Slovo*, this work contains so many striking similarities to it that there can be no doubt that one work was used closely as a model for the other. In the 1800's the French scholar, Louis Léger, expressed doubts concerning the *Slovo*’s primacy which were expanded in the 1930’s by his countryman, the eminent slavist André Mazon, whose ideas are incorporated for the most part in his book, *Le Slovo d’Igor* (Paris, 1940). By comparing individual sections of the *Slovo* with those most closely corresponding to them in the *Zadonschchina*, Mazon argues that, while the *Slovo* appears to have few features in common with the fifteenth-century *Kirillo-Belozerskii* manuscript, which he considers to be an abbreviated primary text, it is very close to the sixteenth and seventeenth-century redactions of

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7 A more detailed account of the history of the manuscript, its early editors and commentators, may be found in D. S. Likhachev, 'Izuchenie *SP* i vopros o ego podlinnosti', in *idem*, ed., *Slovo o polku Igoreve*— *pamiatnik XII veka*, M-L., 1962, 5-78 [henceforth *SP*—XII]; G. N. Moiseeva, *Spaso-Jaroslavskii khronograf i *SP*,* L., 1976, 3-78; E. I. Osetrov, *Mir Igorevui pesni*, M., 1981, 139-219.

8 For an account of the earliest sceptics see Likhachev, 'Izuchenie *SP* i vopros o ego podlinnosti', 17-23; Osetrov, *op. cit.*, 181-9.

9 The controversy was sparked off in no small measure by the proliferation of medieval literary forgeries in the eighteenth century, the most famous of which, James MacPherson’s Ossianic poems, was published in 1760. A number of forgers, the most famous of whom was A. I. Bardin, were also active in Russia around this time (on forgers and forgeries, see Likhachev, *ibid.*, 6-15). Added to this was the increased and widespread interest everywhere in Europe in epic literature, with the publication of El poema de mio Cid, leading to a fashion in ‘medievalisque’ writing. The *Rossiada* (1771–1778) by M. Kheraskov was one such work (see A. A. Zimin, ‘Kogda bylo napisano *Slovo*?’, *Voprosoy literatury*, 1967, no. 3, 149-50).

10 Recent evidence indicates that a version of the *Zad.* may have been seen as early as 1822 by the Czech scholar, Josef Dobrovský (M. Krbets & G. Moiseeva, ‘Pervoje izvestie o *Zadonschchine*’, *TODRL*, 34, 1979, 406-408). All versions of the *Zad.*, both complete and fragmentary, are contained in D. S. Likhachev & L. A. Dmitriev, eds, *Slovo o polku Igoreve* i *pamiatniki Kulikovskogo tsikla*, M-L., 1966, 535-56 (texts ed. by R. P. Dmitrieva). All subsequent references to the *Zad.* will be based on this collection.
the Zadonshchina. He concludes that the Slovo is a late eighteenth-century pastiche based on a later version of the Zadonshchina which was subsequently destroyed to cover up the forgery. In his view, the language of the work is cluttered with what he calls gallicisms, polonisms, ukrainianisms, orientalisms and even modernisms. At the same time he attempts to show that the language, style and mood of the Slovo are entirely in keeping with the new pre-Romantic spirit of the late eighteenth century which, having made its way to Russia, manifested itself in a taste for littérature moyenâgeuse. Other symptoms of this pre-Romanticism, apart from a popular interest in things medieval, were a renewed enthusiasm for folklore, initially provoked by the first publication of collected bylbg, and a resurgence of nationalism, all of which Mazon believes to be reflected in the tone and style of the Slovo, with its over-elaborate images and grandiose style, its unacceptably blatant paganism (especially 'pantheism'), its profusion of folk images, and a nationalistic fervour in which, he feels, is contained a justification for Catherine II's imperialistic pretensions. After considering Musin-Pushkin, Mazon lays the forgery at the door of the only other man in the former's circle who could possibly have perpetrated such a fraud: Bantysh-Kamenetskii.

Naturally, Mazon's views sparked off a volley of protest, both in the Soviet Union and in the West. One of the most concerted attacks on his allegations is contained in La geste du Prince Igor: Epopee russe du douzième siècle (NY, 1948), edited by Henri Grégoire, Roman Jakobson and Marc Szeftel, with contributions by other scholars. Other works such as 'Slovo o polku Igoreve' — pamiatnik XII veka (a collection of essays edited and contributed to by D. S. Likhachev), as well as articles by Jakobson and V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, among others, set about re-examining the whole question of the Slovo's relationship to the Zadonshchina, the relationships of the Zadonshchina's redactions to one another, the Slovo's linguistic peculiarities, and its place, if any, among the pseudo-medieval writings of the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries. This response attempted to point up numerous inconsistencies in Mazon's arguments; such as, that many of the passages in the Slovo which Mazon holds up as glaring examples of a pre-Romantic predilection for the colourful and grandiose have similarly expressed counterparts in the Zadonshchina, which, for its part, is known to have been composed before the eighteenth century. In short, the Slovo's defenders conclude that the Slovo does not conform to eighteenth-century ideas concerning literature and the Middle Ages; that, while the KB redaction may be an earlier manuscript of the Zadonshchina, it is not archetypal; and that Mazon failed to explain the existence of a gloss in the Pskov Apostol of 1307 (discovered by K. F. Kalaidovich, a contemporary of Musin-Pushkin), whose text closely approximates a passage in the Slovo, thus providing them with one of their most important textological substantiations of the Slovo's authenticity.

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11 That is, the Historical redactions (16th c.), the Synodal (17th c.) and the Undol'skii (17th c.). Henceforth these will be abbreviated to KB, Hist. 1, Hist. 2, Syn. and Und.


15 See the following contributions to SP—XII (designated by page nos.): Likhachev (5-78); N. K. Gudsii (79-130); Adrianova-Peretts (131-68); V. L. Vinogradova (255-75).

16 See the following contributions in SP—XII: N. M. Dylevskii (169-254); Vinogradova (255-75); A. V. Solov'ev (276-99).

17 See the following in SP—XII: Likhachev (300-20); Iu. M. Lotman (300-405).

18 Both passages are contained in A. A. Zimin, 'Pripiska k Pskovskomu Apostolu 1307 goda i SP', Russkaia literatura, 1966, no. 2, 60.
Far from stilling dissenting voices, however, the investigations inspired further doubts, prompting the Soviet medievalist, A. A. Zimin, to re-open and re-examine the whole question, particularly the relationship between the *Slovo* and the *Zadonskhchina*, and the problem of linguistic 'impurities' and anachronisms. Although probably weakest in the area of linguistics, his are the most serious and complex studies of ideas brought forward by earlier sceptics, which he either elaborates upon or rejects.

One of his principal aims is to show that the later copies of the *Zadonskhchina* (the so-called Prostranniaia version) which correspond most closely to the *Slovo*, are actually expanded forms of the earlier *KB* redaction.19 The later redactions, which the *Slovo* apparently imitates, are thus a conglomerate of an elaborated *KB* version, motifs from the *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche* (a late fifteenth-century work on the battle at Kulikovo based on the *KB* redaction, and the source for the sixteenth and seventeenth-century copies of the *Zadonskhchina*),20 as well as borrowings from the sixteenth-century *Nikon Chronicle* and the *Hypatian Chronicle*.21

On tackling the linguistic problems, Zimin rejects many of Mazon's allegations,22 although he remains dissatisfied with the number of words, images and expressions in the *Slovo* deriving from Turkic, Polish, Ukrainian and Belorussian usage and folklore.23 Zimin's theory is that the *Slovo* was written some time after 1767 (the year in which the *Nikon* and *Koenigsberg Chronicles* were published) by Ivan Bykovskii, the first owner of the manuscript, whose own links with Belorussia and the Ukraine, and whose knowledge of the Scriptures would explain some of the linguistic idiosyncrasies, as well as the biblical images and stylisation of the work. Ioil' was also the owner of numerous chronicles and other early works, and professed a profound interest in medieval and patriotic literature, folk songs and other early genres.24 Unlike Mazon, however, Zimin believes that it was not Ioil’’s intention to pass off his masterpiece as a genuine twelfth-century composition, but charges Musin-Pushkin with perpetrating the deception afterwards, as well as adding three interpolations which he later pretended not to understand to further his own ends. Zimin believes one of these to be the section that resembles the glos in the Pskov *Apostol*.25

Once again the *Slovo*’s defenders set to work to disprove Zimin’s theories. They maintain that any reputable orientalist would accept the genuine antiquity of words of eastern origin in the *Slovo*26 and that the majority of ‘west Russian’ colloquialisms and idiosyncracies may be found in old Russian works of the pre-Mongol era. Furthermore, while the *Slovo*’s orthography is generally in keeping with that of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it also contains features of the Pskov dialect, as well as Bulgarisms resulting from the so-called Second South Slavonic Influence of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which continue to be reflected in Russian manuscripts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the alleged date of the *Slovo* manuscript), but which are not found in old Church Slavonic — something which even the highly accomplished Ioil’ could not have known, since this is a relatively recent discovery.27

The weightiest attempt so far to silence the sceptics has culminated in the work, *Slovo o polku Igoreve' i pamiatniki Kulikovskogo tsikla*, a collection of articles by Soviet literary

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19 'Spornyey voprosy tekstologii Zadonskhhchenii', Russkaia literatura, 1967, no. 1, 84-104.
20 'Kogda bylo napisano Slovo?', Voprosy literatury, 1967, no. 3, 139.
21 'Spornyey voprosy...', 89.
22 'Kogda bylo napisano Slovo?', 137.
23 ibid., 142.
24 ibid., 147.
25 'Pripiska k Pskovskomu Apostolu...', 60-74.
26 Likhachev, 'The authenticity of the SP...', 39.
and linguistic experts, containing close textual examinations of the *Slovo*, the *Zadonskhchina* and other relevant texts, as well as detailed analyses of grammar and vocabulary. Since their theses are more or less expanded or reworked confirmations of earlier arguments, it is unnecessary to go into them in any depth at this stage. It is enough to note that the approach to the problem is largely ‘formal’ in its preoccupation with grammar, linguistics and textual comparisons. In his post-Zimin articles, one on the ‘Textological Triangle’ of the *Slovo*, the *Zadonskhchina* and the *Hypatian Chronicle*, and another on the authenticity question as a whole, D. S. Likhachev manages to combine mechanical textual analysis with aesthetic and ideological considerations. In the latter article, for instance, he addresses himself to the sceptics’ view that the *Slovo* is not in keeping with the literary level, the genres and the Christian character of twelfth-century Kievan literature. Apart from a handful of scholars, however, little attention has been devoted to the *Slovo* as a work primarily of literature and ideas with a view to confirming its late twelfth-century provenance.

Although this subject has received relatively little attention in Britain, there is at least one British scholar who has not taken for granted the view that the *Slovo* is an authentic work of the late twelfth century. In his article, ‘*Slovo o polku Igoreve*: the textological triangle’, John Fennell reviews the arguments of the *Slovo*’s defenders, offering alternative explanations or disclosing weaknesses in their hypotheses. A later article sets out in detail the events and literature connected with Zimin’s theories. This subject receives further attention in *Early Russian Literature*, in which Fennell gives a comprehensive survey of all the arguments to date in a more or less objective manner. Despite his reluctance to accept wholesale the opinions of most scholars on the subject, he nevertheless concludes that the sceptics’ claims regarding the *Slovo*’s authorship are undermined by the ‘seemingly incontrovertible argument of the defenders of the *Slovo*’s authenticity’. He ends his piece by stating, like Likhachev, that the problem of authorship is not yet solved; for whoever its author may have been, he was undoubtedly ‘a man of singular genius and almost superhuman knowledge’.

This brief survey of the controversy surrounding the *Slovo* barely skims the surface of all the theories and points of contention that have come to light. Some of these absent details will crop up periodically in the course of this work and do not require further elaboration at this juncture. Several things, however, may be concluded from this survey. First, as noted by Fennell, any forger or latter-day writer of pseudo-medieval epic such as the *Slovo* would have had to have been an unusually gifted artist as well as linguist. He would have been deeply familiar with folk literature and culture, possibly also with the early literature of other European nations, and would have enjoyed easy access to numerous chronicles and other texts, some of which did not come to light until after the *Slovo*’s publication. For the majority of scholars, these considerations make up one of the most convincing arguments in favour of the *Slovo*’s authenticity. What also becomes clear is that, so long as no new documentary evidence turns up, scholars will have to continue to postulate theories and draw diagrams.

30 ibid., 41.
34 ibid., 205.
35 ibid., 206.
These observations lead naturally to the conclusion that there is a great need to look more closely at the ideas manifested in the work as an alternative, and possibly more fruitful, area of study to that of the texts alone. If it is found that the ideology of the Slovo fits in with that of its age and genre, then the modern author's or forger's talents would have needed to surpass mere mechanical expertise.

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With so much attention focused on the authenticity debate, as well as on the temnye mesta, the result has been a large proportion of scholarship being devoted to linguistics, textology, genre, history and anthropology, while comparatively little research has been concentrated specifically on the ideas inherent in the Slovo and their literary expression. Comparisons of certain elements in the work with those found in folk literature, as well as in other early Russian literary genres from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries such as military tales, vitae and oratorical works, have yielded certain clues but have not shed much light on the work's many peculiarities in the way other works in the same genre might have done. If, as the majority of scholars assume, the Slovo is an 'heroic epic', then, in the absence of any contemporary counterparts in Rus', we are forced to cast the net wider and to scrutinize the literature of other nations in which, at one time or another, a particular ideology flourished and found expression through the 'poetry of action'. In the early Middle Ages of Europe the prevailing secular ideal expressed through martial exploit in song, and later in writing, was heroism.

While a good deal of scholarship has been devoted to comparative studies of heroic literature, the Slovo, for the most part, has been largely overlooked, or else accorded perfunctory treatment. Indeed, as far as medieval studies in the West are concerned, early Russian literature as a whole has suffered from a kind of scholarly apartheid, while interest continues to focus primarily on Western Europe and the Middle East. Even where attempts have been made to bridge the gap, the Slovo itself generally receives short shrift. In his substantial and comprehensive work on the heroic literatures of many nations and ages, Maurice Bowra concludes towards the beginning that the Slovo is not an heroic work and, save for a few scattered references, excommunicates it from the discussion. He does, however, give considerably more space to the byliny. The Slovo is likewise excluded from two more recent collections of articles, although once again the byliny receive some attention. And, while a handful of studies has appeared over the course of this century comparing the Slovo with western heroic literature, these have been limited either to one other work, such as the Chanson de Roland or Beowulf, or, possibly in response to the speculation surrounding the origins of Rus', to Norse literature in a more general sense.

In more recent years, the Soviet scholar, A. N. Robinson, has highlighted the urgent need to examine the *Slovo* in the wider context of the European Middle Ages. In his attempts to understand the socio-historical process which culminated in a work like the *Slovo* with all its peculiarities, he repeatedly takes into account the development of Romance and Germanic literature. But, while many of his observations have a certain merit, Robinson's underlying assumption that the *Slovo* is an heroic epic means that he never actually addresses the problem of its genre, and the need to distinguish between the characteristics of heroic epic, and those of romance and saga. There remains, therefore, a need to identify what is specifically heroic, and to what extent the *Slovo* reflects this quality in the light of Western European literary manifestations of the heroic ethos.

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The most comprehensive study of those ingredients which make heroes, and of the literature dedicated to their glorification, has been provided by C. M. Bowra.

It appears that the concept of heroic prowess, courage and enterprise is an international phenomenon, shared by many nations irrespective of their cultural and geographical differences. Allowing for a certain degree of local colour in the characterisation of heroes, the common ground they all share is a superiority over their fellows in strength, courage, martial skill, independence and social class (they are almost invariably princes or chiefains). The 'low hero' is a much later concept found, for instance, in the Russian *byliny* and French romances, whereas literary or 'high' epic does not admit peasants or drunkards into its ranks. It also rarely depicts the almost supernatural strength that enables the heroes of the *byliny* to

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40 *op. cit.*, esp. Ch. 1.

41 For peasant heroes in the *byliny*, see *supra*, 7–8. Another popular hero is Vasilii (the Drunkard) Ignat'evich, whose prowess in battle is second only to his capacity for strong drink (see *Vasilii Ignat'evich i Batygga* (Gil'ferding, I, 60), and the less popular *Vas'ka-p'etnitsa i Kudrevanko-tear* in A. D. Grigor'ev, Arkhangelskie byliny i istoricheskie pesni sobranaye v 1899–1901 gg., III, SPb., 1910, 65 (369) [henceforth (Grigor'ev)]. Like the *byliny* which feature peasant heroes, these are generally considered to be of late 17th c. provenance, or else reflecting skomorokh influence. Parallel developments can be seen much earlier in France. The late 13th–14th cc. mark a period of decadence for French 'epic', and a new orientation with figures such as the heroic artisan (a goldsmith who becomes king of Antioch) and the heroic vilain (a charcoal-burner who is knighted for his loyalty and valour). Once the aristocracy lost its taste for 'primitive' epic, its new audience among the lower classes created heroes with which it could identify (Ross, loc. cit.).
vanquish thousands of the enemy single-handedly, or victory through stealth and trickery.\textsuperscript{42} Although exaggeration is also characteristic of literary epic, whose heroes are cast on a much larger scale than other mortals, there are limits as to how far the audience is expected to suspend disbelief. The most poignant confirmation of this is the fact that, despite their martial superiority, heroes are usually defeated and killed in the end. In 'folk epic', however, heroes rarely die, their immortality ensured by the imagination of a nation no longer concerned with the old aristocratic ethos, and so their legends continue to develop.\textsuperscript{43} In a sense, the idea of an invincible hero who may be overpowered only by supernatural force goes back not only to fairy tale, but to the earlier 'mythological' hero who predates the anthropocentric hero. In the shamanistic or mythological poetry of pre-heroic times the central figure is a magician, sometimes a god, and the interest of nearly every episode turns on his ability to master a difficult situation through magic. In contrast, one of the most significant features of heroic poetry is the hero's self-reliance and independence of supernatural assistance in his endeavours. Pagan or Christian divinities may appear, but the course of events must be directed by the hero himself.\textsuperscript{44} Nor does he rely upon outside human agency for his success, although friends and retainers normally receive due credit. If a hero succeeds unaided, the greater his glory; if he falls the more admirable his death. Either way he wins in his quest for honour, which is, after all, the\textit{raison d'être} of heroism. So long as he is seen to strive to the limits of his courage and endurance, victory is of secondary importance, for his worth has already been tested and proved in the ordeals of the heroic life. As proponent of this life of action, the hero is characterised, not by gratuitous physical description, nor by the internal workings of heart and mind, but by his actions alone.

Heroic literature 'presupposes a view of existence in which man plays a central part and exerts his powers in a distinctive way'.\textsuperscript{45} The first and strongest appeal in the poetry of action is through the story and therefore no superfluous description or commentary should come into it. On the whole, it should be impersonal, objective and dramatic, and preferably not directed at any patron.\textsuperscript{46}

In applying these criteria to the\textit{Slovo o polku Igoreve}, Bowra concludes that it is 'on the edge of heroic poetry', for although it resembles an heroic poem in objectivity and heroic

\textsuperscript{42} Trickery and cunning as a means of attaining victory belong to the class of 'mythological poems', such as those concerning the gods in the \textit{Elder Edda} and the \textit{Kalevala}, and in the \textit{bylina} of the so-called 'older hero', Volkh Vseslavich (K. Kalaidovich, ed., \textit{Drevniaia rossiiskia stikhotvorenia sobrannyia} \textit{Kirshiev Danilovym}, 2nd ed., M., 1818, 6 [henceforth (Danilov)]. See also Bowra, \textit{op. cit.}, 5-8.

\textsuperscript{43} See Bowra, \textit{op. cit.}, 1. On the rare occasion that a Russian folk hero is killed, he is never seen to die the heroic death on the battlefield that befits him, but is usually vanquished by some supernatural force (e.g. \textit{Sviatogor i tiaga zemnaia} (Rybnikov, I, 86)). In the few \textit{byliny} devoted to the deaths of the \textit{bogatyri} in battle, the circumstances are in some way supernatural or unusual (see \textit{Kamske pekoishche}, \textit{Il'i a i Mamai i Gibel' bogatyrei} in M. Speranskii, ed., \textit{Russkata ustniaia slovesnost'}, I (\textit{Bilyny}), M., 1916, 383-419 ('Kak ne stalo bogatyrei na Russi')). See also A. E. Alexander, \textit{Bylina and Fairy Tale: the Origins of Russian Heroic Poetry}, The Hague-Paris, 1973, 105-20.

\textsuperscript{44} This is almost invariably true, not only for the European tradition, but also for the Ob Ugrians, the East Africans, the Mongols, the Kirghiz and other Turkic peoples of Central Asia. See corresponding entries in Hatto, ed., \textit{Traditions}; also N. K. Chadwick & V. Zhirmunsky, \textit{Oral Epics of Central Asia}, Cambridge, 1969, 28, 94, 152. This point will be expanded infra, Ch. 2.

\textsuperscript{45} Bowra, \textit{op. cit.}, 5.

\textsuperscript{46} ibid., 30, 48. While I accept Bowra's general definition of heroism, it will transpire in due course that the same is not the case for all his ideas. In this instance, however, he has provided an interpretation of the nature of heroism with which, it appears, most scholars are in accord, and which, more importantly, is borne out by the works themselves.
outlook, it betrays itself as a panegyric at the close.\textsuperscript{47} In dismissing it thus, Bowra fails to take into account the work’s underlying narrative structure which, despite its starkness, conforms in many of its aspects to the general concept of what constitutes heroic poetry.

In the study of heroic poetry the problem of genre is a baffling one. While so-called heroic epics share similar outlooks, images and modes of expression, the most striking thing they have in common is that they are all so different, making it virtually impossible and certainly impractical to enforce inflexible standards on them. If, as was the case until fairly recently, the \textit{Iliad} and the \textit{Odyssey} are taken as prototypes for heroic epic then, strictly speaking, no ‘epics’ have been produced since the eighth century B. C. Since, hitherto, ‘epic’ has failed to be satisfactorily defined,\textsuperscript{48} (nor will any attempt be made to do so in the course of this work), the term is used in its loosest sense. In designating works treating heroes and their careers, most scholars side-step the problem to some extent by resorting to terms such as ‘heroic poem’, ‘song’ or ‘lay’. These expressions conveniently gather together under one head, within the European tradition alone, such widely disparate works as \textit{Beowulf} (an early 8th c. hybrid of pre-Christian Germanic ideals and Christian morality, in which the hero is seen three times, not on the battlefield, but in single combat with monsters); \textit{The Battle of Maldon} (a 10th c. account of a battle lost by the English against Danish invaders in which the central hero is one of many); \textit{La chanson de Roland} (with its endless series of single combats on the field of battle, a large element of Christian chauvinism and a strong nationalistic flavour surprising for its time (c. 1100)); the \textit{Nibelungenlied} (an unique hybrid of the Germanic ‘Heroic Age’ and the new ‘chivalric’ age (c. 1200)); \textit{El poema de mio Cid} (a contemporary of the \textit{Nibelungenlied}, with its central theme of loyalty to social hierarchy, humourous and domestic interludes, and absence of tragedy); the heroic \textit{Edda} (which date from the 9th to the 12th centuries but, despite undergoing dramatic compositional changes in that time, betray no Christian influences); the Serbian heroic songs (the majority of which date from the 14th and 16th centuries following the Battle at Kosovo, and are characterised by their fervent patriotism); and the \textit{Slovo o polku Igoreve}, a complex work abounding in metaphor and pagan imagery, the bare bones of whose heroic narrative is heavily overlaid with panegyric and lament. These and other works of their kind may span a hero’s lifetime, concentrate on part of his career, or treat isolated battles. They usually, though not always, end tragically either in defeat, the hero’s death or both. In some, a moralizing tone is discernable; in others this is wholly absent. Pagan, Christian and folk elements assert themselves in these works to widely varying degrees, as do motifs such as dreams, panegyrics and laments. The varieties and combinations are endless. The \textit{Slovo}'s complex and unusual structure, therefore, need not disqualify it from serious comparison with other heroic narrative traditions since, as will become apparent in the course of this work, it contains many features and ideas inherent in the heroic literature of other nations, and possesses an objectivity in its treatment of the heroes that is perhaps not apparent at first sight.

Given the different styles and emphases of ‘literary’ heroic poems, the decisive criterion for comparison must be \textit{ethos}. The truly heroic poems of medieval Scandinavia and Western Europe inherited their ethos from what is commonly known as the ‘Heroic Age’, that is, the ‘Age of Migrations’ from around the fourth to the sixth centuries of our era, which was transformed in the course of time by the ‘feudal ethos’. According to A. T. Hatto, only a few surviving poems of medieval Germany may be said to be undoubtedly heroic for, despite late characteristics of style, these works still express the heroic outlook of early Germanic lays—the outlook of chieftains and their select retinues. The principal function of these lays was ‘to

\textsuperscript{47} ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{48} The London Seminar on Epic (1964–1972), while noting criteria, decided in the end to postpone its quest for the definition of ‘epic’. (Hatto, \textit{Traditions}, I, 2.)
recall the mutual obligation of lords and retainers and to flesh them for battle whenever it might come.49

The establishment of Christianity in Europe brought literacy and thereby a means of recording heroic songs, but it was also instrumental in the disruption of the early heroic ethos. It was only a matter of time before the man-centred tradition of the early heroic songs, with its emphasis on personal honour and mutual loyalty within the comitatus, would be forced to yield ground before the new Christian ideals of humility, spiritual salvation as the ultimate aim, and an unquestioning submission to the will of God. Political centralisation with the emergence of the new Christian kingdoms and empires also contributed to the disintegration of the comitatus, the social basis for the heroic ethos.50 It was in the course of this time of social change that the surviving heroic poems were written, if not actually composed, in their respective countries. The dilemma which must have confronted the poets, of accommodating traditional heroic subject matter to Christian values while still retaining the credibility of the older ethos, forms yet another common ground shared by the Slovo with the rest of the European heroic tradition. These works, then, will not be ‘heroic’ in the purest sense, since they will have been affected to some extent by the circumstances which have brought about their survival. Although in most cases they are based on earlier versions of their respective tales, whether oral or textual, by the time they reached their present forms, the stories would have undergone many retellings and accretions, reflecting changes in social, cultural, historical and religious circumstances, as well as in those of the individual ‘authors’. To attempt to force any of them into narrow preconceptions regarding a strict genre could, therefore, prove dangerously misleading. What they all share, however, is an underlying heroic ethos (more apparent in some than in others), which demands a particular kind of treatment and expression.

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Thanks to the survival, not only of literary epic, but of so many other secular and religious literary sources in Western Europe, a great deal has come to light concerning the early Heroic Age and the traditions, both oral and literary, that it inspired. Although the nations which produced heroic literature may have experienced certain social and cultural developments at different times, there is no doubt that their earliest recorded lays reveal a shared notion that has its roots in this pre-Christian ethos. In each case this body of ideals was developed uniquely, but under closer inspection many parallels of expression may be found in these diverse works.

Unfortunately, there is a distinct paucity of helpful evidence supporting the existence of a Russian heroic age; but what little there is points to the existence of at least a concept of heroism not unlike that which at one time prevailed in the rest of Europe. This nevertheless leaves unresolved the question of whether early Rus' possessed an indigenous heroic ethos, whether its ideas in this regard were the product of external influences or borrowings, or whether the answer lies somewhere in between. While this thesis does not hinge on the answer to this troublesome question, since this is primarily a literary analysis aimed at determining

49 'Medieval German', in Traditions, 166.
50 ibid., 169. See also M. J. Swanton, Crisis and Development in Germanic Society, 700–800: Beowulf and the Burden of Kingship, Göppingen–Kümmerle, 1982, 12–82 on the changes brought about in Gmc society by Christian and ecclesiastical notions of kingship and hierarchy.
the existence *per se* of recognisable heroic elements in the *Slovo*, it is worth taking a look at the possibilities all the same.

One theory is that literary trends are autochthonic, arising from similar social evolutions in different nations. V. M. Zhirmunsky believes that heroic poetry 'emerged independently among different peoples at an early stage of social development (the so-called 'heroic age')'. At the same time, he does not rule out altogether the influences of 'borrowing': 'Literary movements in general and literary facts in particular, considered as international phenomena, are partly based on similar historical developments in the social life of the respective peoples, and partly on the reciprocal cultural and literary intercourse between them. When considering international trends in the evolution of literature we must therefore distinguish between typological analogies and cultural importations or 'influences' which are themselves based on similarities of social evolution.'

While Zhirmunsky's theory has a socio-historical basis, a case for the autochthonic origins of heroic poetry may also be made on the basis of the evolution of a people's cosmology. It has been noted that societies which possess an heroic tradition tend to pass through similar stages of religious belief which are reflected in their songs. With few exceptions, older mythological poems give way to man-centred songs celebrating the deeds of superior mortals (although both classes of poetry continued to co-exist for some time). Although heroic literature secularizes myth, it is still essentially bound to the world view held by a society at a given time.

Since early Rus' sustained more or less the kinds of conditions which might have engendered an heroic tradition, it is easier to ascribe to it an independent development of heroic concepts than it is to determine the nature and magnitude of external cultural influences. The extent of Scandinavian influence on the culture of early Rus' continues to be a much debated point. To ascertain whether there is sufficient justification for a comparative analysis of the *Slovo* alongside the Western heroic tradition, which has its own roots in the Germanic song tradition, it is necessary to look for answers, or at least grounds for speculation, somewhere between the extremes of the Normanist and Anti-Normanist views.

According to the *Povest' vremennykh let*, Scandinavian historians and writers of saga, Byzantine chroniclers and Arab geographers, the Varangians (as they came to be known in the *PVL*) were active in Rus' by the middle of the ninth century, the period known as the Viking Age. These were primarily Swedes who, at the time the Danes and Norwegians were active in the west, directed their expeditions east. The Varangian dynasty, first founded by the semi-legendary Riurik in Novgorod in the second half of the ninth century, effectively came to an end with the death of Vladimir in 1015. Although up to this time the Scandinavians comprised the ruling class, it is difficult to assess any impact they may have made on native

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52 ibid., 1. Zhirmunsky confines his studies to comparing the *byling* with western epic and the oral epic tradition of Central Asia.
53 See Bowra, op. cit., 28; H. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, Cambridge, 1926, 94–100; H. V. Routh, *God, Man and Epic Poetry*, II, Cambridge, 1927, 26ff. This subject will receive more detailed treatment infra, Ch. 2.
culture since, wherever they invaded, they tended to merge with the peoples they conquered, adopting their customs and even their names.\textsuperscript{56} By the time Sviatoslav came to power (964), Rus' was mainly Slavic in organisation and policy. The propagation of culture through its imposition on other nations seems to have been, in Europe at least, a Christian tendency. The tolerance of foreign cultures and beliefs on the part of the Vikings may be attributed to the fact that paganism, possessing no fixed doctrine, could readily accommodate new ideas and deities, and, since spiritual salvation was not an issue, there was no incentive to proselytise. Christianity, on the other hand, ultimately affected the entire social structure of the nations among which it took hold to the extent that it overturned completely their culture and ideology, influencing not only ethics and government, but also art, literature and music. It is therefore unproductive to perceive the Vikings in terms of later Christian conquerors. But, although the Scandinavians made no significant impact on the language, politics or material culture of Rus', it is difficult to imagine that they also made absolutely no impression in the realm of ideas and culture among the ruling warrior classes (to which they belonged), the more so if these ideas already existed in some form among the Eastern Slavs. Given the evidence we have for the existence of song traditions in other cultures, more specifically in Europe and in Central Asia, ideas about martial skill would no doubt have been preserved in the oral poetry of the Slavs themselves. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that the Varangian rulers and their courts would have continued to perpetuate the heroic ideals intrinsic to their \textit{raison d'être}. This would have been carried on even into Iaroslav's reign and later, especially in Novgorod, so long as the princes continued to maintain Varangian retinues. Whether the artistic expression of this ethos remained Scandinavian for some time, or was adapted quickly to its new environment is impossible to determine.

While the Kievan rulers after Vladimir were no longer represented as Scandinavians, they continued to maintain close contacts with the ruling houses of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Their courts also served as places of refuge for Scandinavian kings such as Olaf Tryggvason (b. 968–9 and grew up at Vladimir's court in Novgorod), Olaf II (d. ca. 1030) and his son, Magnus, and Harald Harðráði, Norwegian king and poet (d. 1066) who, like Olaf and Magnus, spent time in the household of Iaroslav. Scandinavian sagas tell of them and also of other less well-known heroes and poets who sojourned at the courts of both Vladimir and Iaroslav.\textsuperscript{57} Personal ties with the Scandinavians are well-documented in Russian sources, which reveal the dynastic connections between Vladimir, Iaroslav, Vladimir Monomakh and his son, Mstislav, and the ruling houses of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Although the end of Iaroslav's reign marked a decline in contact between Rus' and Scandinavia, the dynastic links remained close,

\textsuperscript{56} Vernadsky, \textit{Kievan Russia}, 333; Turville-Petre, \textit{op. cit.}, 63ff.

as they did with the rest of Europe, until the middle of the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{58} Given the lively and lengthy intercourse between the two nations, it would be easy to overestimate Scandinavian influence on Rus'. On the other hand, with the continual arrivals in Rus' of Scandinavian royal households, whose entourages were likely to include at least one poet whose job would have been to record in favourable terms the exploits of his royal patron, together with the continued presence of Varangians in the Russian princes' retinues, it would not be far-fetched to conclude that some kind of cultural exchange must have taken place,\textsuperscript{59} particularly in Novgorod, where links with Scandinavia endured much longer. By the middle of the twelfth century, however, heroic poetry in Rus' would have developed its own characteristics, and any Scandinavian influences would now have been felt in the most indirect way.\textsuperscript{60} But, despite social change and literary evolution, the seminal ideas concerning heroism endured, since warfare remained the principal occupation of the ruling class. The concept of Christian rulers as defenders of the Faith and Holy Russia had not yet taken root in the twelfth century in the way it was to do following the Tatar invasions.

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Before embarking on this study, something more needs to be said concerning the non-Russian texts used here.

The oldest complete poem is \textit{Beowulf} (early 8th century) which, despite its predilection for monsters, has proved a rich source for comparison with the \textit{Slovo}\textsuperscript{61} with its analogous themes and images, its strong pagan character, its view of history in relation to the present and its sense of man's place within the cosmos. Two centuries later comes \textit{The Battle of Maldon}, of which the beginning and end have not survived. Although in many respects very different

\textsuperscript{58} The principal dynastic links are as follows: Vladimir (+ 1015) X 4 Scandinavians (prior to conversion); Iaroslav (+ 1054) X d. of k. Olaf of Sweden; Vladimir Monomakh (+ 1125) X Gytha, d. of English k. Harald (match arr. by k. of Denmark); Mstislav-(Harald) (+ 1132) X Christina, d. of Swedish k. Inge; Elizabeth, d. of Iaroslav X 1. k. Harald Hargraafi of Norway (+ 1066) 2. k. Svein of Denmark; Malfrid, d. of Mstislav-(Harald) X 1. k. Sigurid of Norway 2. k. Eirik Emun of Denmark; Ingeborg, d. of Mstislav-(Harald) X Duke Canute Lavard, s. of Danish k.. (See Schlauch, \textit{op. cit.}, 106; \textit{Heimskringla}, III, 290, 434–5 (for a report of the intermarriages between the Russian and Scandinavian royal families and their issue)). Dynastic connections with other Western European noble houses are as follows: d. of Vladimir X Bernhard, marg. of Nordmark; Vladimir, s. of Iaroslav X Oda, d. of Count of Stade (c. 1043); Sviatoles of Kiev (+ 1076) X d. of Etheler, ct. of Dithmarchen; Anna, d. of Iaroslav X 1. k. Henry I of France (+ 1060) 2. Raoul II, ct. of Creepy & Valois (+ 1071); Iaropolk, s. of Iaroslav of Kiev (+ 1078) X Cunigundis, d. of Otto, ct. of Orlamünde (c. 1073); Praxedia, d. of Vsevolod (+ 1093) X 1. Henry, marg. of Nordmark (+ 1087) 2. Henry IV, Western Emp. (+ 1106); d. of Iaropolk-Peter of Vladimir-Volynsk X Günther, ct. of Kävenburg. (For relations with Scandinavia and Western Europe see Vernadsky, \textit{Kievan Russia}, 332–47).

\textsuperscript{59} Besides Harald of Norway, himself no mean skald, other named persons with poetic associations to visit Rus' during Iaroslav's reign were Sigvat the Skald and his royal patron, Olaf II of Norway. Olaf was well-known for his patronage of poets and, according to a verse which Snorri attributes to Sigvat, made them go into battle with shields to obtain first-hand information (\textit{Heimskringla}, III, 18–19). Also see Schlauch, \textit{op. cit.}, 101–105.

\textsuperscript{60} Schlauch, \textit{op. cit.}, 124.

\textsuperscript{61} See Perejda \textit{op. cit.}; Barker, \textit{op. cit.}. 
from *Beowulf*, its heroic credentials are not in any doubt. Its suitability for comparison with the *Slovo* lies in the fact that it is also a more or less contemporary account of an historical battle between the English and the Danes, and displays to a certain degree a more Christian and 'national' character. As texts go, the *Chanson de Roland* is early (c. 1100), but it already manifests a strongly partisan Christian spirit, inspired no doubt by the Crusades which by then were well under way; yet it also retains many of the ideas and conventions which characterise the literary heroic ethos, especially in the first part which deals with Roland, a popular subject of earlier songs celebrating his short-lived career. One of the features the Roland episode shares with the *Slovo*, and also with *Beowulf*, is the seemingly unresolveable conflict between old and new ideas, which may be seen as central to the tragic course events take. The second part, the so-called 'Baligant Episode' in which Charlemagne and the Saracen giant king, Baligant, do battle, is quite different both in style and temperament; many scholars now agree, however, that this much more overtly Christian episode is a later interpolation and that Roland's death is the culminating point in the main poem. The early years of the thirteenth century produced *El poema de mio Cid* (sometimes called *El cantar de mio Cid*), the only survivor of medieval Spanish epic in near-complete form, and the German *Nibelungenlied* (c. 1200). While the *Cid* echoes certain themes inherent in the *Chanson de Roland* and yields some useful analogies for the present study, there are many striking differences between it and its European fellows, some of which were noted in the brief descriptions given earlier (*supra*, 16). Its happy resolution, in which the wrongly accused hero exonerates himself, is more typical of the romance genre, while, more significantly, the Cid's character, his humanity and the detailed accounts of his personal life, diminish his impact as an heroic warrior. Like its Spanish contemporary, the *Nibelungenlied* has one foot firmly entrenched in romance, with its predilection for magic, personal detail, love and wooing scenes and domestic squabbling, but, lacking the former's optimism, it is a dark and tragic tale. Its subject—the destruction of the Burgundian kings, the Nibelungs—is an ancient one, like that of *Beowulf* and the *Chanson de Roland*, and is also preserved in an expanded old Norse cycle. As a revival of an old story, it preserves many aspects of the Germanic heroic ethos, and so despite numerous references to Christian concepts and worship, it generally reflects a more pagan world view. Among the earliest Norse *Edda*, dating from the late ninth century, are *AtlakviSa* (which recounts the Burgundians' visit to Atli and their subsequent destruction) and *HamSismdl* (a later episode in the Niflung cycle). A later retelling of the former, *Atlamdl* (12th century), retains many heroic echoes, but its apparent bookish nature, its attention to detail, its insights into the characters' personal lives (as witnessed in the lengthy exchange of mutual recriminations between Atli and GuSrun), as well as its elaborate imagery and symbolism make it more a 'post-heroic' story. One conspicuous feature of the *Edda*, distinguishing them from other European epics, including

62 It could be argued that Roland's death and the destruction of his warriors is attributable to his attempt to live up to the ideals of the old-style hero and his consequent inability to adapt to the demands of his own society. See A. Renoir, 'The heroic oath in *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Nibelungenlied*', in S. B. Greenfield, ed., *Studies in OE Literature in Honour of Arthur G. Brodeur*, NY, 1973, 237–66 (esp. 252-3) [hereafter *Studies in OE Literature*].


64 See Bowra, *op. cit.*, 249.

the *Slovo*, is the absence of any Christian colouring and hence any conflict of ideals. Any mythological allusions derive from a rich tradition of mythological poetry treating the Norse gods, their relationships with one another and their dealings with the world of men. Although the gods have ceased to exercise any direct influence over the affairs of men in the heroic tales, the mythological poems furnish much helpful evidence for clarifying the relationship between mythology and the man-centred universe.

Also included among these heroic works, should be the *Waltharius*, a Latin verse epic of tenth-century German provenance. Owing to its self-conscious bookishness and its pervasive sense of parody, it is often dismissed from serious studies of medieval epic. But its subject matter is old, enjoying widespread popularity, and illustrates, even through parody, the heroic tradition surrounding its central hero.\(^{66}\)

With the exception of the *Cid*, the above works offer an abundance of material which could help to shed light on the artistic nature of the *Slovo*. These represent the most complete works of heroic literature; other sources furnishing additional clues are the many surviving fragments of heroic works. The oldest is the *Gododdin* and its accompanying lays, the *gorchenau*, composed in Scotland around 600. These poems are heroic in character, although they are not narratives, but a mixture of eulogy and panegyric celebrating a number of heroes killed in battle or sometimes the army as a whole. Other incomplete works include the Anglo-Saxon *Fight at Finnsburg* (8th century) and the *Waldere* fragments (8th or 10th centuries), and the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* (7th or 8th centuries).

A certain amount of useful information for this study has also been obtained from sources other than early literary epic. The geographical situation of Rus’ in itself invites us to take into account the oral traditions of its neighbours, the Finns, the South Slavs and the peoples of Central Asia. Other important sources of both east and west include histories (notably those of Tacitus, Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson), chronicles (Western European, Byzantine and Arabic), Icelandic prose sagas, the French *chansons de geste*, early German romances, and Anglo-Saxon elegies, historical poems and religious verse.

A study such as this, which is forced to cast its net so wide, is bound to unearth many tempting avenues for digression and further exploration. The constraints of time and space, however, dictate against attempts to resolve every question that may present itself. The aim, therefore, is not to define epic, nor to resolve the problem of the origins of early Russian literature, but to ascertain through its literary content and expression the *Slovo’s* place in the context of a European heroic tradition. At the same time, it is hoped that some of these findings will help to answer on literary grounds certain doubts expressed by the *Slovo’s* detractors.

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\(^{66}\) The legend of Walther has also survived in MHG, AS, ON and Polish. All but the *Waltharius* are brief or fragmentary in their present form. For all extant versions see M. D. Learned, ed., *The Saga of Walther of Aquitaine*, Westport, Conn., 1970.
Chapter One

Slovo o polku Igoreve and the Heroic Ideal in Kievan Rus’

a. The heroic ethos in the early literary sources of Rus’

Before examining the literary treatment of heroism in the Slovo, an attempt must be made to reconstruct from the few secular sources available a picture of the heroic ideal in Rus’ prior to the late twelfth century, to determine whether there existed a concept of heroism along the lines of the Western European ideal.1

The only available source for the reigns of the early Varangian princes of Rus’ is the Povest’ vremennykh let which, although not completed in its present form until around 1118, is based on earlier chronicles, legends and songs. The early section describes how in the first century of Varangian rule the Kievian princes Oleg, Igor, Igor’s wife Ol’ga and their son Sviatoslav brought various East Slavonic tribes under their sway. Nevertheless, the accounts covering the careers of the first three rulers emphasize, not martial excellence nor the pursuit of honour, but cunning, foresight2 and the quest for tribute. Oleg and Ol’ga in particular are characterised by their extraordinary wisdom rather than by heroic epithets. For instance, upon Oleg’s return from a successful attack on the Greeks in 907 the people of Kiev are said to praise him, but instead of glorifying him for his military achievements, they make much of his vatic qualities (I prozvasha Olga veschii — PVL, 31, ll. 23-4). In Ol’ga’s case, much detail is devoted to the ingenious methods she employs in avenging her husband’s death on the Drevliany in 945 and 946 (54-8). This quality of cunning is translated into a thirst for wisdom following her conversion.3 On the military front, although the reigns of Oleg and Igor are marked by incessant campaigns, the princes seem to be motivated to action more by the promise of material gain than by the desire for glory and honour:

В се же лётo [945] рекоша дружина Игореви: «отроці Сві́ньльчижони издо́валися суть оружьємь и порты, а мы наки; поняшь, княже, с нами в дань, да и ты добудешь и мы. [И] послуша ихь Игорь, яде в Дерева в дань, и примышляше кь перовой дань, [и] насильяше нымь и мужи его; возземавъ дань, пони вь градь свой. (53, ll. 13-18)

The tone of the chronicle changes, however, in its treatment of Sviatoslav, who ruled from 964-972 and may be regarded as the last Kievian leader in the pagan heroic tradition. Arabic, Greek and Scandinavian accounts of the Rus’ as warriors in this period describe them in the light of the Germanic heroic ideal, emphasizing their martial fury, fearlessness, mutual loyalty,

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1 As summarized in the Introduction, supra, 14ff.

2 Although for all his vatic wisdom and precautions, Oleg is unable to prevent the unheroic death foretold to him in 912. The quality of cunning is not particularly respected or admired in heroic literature. B. V. Sapunov believes this to hold true also for the period in which the Slovo was written, and that this is why the portrait of Vseslav deviates from the conventional style of portraying princes (Vseslav Polotskii v SP’, TODRL, 17, 1961, 75-6).

3 But not before the chronicler permits himself one last anecdote which reflects some of her old shrewdness. When, after her baptism, the Greek emperor asks her to marry him, she points out that, as he has baptized her (that is, acted as her sponsor), and called her his ‘daughter’, it would be unlawful for him to marry her. The emperor replies with apparent admiration: ’perekhvaka mia esi, Ol’ga’ (60, l. 8).
reckless daring, scorn for death and thirst for glory above all else. Such descriptions closely tally with what is known of the heroic tradition of the north as it is reflected in literature, and the impressive portrait of Sviatoslav that emerges testifies to his parity with any great Scandinavian leader. The portrayal of Sviatoslav in the Povest' vremennykh let, which looks as if it might have been lifted straight out of an heroic panegyric, reinforces this picture of a great chieftain who shares the hardships of the heroic life with his retinue, never tarrying too long in one place when there are battles to be fought elsewhere. The entry for the year 964 reads:

He proceeds to defeat the Khazars, the Danube Bulgars and the Pechenegs, then, in 971, he advances against the Greeks. Leo Diaconus, the Greek historian present during Sviatoslav's campaign against the Greeks in Bulgaria in this year, describes the madness with which the Russians fought, a fury that shocked the Greeks. Their leader encouraged them to fight against heavy odds, exhorting them to recall the valour of their forefathers, and to win or else die gloriously, rather than return home as fugitives. The PVL corroborates this account in the entry for 971. Here, when Sviatoslav's forces suffer a reversal in their battle against the Bulgarians, their prince addresses them with the words:

Emerging apparently victorious from this battle, the Russians proceed next against the Greeks. Finding themselves once again hard-pressed, they are exhort ed by Sviatoslav thus:

4 Davidson, op. cit., 109–14; 137–47.
His words to his retinue reveal a man who fears nothing but dishonour, and who regards his companions as equals. They in their turn make a reciprocal vow saying in true *comitatus* fashion that where he falls, they will fall with him (69, ll. 5–6).

In the manner of many heroes, Sviatoslav began his heroic career early, in 946, when, as a child, he accompanied Ol'ga and her troops on a campaign against the Drevliany and cast the first spear as a signal for the battle to commence (56, ll. 21–2). When he grew older and was on the threshold of his valiant career, his mother urged him to convert to Christianity, a suggestion he greeted with vehement refusal:

«Как азъ хочу инъ законъ принять един? а дружина [моя] сему сьмьятися начнуть.»

(62, ll. 11–12)

The new Christian faith would have been hard to reconcile with all that is known about Sviatoslav. Unlike his predecessors, he shunned tributes of riches and finery, preferring weapons and other military accoutrements, and for this reason gained a reputation for fierceness (69, ll. 16–44).

One explanation for the more 'heroic' rendering of Sviatoslav and his campaigns in the *PVL* may be that by the time native chroniclers began to record the history of Rus' from legends and songs, both oral and written, (around the middle of the eleventh century when literacy would have been more widespread), the lays praising the exploits of Sviatoslav, the father of 'Saint' Vladimir, would still have been more or less fresh in the memories of the people. On the other hand, by that time much less would have been remembered about the reigns of the earlier princes, and so the chroniclers would have had to rely upon non-Russian sources, legend and possibly half-forgotten myth.

With the death of Sviatoslav, the last truly pagan prince, comes a marked change in the chronicle's accounts of battles. Gone is the hero of Scandinavian descent who, together with his devoted bodyguard, builds up vast armies with the help of Slav and Pecheneg allies. With the reign of Vladimir begins a decline in Varangian influence, which was now by and large confined to mercenary service for the rulers of Kiev, Novgorod and other Russian towns.

One of the consequences of Vladimir's consolidation of Rus' with Kiev at its centre, together with the simultaneous growth of Christianity, was the degeneration of the *comitatus* along similar lines to those noted by A. T. Hatto in his study of German heroic literature, and by M. J. Swanton. Although the princes of Rus' continued to maintain an elite bodyguard, or *druzhina*, the spirit that existed between Sviatoslav and his retinue appears to have all but evaporated. In the first place, after its treatment of Sviatoslav, the *PVL* ceases to portray

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7 For a more detailed discussion of exhortation as a literary convention, see infra, Ch. 5f. (Heroic speech).


9 Davidson, *op. cit.*, 148–9. As noted in the Introduction, however, dynastic and personal links with Scandinavia persisted for some time yet.

10 See Introduction, 16–17. For a more general view of the evolution of the state in medieval Europe (particularly in France and England), see J. R. Strayer, *On the Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton, 1970, 9ff. (according to Strayer, by the year 1000 it would have been hard to find anything like a state in Europe, apart from Byz.; nor, up until that time, was Western Europe really Christian (15)).
the princes addressing their warriors. At the same time, the relations between Vladimir and
Iaroslav and their former allies lack any sign of mutual loyalty and affection. This is borne out
by the chronicle account of Vladimir’s march on Kiev in 980 with his Varangian allies against
his brother Jaropolk. Since they were instrumental in taking the city the Varangians claimed
it as theirs and demanded tribute which Vladimir refused to pay. Selecting the few he deemed
to be ‘good’, ‘wise’ and ‘brave’ to remain in his service, he allowed the rest to depart for Tsar-
grad (Constantinople), sending the Byzantine emperor advance warning that they could prove
troublesome if allowed to remain together in one place, together with a request that they be
forbidden to return to Rus’ (77, ll. 6–17).

It is hardly surprising, then, that Vladimir and his son, Iaroslav, should have received such
a bad press in Icelandic saga literature. With the decline in Varangian influence in Rus’, which
by then was mainly Slavic in organisation and policy, came an increased interest on the part
of Icelandic writers of saga in the affairs of Rus’ during the reigns of Vladimir and Iaroslav
(978–1054), as many stories connected with their courts were carried back to Scandinavia
by mercenaries who had served under them. Valdimar and Jarisleif, as they are called, are
portrayed as mean and ineffectual, able to maintain power only through the assistance of
Scandinavian warriors who had come to Garšariki (Rus’) seeking fame and fortune.11 It is
only natural that the Scandinavian warriors, whose relations with foreign princes stood upon
a strictly business-like footing, and who felt that their efforts went insufficiently rewarded,
should have lacked any feelings of loyalty towards their employers; furthermore, in depicting
the Kievan princes as weak or indecisive, they enhanced their own status as heroes.

While Iaroslav did not always acquit himself in the Norse sagas, his brother Mstislav
emerges as a more popular figure. Although he is portrayed as a Christian in the PVL, his
personal qualities belong to the older heroic tradition far more than the cautious Iaroslav. 12
He is virtually the last military figure in the Chronicle to be portrayed in heroic language, with
all the necessary heroic qualities concentrated in him: courage, a fine manly bearing, and a
deep love for his retainers.

Бë же Мъстиславь дебель тёмлымь, чермень лицемь, велицымь очымь, храбрь на рати, милостивь, любяше дружину по велику, имань я не щадяше, ни питья, ни ёдень я/ браняше.

(146, l. 23/147, ll. 1–3)

This affection for his retainers is expressed earlier in Mstislav’s own words when, following his
battle with Iaroslav, he surveys the dead on the battlefield and is relieved to find none of his
retainers among them:

«кто сему не радь? се лежить Свёрряинь, а се Варягь, а дружина своя цьля».

(145, ll. 7–8)

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11 See esp. Bjarnar Saga Hittskapar, ch. 4 (for the tale of the Icelandic hero Bjorn at Vladimir’s court,
in which Vladimir is portrayed as cowardly and indecisive) and EymundarPáttir Hringssonar 118ff. (which gives a
distorted but still recognisable account of court life and the enmity between Iaroslav and his brothers). Also Thidrek’s
Saga, which relates how the hero Thidrek slew King Valdimar of Holmgard (Novgorod) (E. R. Haymes, trans., The
Saga of Thidrek of Bern, NY—London, 1988, 312). See also Davidson, op. cit., 153–63; Cross, ‘La tradition islandaise

12 Davidson, op. cit, 157–62 (It should be noted that in her section on the dynastic links with Scandinavia, Dr.
Davidson confuses this Mstislav with the son of Monomakh); Orlov, op. cit., 17–18 (on Mstislav as one of the more
interesting chronicle characters, and as a suitable subject for heroic song).
His most famous adventure, also recollected in the *Slovo*, is his wrestling match in 1022 with the giant Rededia, prince of the Kasogians (*PVL*, 143, ll. 3–20).\(^{13}\) Mstislav’s clash with his brother Iaroslav also receives heroic treatment; the elevated language in which it is couched captures the spirit of heroic song:\(^{14}\)


\[\text{[и посемь наступи Мстиславъ со дружиною своею и нача свяч Варяга; и бысть свяча сила, яко посвятяше моленья, блещашеться оружье, и вб гроза велика и свяча сила и страшняя.]}\]

\((144, \text{ll. 21–2/145, ll. 1–2})\)

Interestingly enough, the description of the battle between Iaroslav and his other brother, Sviatopolk, earlier in 1019, is likewise expressed in a manner typical of military accounts:\(^{15}\)

\[\ldots\text{въсходящую солнцию, и сступящихся обою, бысть свяча зла, яка же не была в Руси, и за руки емлюче сечахуся, и сступашася трижды, яко по удольемь крови тещи...}\]

\((141, \text{ll. 7–10})\)

That these passages differ both in style and in mood from the matter-of-fact, often didactic, tone usually adopted by the chronicler in his battle descriptions, suggests they may be echoes of contemporary heroic poems treating the conflicts between Iaroslav and his brothers. Normally, the internecine feuds which were to rage Rus’ would have elicited stern disapproval from the chronicler. These rare glorifications of battles between brothers, however, may be attributed to two factors: first, the overall popularity of Mstislav (cf. n. 13) and his subsequent acceptance

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\(^{13}\) Wrestling matches are a common feature in Northern literature and folklore (cf. F. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, Lexington, Mass., 1950, xiii–xxi). In his victory over the giant Grendel, Beowulf uses no weapon, but is forced to use a powerful sword on Grendel’s dam, a more formidable foe (*ibid.*, ll. 745–819; 1441–1569). The Icelandic hero Grettir (d. 1031) was also renowned for his wrestling contests. *Grettissaga* (c. 1300) relates two such adventures: 1. in which Grettir slays the shepherd Glámr (who is haunting a farm after being killed by an evil spirit) in a mighty struggle, which ends when Grettir finishes Glámr off with his sword (Ch. 32–5). 2. in which Grettir grapples with a troll-wife whom he also finally stabs with his sword (Ch. 64–5), in P. Foote, ed., & G. A. Hight, trans., *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*, London–NY, 1968, 86–100; 170–75. For further analogues to Mstislav’s wrestling match, see Davidson, op. cit., 135. Other examples of single combat without weapons may be found in the *PVL* under the year 992, as well as in the youthful career of the Byz. hero Digenis Akritas who, in preparation for the warrior’s life, wrestles with bears (V. D. Kuz’mina, ed., *Devgeniyevo deianie (Deianie prezhnikh vremen khрабрыkh chelovek)*, M., 1962, 144).

\(^{14}\) While there is an actual storm taking place during the battle, the images of thunder and lightening are used metaphorically to convey the scene of battle. Storm metaphors for the clash of weapons are widely used in heroic literature, and are especially abundant in the *SP*. See A. S. Orlov, ‘Ob oesobennostiakh formy russkih voinskih povestei (konchaia XVII v.)’, *Chteniya v imperatorskom obshchestve istori i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete*, 203, IV, iii, M., 1903, 13–15 (Grom i molniia, bleok oruzhiio) [henceforth ‘Ob oesobennostiakh formy’]. See also infra, Ch. 5d., 193–4.

\(^{15}\) *ibid.*, 11–12 (‘Sostupshassia...i byst’ secha zla’); 12 (‘Za ruki emluashche sia sechakh’); 21–2 (‘Krov’ ilias’ po udoliam, kak reka’, etc.). The so-called ‘military tales’ and traces of them in chronic accounts are quite separate from the heroic literary genre, although, as Antony Stokes points out, it is difficult to place them within any single fixed genre (‘What is a voiskaia povest’?’, *Canadian and American Slavic Studies*, 13, 1979, 33–51). The military tales mix elements from Byz. translated works and the Russian heroic song tradition, although their use of combat formulae is fairly prosaic.
of Iaroslav's authority, and secondly, the legitimacy of Iaroslav's battle with Sviatopolk on the
grounds that the latter was a thoroughly iniquitous character on whom Iaroslav was exacting
revenge for engineering the deaths of their saintly brothers, Boris and Gleb.

From the time Iaroslav became sole ruler of Rus' (1037–9) until 1110, the year at which the
Povest' vremennykh let ends, military campaigns consisted mainly of internecine wars: even
when the 'elder princes' formed alliances against the Polovtsy in the 1090's, the minor princes
continued the feuds. Such wars, apart from rare exceptions such as those mentioned above,
would have made poor subjects for heroic treatment, since the bonds of kinship constituted one
of the most important bases for the heroic ethos. Although the concepts of honour and glory
continue to play a part in the campaigns against the Polovtsy (beginning around 1061), the
princes themselves have forfeited their individuality and are practically indistinguishable. The
most notable change in the chronicle's portrayal of princes comes after the death of Iaroslav.
Whereas the earlier princes are characterised and distinguished by their deeds, the later princes,
more or less following Byzantine models of ideal Christian rulers, come to be characterised by
more abstract qualities outside the sphere of military action. From now on, the glorification
of princes goes beyond personal eulogy; praise is rendered to them as representatives of Rus'
and her institutions. 16

In the reign of Iaroslav a new brand of hero emerges who is to have a significant impact on
later military tales: the hero-martyr. Following the death of Vladimir in 1015, Sviatopolk, the
aforementioned brother of Iaroslav, ascended the throne of Kiev and immediately proceeded to
eliminate the competition, beginning with his universally loved brothers, Boris of Rostov and
Gleb of Murom. Leaning heavily on the Psalms and the story of Cain, the chronicler relates
how Sviatopolk betrayed them and had them murdered. Boris and Gleb embody and exalt the
ideal of brotherly love, not only in their love for one another, but in their unwavering loyalty to
the elder brother who betrays them. Rather than raise his hand against a brother, Boris prays,
then lays down meekly to await his assassins (129, ll. 13ff.). They were subsequently canonized,
and their story became so popular that their cult soon became widespread throughout Rus'.
It is a little ironic that these heroes of non-resistance should have become patron saints of
warriors, particularly in 'holy wars' against pagans and Roman Catholics. Although, strictly
speaking, they had not laid down their heads for the Orthodox Church, they nevertheless came
to be associated with dying for the Faith and the Russian land, and were repeatedly held up
as models for princes in the course of Russia's kin-slaying history.17

For the period between the death of Iaroslav (1054) and the late twelfth century, there
are no surviving native texts corresponding to the heroic lay. Beginning in the middle of the
eleventh century, however, several secular works based on military themes were translated into Old
Russian from the Greek: the History of the Jewish War, Digenis Akritas and the Alexandria.
The Jewish War, which tells of the struggle of the Jews against the Romans from 4 B.C. to
73 A.D., was to influence Russian military narrative well into the seventeenth century, with its
dramatic style and elaborate images relating to military themes. 18 The Alexandria, one of a
number of retellings in both east and west of the life and exploits of Alexander of Macedon, is
believed to have been in circulation in Rus' in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Alexander,
remarkable for his successful exploits and prowess, is further distinguished by such abstract

16 Likhachev, Chelovek, 27ff., 72-3; idem, Velikoe nasledie, 36-7.

17 The story of Boris and Gleb may be found in the Chtenie o Borise i Glebe and the Skazanie o Borise
i Glebe (D. I. Abramovich, ed., Zhitiia svyatkh muchenikov Borisa i Gleba in L. Muller, ed., Die altRussischen
hagiographischen Erzahlungen und liturgischen Dichtungen über die heiligen Boris und Gleb, Munich, 1967).

18 See N. A. Meshcherskii, Istoritsia iudeiskoi voiny Iosifa Flaviia v drevnerusskom peresvede, M-L, 1958, 97-115
[henceforth Istoritsia iudeiskoi voiny]; E. V. Barsov, 'SP' kak khudozhestvennyi pamiatnik Kievskoi druzhinnoi Rusi,
I, M., 1887, 213-72. The following phrases from Josephus, for example, find close parallels in the Slovo (44, ll. 9-11):
'sharpen your spirits in vengeance' (331) and 'girding his mind with strength' (322).
qualities as wisdom, mercy and a thirst for knowledge. The same applies to Digenis. The old Russian text, *Dyegenievoe deianje*, goes back to a lost Byzantine romance of the tenth century based on the struggle between Byzantium and the Saracens, and was translated not later than the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Devgenii is a hero in the mould of Alexander, only more emphasis still is placed on his piety. All his gifts and successes he attributes to God’s grace, although overt divine assistance is still absent here. With the emphasis placed on qualities of mind and on piety, these two Greek heroes, while retaining youthful and enterprising spirits, also epitomise the ideal ruler.

While the tales of Alexander and Devgenii celebrate heroic qualities and employ fairly standard heroic metaphor, they are, in the final analysis, romances, with their stress on qualities of mind and soul outside the sphere of heroic characterisation, their love interest, their hyperbole, their delight in subterfuge and their quixotic qualities in general. Although it is generally agreed that certain features contained in these works as well as in the *History of the Jewish War* are reflected in the *Slovo*, this holds much more true for the military tales of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

While no indigenously Russian heroic lays survive from the long years between Iaroslav’s death and Igor’s campaign, a fairly comprehensive description of the ideal warrior-ruler for the late eleventh, early twelfth centuries is preserved in the *Pouchenie* of Vladimir Monomakh, who ruled Kiev from 1113–1125. The work, which appears in the Chronicle entry for 1096, is the first Russian ‘autobiography’ and the only ‘Mirror for Princes’. In it, Monomakh not only instructs his children in matters of decorum, Christian virtue and plain prudence, he also seizes the opportunity to recount his numerous hunting expeditions and military campaigns, particularly his successes against the Polovtsy: *A usekh putii 80 i 3 velikikh, a proka ne isponnii menshikh* (146). The relatively conventional picture invoked by Monomakh is that of an energetic warrior and statesman of courage and honour, whose love of hunting and danger is tempered by wisdom, good statesmanship and humility. What is particularly noticeable here, is the absence of any ideology relating to the *comitatus*. Although he regularly joined forces with other princes in his campaigns, Monomakh exhibits more a tendency to undertake everything himself, than a chieftain’s trust in and deference towards the retainers who serve him. He warns his sons not to depend upon their captains, and adds:

Еже было творити отроку моему, то сам есмь створилъдѣлала, на войнѣ, и на ловѣ, нощь и день, на зною и на зимѣ, не дай собѣ упокою. На послѣдники не зря, ни на биричи, самъ творилъ что было надобѣ.

(148)

The virtue of such an approach lies in Monomakh’s unwillingness to rule by proxy, and in his desire to share in the hardships and ordeals borne by the men who served in his campaigns (in much the same fashion as his ancestor Sviatoslav). It also has the purely practical advantage of

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19 V. Istrin, ‘*Aleksandriia pervoi redaktsii*, *Aleksandriia russkikh khronografov* (Issledovanie i tekst), M., 1893, 16, 19.

20 For stylistic features and *loci communes* see Orlov, ‘*Ob oobennostiakh formy*, *passim*; H. Y. Prochazka, *Military Prose Narratives in ORL: The Problem of Genre*, PhD dissert., London, 1978, *passim* (esp. 70–1; 260–312); *Istorija judeskoi voiny*, 97ff. While there is no love interest in the military tales, the heroes nevertheless resemble Alexander and Digenis in their deep piety and trust in God’s grace. Comparable characters are wholly absent in the *Slovo*.

21 The text used here is found in A. S. Orlov, *Vladim ir Monomakh*, M–L, 1946. References will be designated by page numbers in the body of this work. For a summary of the *Pouchenie* with commentary and references, see Fennell’s article in, Fennell & Stokes, eds, *Early Russian Literature*, 64–9; also Likhachev, *Velikoe nasledie*, 111–31.
ensuring that things get done to his satisfaction. On the other hand, his reluctance to delegate indicates fairly conclusively that the heroic ideal of mutual loyalty and trust between a prince and his retainers has no real hold in Kievan Rus’ by this time. This, it has been suggested, may be accounted for by the complexities of the Russian vassalage system, which allowed members of the družina to transfer their allegiance from one prince to another without being reviled as traitors, since their loyalty went first to the grand prince of Kiev, and to his dynastic offshoots only second. Under these circumstances there would have been little scope for the cultivation of strong personal loyalties and emotional ties between a prince and his retainers. While this particular hierarchy of loyalties and freedom of mobility for retainers may have been peculiar to Rus’, the relegation of personal loyalties to a position secondary to that of fealty towards the central figure of authority parallels a similar process in the West, as will be noted in due course.

* * *

What emerges from these earliest sources, meagre though they be, is evidence for the existence in early Kievan Rus’, until the death of Iaroslav, of heroism more or less on a Germanic model. This concept embraces ideas concerning the comitatus as well as self-sufficiency, military enterprise, personal honour, single combat, courage in the face of overwhelming odds, leaders sharing in the austerities of the heroic life, and a preference for weapons above riches. In the earliest military accounts of the Povest’ vremennyykh let, campaigns, especially individual battles, are seen as the culminating points in the historical narrative process, in which the exploits of individuals, usually princes, are emphasised. The chronicler, despite what his own views may be, does not subordinate the narrative to Christian speculation and didacticism, but chooses his moments for religious reflection. Prayers by leaders before battle are used with discretion, and there is not as yet any kind of divine intervention, however indirect.  

Beginning in the reign of Vladimir, Varangian influence begins to decline dramatically and, whether as a direct consequence of this, or of the changing political structure of Rus’, so too does the concept of the comitatus, even though the chronicle also states, under the entry for 996, that Vladimir was fond of his followers, that he consulted them on matters of government and war, and that he was sensible to the fact that a good retinue was beyond price (123, ll. 20–2/124, ll. 1–3). Nevertheless, the decline in the earlier concept of the družina begins here and continues into the reign of Vladimir Monomakh. In the reign of Iaroslav emerge the concepts of the Christian hero-martyr and the ‘Defender of the Faith’ through the cult of Boris and Gleb. Translations of Greek military tales, whose heroes are characterised principally by their piety, had also begun to circulate in Rus’ around that time. Despite these new Christian influences, however, notions relating to personal heroism and honour must still have had some

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23 Likhachev, Velikoe nasledie, 50–2. On the theme of divine intervention in the military tales, see Orlov, ‘Ob osobennostiakh formy’, 37–49 (Pomoshch nebesnoi sily). For a discussion of divine intervention in the later military tales, see Prochazka, op. cit., 222–32 (In her discussion of the Slovo Dr. Prochazka interprets the omens there as belonging to the category of divine intervention. As will be noted in Ch. 2, omens such as these have their roots in pre-Christian tradition.)
currency if the *Slovo* is at all representative of the kind of poetry that was current among the nobility in late twelfth-century Rus'.

b. Heroism in the *Slovo o polku Igoreve*

The heroes of the *Slovo* are characterised exclusively by their actions, which are expressed solely through military feats. In this respect they conform to one of the universal criteria for protagonists of heroic poetry, since their internal lives, that is, their reason, emotions and appetites, are subordinated to the single-minded pursuit of honour through personal risk in battle. All thought and speech on their part is strictly directed to the conflict at hand. Such is the setting when the narrative unfolds, revealing Igor from the inside out, driven by a single purpose: 24

Почемь же, братие, пов'ять сию оть стараго Владимира до нынешняго Игоря, иже истинну умь кржостоя своєю и поостри сердца своеаго мужествомъ, напльвиться ратнаго духа, наведе своя храбрыя плкы на землю Половцкую за землю Русскую.

(44, ll. 8–12)

This burning eagerness and longing for victory in battle takes him over to the extent that he appears to be unconscious of the omen, the solar eclipse which forebodes disaster for him and his warriors (44, ll. 17–19). However, since Igor is shown to be mindful of the eclipse in the *Laurentian* and *Hypatian* chronicle accounts of the campaign, 25 it may be supposed that he is also meant to be aware of it in the *Slovo* when he is said to observe the shadow it casts over his troops; but his warlike spirit obliges him to forge ahead despite the obvious danger. Knowledge of the portent not only enhances the drama of the narrative, it also underlines the heroic quality of self-sufficiency in the heroes. Undaunted by the omen, then, Igor addresses his troops: 26

«Братие и дружино! луце жь бы потату быти, неже полонену быти, а всядемь, братие, на своє брыляя комони да позримь синего Дону....Хошу бо...копие приломити конець поля Половецкаго, съ вами, Русицы, хошу главу свою приложить, а любо испити целомьмь Дону».

(44, ll. 15–21)

Since the princely exhortation to his followers is, like the heroic boast, one of the principal devices through which the heroic spirit reveals itself, its contents tend to reflect a more or less universal standard. Analogous sentiments may be observed in the *Chanson de Roland*. Note especially the rallying words of the warrior-archbishop, Turpin, to the other peers when they find themselves surrounded by a great Saracen host: 27

24 All quotations and references to the *Slovo* will be taken from L. A. Dmitriev & D. S. Likhachev, eds, *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, L., 1967, and will be designated by page and line numbers in the body of this work. (The line numbering is my own, its purpose being to facilitate the location of references on any given page).

25 *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, I (*Laurentian Chronicle*), L., 1926, col., 396: II (*Hypatian Chronicle*), M., 1962, col. 638 [henceforth *Laur.* and *Hyp.*]. All references to these chronicles will be designated in the body of the text by column numbers.

26 On the hero's defiance of omens, see *infra*, Ch. 2, 107 (also Ch. 5, 157–8). For a more detailed examination of heroic speech, see *infra*, Ch. 5f.

27 The text and translation of the *CDR* is taken from G. J. Brault, *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition*, II, University Park, Pa.—London, 1978. All references will be designated by line or *laisse* numbers in the body of this work.
Just as Igor considers death to be preferable to shame (in this case, that of capture), so also does Roland. On Oliver's pointing out that the pagans far outnumber the Franks, he replies:

'Mis talenz en est graigne.
Ne placet Damnedeu ne ses angles
Que ja pur mei perdet sa valur France!
Melz voeill murir que huntage me venget.'

['My determination is greater because of it.
May it not please the Lord God nor his angels
That France lose its worth on my account!
I'd rather die than be disgraced.']

The same qualities of single-mindedness and courage in accepting death as the only alternative to victory befiting a hero is also expressed by Beowulf when he vows to undertake the task of ridding Heorot of Grendel's unwelcome attentions:

'Ic þæt h gode, þa Þæt on holm gestah,
sæbat gesæt mid minra segca gedriht,
þæt ic anunga eowra leoda
willan geworhte, òpðe on wæl crunge
feondgæpum fæst. Ða gefremman sceal
eorlic ellen, òpðe endedæg
on þisse meoduhealle minne gebidan!'

['I had this in mind at the time I embarked,
Entered the ship with my company of men,
That I should assuredly accomplish the yearning
Of all your people, or else be destroyed
In a fiend's stranglehold. Bravery of chivalry
I shall follow to victory, or else in this mead-hall
Suffer the close of my living days.]

Speeches like these encapsulate all that needs to be known about the hero. It may be said that, to an audience well-versed in heroic convention, they merely confirm what the audience already knows and expects.

Having disclosed all that is necessary to establish his courage, self-sufficiency and enterprising spirit, Igor steps into his 'golden stirrup' and all but disappears from the action until his escape from captivity. The author devotes no space to Igor's prowess in the field, but reserves it instead for his brother Vsevolod:

28 All references to Beowulf are taken from the third edition of F. Klaeber, ed., Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, and will be designated by line numbers in the body of this work. The translations are my own.
The author presents a portrait of the ideal warrior displaying his manly prowess by fighting furiously in the thick of battle. Vsevolod is depicted on a larger than human scale as the embodiment of his whole force, the men of Kursk, whom he describes thus:

...«свідомі кьмети: подь трубами повити, подь шеломы възпліяны, конець копія въскрымлі, пути имь вѣдомы, яругы имь знами, луци у нихь напряжени, тули отворени, сабли изъострени, сами скачуть, якы сърны влзци въ поль, ищучи себе чть, а князю служи.»

(46, II. 5-10)

The author's exaggerated claim that the men of Kursk were born to heroism and nurtured on warfare recalls other heroes, particularly in Central Asian epic, who, from the start, can be identified as extraordinary men whose physical development and martial qualities are not those of ordinary beings. This portrayal also shows that for them life was on a permanent war footing. The praise of Vsevolod, then, may be interpreted metaphorically as a panegyric also to his men, for the actions of his *druzhina* are seen to be concentrated in him. In reality he has only one sword and one bow, and cannot be in every place at once, but the *Slovo* speaks of ‘raining arrows’, ‘thundering swords’ and ‘infidel heads’ lying everywhere in his wake. The concentration of the *druzhina’s* actions, or even those of an entire army, into the actions of one prince is found elsewhere in the *Slovo*. Of Sviatoslav of Kiev it is said:

...башеть притрепаль своими сильными плквы и харалужными мечи; наступи на землю Половецкую, прятопта хлымы и яругы, взытры рьки и озеры, иссуши потоики и болота. А поганаго Кобяка изъ луку моря, отъ желъныхъ великихъ плквозь Половецкихъ, яко вихрь, выторже...

(50, 1-6)

The author addresses Grand Prince Vsevolod of Suzdal’ and Yaroslav ‘Osmomysl’ of Galicia in the same vein (51, II. 31-4/52, II. 1-2; 52, II. 9-17).

The culmination of this kind of concentration may be found in the legendary character, Evpatii Kolovrat, in the *Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem*, a military tale relating the brave but hopeless defence of Riazan’ by the princes of Rus’ against the Tatars in 1237. On seeing the devastation wrought upon Riazan’, Evpatii gathers together a modest force and pursues the Tatars. He and his men are annihilated, but not until Evpatii performs a series of remarkable feats of courage and prowess. When the battle begins there is no mention of his men; Evpatii emerges as the sole avenger, fighting with such fury that he must keep exchanging his dulled

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29 Chadwick & Zhirmunsky, *op. cit.*, 155-7; Bowra, *op. cit.*, 94-5. Both Digenis and Alexander of Macedon start their careers as prodigies, performing feats of valour by the age of fourteen. The *bylina* hero, Volkh Vseslavich is also a born warrior who, soon after his birth, demands to be swaddled in armour and begins his military career in earnest at the age of twelve (Danilov, 6).

30 See Likhachev, *Chelovek*, 74-5.
swords for new ones. He fights a duel with the Tatar champion, Khostovrul, whom he chops in half, and is only killed himself when the Tatars resort to firing their siege guns at him.31

In Likhachev's view, Evpatii Kolovrat, whose image comprehends all the qualities of his druzhina, is the first bogatyry of Russian literature. This figure developed later into the bylina bogatyry who in time came to be portrayed as a single hero without an army fighting against a huge enemy force.32

A similar phenomenon, that is the attribution of qualities and actions pertaining to an entire army to a single hero, may be perceived in the Chanson de Roland. The battle between the French rearguard and the Saracen army is described in two successive series of single combats between the Twelve Peers and their opposite numbers among the Saracens. Apart from general allusions to the battle raging between the forces and to the many casualties on both sides, no mention is made of the rest of the warriors who make up the rearguard. Not only does the business of fighting appear to rest with the Twelve Peers, but the damage they inflict on their opponents takes on super-human proportions: shields and spears are shattered with ease, armour splits and flies apart, bones jut out, organs and entrails burst forth, swords slice down through helmets, bodies, and saddles until they break the horses' spines (ll. 1188–1395; 1483[1526]–1609[1652]). Pagan victories over the French are naturally much less spectacular than the revenge taken by the latter for fallen friends. In the end only three of the heroes remain—Roland, Oliver and Archbishop Turpin—who, terrible injuries notwithstanding, continue to dispatch their enemies in great numbers until the Saracens flee, leaving the heroes to die from their wounds (2146 ff). Earlier the three are portrayed thus:

Dur sunt li colps e li caples est grefs,  
Mult grant duor i ad de chrestiens.  
Ki puis veist Rollant e Oliver  
De lur espes e ferir e capler!  
Li arcevesque i siert de sun espiet.  
Cels qu'il unt mort, ben les poet hom preiser:  
Il est escrit es cartres e es brefs,  
Ço dit la Geste, plus de .11. milliers.  

[The blows are hard and the fighting is heavy,  
The Christians suffer very heavy losses.  
One could see then Roland and Oliver  
Striking and slashing with their swords!  
The Archbishop strikes with his spear.  
We have a good idea of the number they killed:  
It is written in the documents and records,  
The Chronicle says that there were more than 4000.]

(ll. 1678–85)

The poet's description of Roland in the fray closely resembles the portrait of Vsevolod in the Slovo:

Li quens Rollant par mi le champ chevalchet,  
Tient Durental, ki ben trenchet e taillet,

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31 In V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, ed., Voinskie povesti drevnei Rusi, M—L, 1949, 9–19 (Volokolamskii spisok, 13–14) [henceforth PRBB]. All subsequent references will be taken from this edition.

32 Chelovek, 75. In his study, 'Literature of the Tatar period (13th to 15th centuries)', John Fennell demonstrates that the PRBB is, as most scholars agree, a compilatory work spanning nearly three centuries, concluding that the religious colouring is out of place for the first half of the 13th c., and that Evpatii's hyperbolised exploits, together with the universality of the slaughter, have a popular folkloric ring, and are therefore more likely to be later interpolations (Fennell & Stokes, op. cit., 90–2). On the folkloric origins of Evpatii, see B. N. Putilov, 'Pesnia o Evpatii Kolovrate', TODRL, 11, 1955, 118–39.
Des Sarrazins lur fait mult grant damage.
Ki lui veist l'un geter mort su l'altre,
Li sanc tuz cler gesir par cele place!

[Count Roland rides in the middle of the field,
He holds Durendal, which cuts and hacks well,
He causes great harm to the Saracens.
One could see him dispatching his adversaries, piles of them,
And the bright blood in profusion in that place!]

(ll. 1338-42)

This device of depicting the hero as the embodiment of a collective force may be seen as a kind of substitute for single combat which, in early heroic poetry as well as later, was regarded as the most effective means by which a hero could display his ability. Mstislav's conflict with Rededia was apparently such a popular story that the author of the Slovo includes it among the eulogies of Boian (44, ll. 2-4). He also recalls how Iziaslav of Polotsk, deserted by his brothers, fought 'alone' against the Lithuanians, 'clanging with sharp swords' against their helmets (53, ll. 7-19). Again, as in the passage devoted to Vsevolod, the plural form 'swords' (mechi) suggests that he was supported by his retainers, but in portraying him thus alone, the author accentuates his heroism in the face of overwhelming odds and glorifies his tragic fall. It also reinforces the fundamental notion that heroes must face their doom alone (as do Beowulf, Roland, HamSír and Spáll in HamBismal and Rüdiger in Nibelungenlied, to name but a few).

Returning to Vsevolod, it may be asked why he and not Igor is held up as the conventional epic ideal, the hero whose 'single combat' against terrible odds is depicted in the most elevated terms. The answer may lie in the author's apparently ambivalent attitude towards his heroes, Igor in particular. Although he endows Igor with heroic qualities from the start, tactfully excluding any mention of Igor's historical alliance with the Polovtsay in 1180, to eulogize him in the same exuberant manner as he does Vsevolod would have seemed inappropriate since he is also obliged to condemn his rashness. It is true that he censures Vsevolod together with his brother but, as he makes clear from the beginning of the narrative through Igor's exhortation, it is Igor who is the instigator of the venture and therefore responsible for its failure. The author's portrayal of Vsevolod tallies closely with what is revealed about him in the Hypatian Chronicle account of the campaign of 1185. Besides declaring him the boldest and manifest of the Ol'govichi (col. 642), it imputes no direct blame to him for the exploit and its consequences. What must partly exonerate him from blame in the author's eyes is that he accompanies Igor through brotherly tenderness by which he affirms their common interest:

«Одинь брать, одинь светъ. святлы — ты, Игорю! Оба свя Святъславичь!»

(46, ll. 1-3)

And so, while censuring Vsevolod along with Igor, the author also suppresses his role in the defeat in order to invest him with an aura of heroism in this fatal campaign. Consequently, Igor's heroic qualities of mind combined with Vsevolod's physical courage and prowess produce a complete heroic figure.

In the same way that the heroes of the Slovo, past and present, at times embody the sum of the qualities pertaining to their individual armies, so they also incorporate what the author sees as the heroism of all Rus', past and present. That the Slovo betrays certain national

33 This portrait remains consistent until Vsevolod's death in 1196, under which year the Hyp. not only describes his funeral and the lamentation his death inspired, but also praises his valour, goodness and love for all, judging him once again to be the best of the Ol'govichi (col. 696).
aspirations, at least on the part of the author, is self-evident, and that Rus' may be viewed on one level as the 'hero' of the Slovo, as some scholars believe, is supported by the fact that the work does not limit itself to the figures and events of 1185, but embraces the entire history of Rus' from its foundation—from Vladimir of old to Igor of our time (44, ll. 8–9). In the events that comprise this history, furthermore, it is all of Rus'—flora, fauna, cities and the cosmos—that sorrows, fears and rejoices. In a sense, then, the individual heroes are only microcosms of the nation's bravery and aspirations (as well as its problems and failings).

The precise meaning of Rus' or Russkaia zemlia here continues to be mooted by scholars. It suffices to say at this point that contrary to the apparently narrow geographical and political understanding of the term in the late twelfth century, the author of the Slovo invests it with a broader ethnic significance. For him Russkaia zemlia is not limited by the boundaries of the Kievan lands or the closest surrounding principalities, but includes all the Russian lands where there are Russian people, as far as the Don, the Donets, the Danube and even Tmutorokan, which by then had long been in Polovtsian lands. His understanding of the term, then, is not territorial so much as dynastic, with all the princes and people as inheritors of the legacy of the Riurikids. In calling the heroes by the name Rusichi he encourages the audience to note the tribal or clan connotations. They are also termed Ruskyia pl"ky (47, l. 23) and Ruskie synove (54, l. 4), reinforcing the idea that the fate of Rus', the underlying theme of the Slovo, is inextricably linked with and embodied in the fate of her 'warriors' and 'sons', of the participants in Igor's expedition. Their defeat prophesies disaster for Rus', which is personified and to which the author twice addresses this warning (which on both occasions follows a bad omen): O Ruskaia zemlia! Uzhe za shelomianem" esi! (46, l. 24; 47, l. 18).

Parallels may again be observed in Western heroic literature. While the earliest poems tend to treat individual heroes in the context of the tribe or clan, by around the tenth and eleventh centuries, the concept of the heroic nation begins to emerge in European heroic poetry.

The Battle of Brunanburh is strictly speaking a military account which relates, not many years after the event, the victory of the English forces under the command of Ethelstan and his brother Edmund over the Danish invaders in 937. This was seen as a military climax in a movement by Alfred the Great and his immediate successors to free the West Saxon kingdom from the threat of Viking conquest. While the poem contains many heroic features, it is more a royal panegyric, and betrays strong national feeling, a natural consequence after long years of humiliation at the hands of the Viking raiders. Practically no space is given to individual achievement here, rather, all the participants in this battle are identified by nationality (Scots, Norsemen, West Saxons, Angles); in addition, reference is made to Wesseaxena land. This tendency to portray the heroism of a nation as a whole may be discerned also in the Battle of Maldon, although it is presented somewhat differently here. In the first place,

34 The phrase Russkaia zemlia appears 21 times (4, l. 12; 46, l. 24; 47, l. 18; 48, ll. 19, 26; 49, ll. 5, 17, 20, 26, 27, 29; 51, l. 3; 52, ll. 7, 16; 53, ll. 5, 23; 54, l. 15; 55, ll. 10, 25; 56, ll. 17, 18–19). The words ruskii and Rusichi appear 8 times (44, l. 20–Rusiti; 46, l. 27–Rusichi; 47, l. 23–Ruskyia pl"ky; 49, l. 4–Rusichi; 49, l. 21–sheny Ruskia; 50, l. 10–Ruskago zlata; 51, ll. 7–8–Ruskyim" zlatom"; 51, l. 4–Rusikh" synove). These words acquire greater force when taken in conjunction with the author's political message of the need for a unified Rus'.

35 See Orlov, Geroicheskie temy, 36; Osetrov, Mir Igoruioi pesni, 71; Likhachev, 'V zaachchitu SP', Voprosy literatury, 1984, no. 12, 95.

36 On the personification of nature see infra, Ch. 2.c., passim and Ch. 5.c.,172–3; 176.

37 Likhachev, 'Nekotorye voprosy', 84–6; idem, 'Istoricheskie i politicheskie predstavlenia avtora SP', in idem, 'SP i kultura', 126–7; A. N. Robinson, 'Russkaia zemlia v SP', TODRL, 31, 1976, passim. Robinson argues that the author's appeal to all the princes of Rus' constitutes poetic hyperbole without any real political motive, since the princes of Southern Rus' could easily have handled the Polovtsian threat on their own (124).

38 In A. Campbell, The Battle of Brunanburh, London, 1938, l. 59
the characters are identified less by their nationality than by name and pedigree, and are distinguished individually by their brave words and actions. Secondly, the central theme of the poem is absolute and overriding loyalty to one's lord coupled with heroic resistance on his behalf, a theme also echoed in the Slovo, but not in Brunanburh. Although the focus of this devotion is Bryhtno8, ealdorman of Essex and one of the top men in England, who is responsible for taking the fatal decision that leads to defeat, the poet devotes as much attention to the courage and valour of his personal retinue, some of whom originate from as far away as Mercia and Northumbria. Of particular interest and contrary to common practice in heroic literature, is the exaltation of the rank-and-file soldier. Here the 'common churl' (unorne ceorl) Dunnere, personifying as it were the entire English nation, exhorts his fellow warriors to avenge their lord's death. Although the tone of Maldon is patriotic and its characters take pride in the lands of their birth, national intolerance towards the Vikings and hostility towards their paganism is, as in the Slovo, relatively underplayed, and it is not propagandistic in the same way as Brunanburh. Both works, however, were composed at a time when England was under constant threat from a foreign invader, an England that was now organised from scattered tribal units into centralised kingdoms. Under such circumstances it was natural for the English to identify themselves in national terms, and to begin to unite against foreign threat. Such a situation is not unlike that of Rus' in the twelfth century, and this is reflected in the Slovo.

The Chanson de Roland was also composed in its extant form under such conditions. The 'valiant Franks', under Charlemagne, the ruler of 'fair France' (ll. 116; 1054; 1064, etc.) and defender of Christendom, are waging war against the Saracens in Spain. The Twelve Peers, the 'flower of fair France' (ll. 2431; 2455), while also expected to consider their personal glory, strive on behalf of Charlemagne and France. Ganelon's treason against his kinsmen is the more serious since it spells destruction for the whole of France (l. 835). To Roland the honour and glory of France are closely linked to family honour. He refuses to sound the horn and summon help, he says, lest he bring disgrace upon France (ll. 1062-4); on other occasions he and Oliver express concern lest his actions betray her glory and bring shame upon her (ll. 1090; 1734). Prior to his death, Roland recalls in true heroic fashion all the successes achieved by him with his sword Durendal, but while he is justifiably proud of his record, he nevertheless claims to have done these things selflessly for Charlemagne and for France, and closes his speech invoking God to preserve France from shame (ll. 2316-37).

While the Chanson de Roland provides many opportunities for the individual to accrue personal honour in battle, it also portrays heroism on a more abstract national level. In the first part, which treats the battle at Roncevaux, Roland emerges as the principal hero; but in the second, in which Charlemagne, the 'defender of Christendom', does battle with the larger-than-life Baligant, the personification of heathendom and God's enemy, it may be said that the real hero there is Christianity and, by implication, its defender, France, whose representative is Charlemagne.

It remains puzzling that a French poem of the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries should betray such a highly patriotic tone and theme; that concepts of 'fair' and 'holy' France should gain currency at a time when personal loyalty to one's lord was the prevailing ethic in

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40 See II. 216-24; 265-7.

41 For more on this point see infra, Ch. 2, 53ff. Where personal heroism is the main concern, religious differences are not usually the prime motivation for fighting.

42 l. 789. Cf. 'khrabrii Rusichi'.

43 See Introduction, n.63.
As D. J. A. Ross observes, the Roland poet had 'a more uncommon vision in that he saw the state as an entity and an abstract idea in an age of warring individualists precariously held together by a feudal bond'. The same holds true for the author of the Slovo and his assessment of the Russian princes' separatist policies. His view of Russkaia zemlia transcends its contemporary political-territorial definition, and acquires ethnic, dynastic and even metaphysical or spiritual connotations. This more abstract and emotive understanding of the term becomes more widespread during the Tatar period and later. However, as it would be some time before Russkaia zemlia became inextricably coupled with vera khrist'ianskaia, any 'spiritual' quality that the author may be said to be injecting into his understanding of the term may possibly have its roots in the pre-Christian and folkloric concept of zemlia-mat' (Mother Earth), which in turn is linked to the pagan concept of the clan. In his appeal for unity and allegiance to the prince of Kiev on the part of all the principalities of Rus—even those more remote and therefore not directly threatened by the Polovtsy—the author is reminding them of their common ancestry and origins at a time that is especially politically precarious.

As Maldon and Roland testify, however, patriotism and national identity need not detract from an individual's pursuit of personal honour and heroic acclaim. On the contrary, poems of this kind may furnish plenty of scope for heroic initiative. As C. M. Bowra says, 'national pride is a legitimate pleasure, and heroic poetry cannot fail at times to promote it'. It is not therefore required for the heroes of the Slovo to sacrifice personal considerations altogether in favour of some kind of 'higher' external goal, but to synchronize their aims with the interests of Rus.

Honour (chest) and glory (slava) are the concepts which motivate heroic action. In the Slovo these concepts are also closely linked with the themes of Russkaia zemlia and loyalty to central authority, as they are also with the notions of 'fair' France and loyalty to Charlemagne in the Chanson de Roland.

From the start the author establishes what he considers to be the prime motive for the campaign in Igor's address to his troops, in which the latter stresses the heroic ideal of honour: that death is preferable to capture. As the Russians prepare to do battle, the author says on two occasions that they do so—ishchuchi sebe chti, a kniaziu slave (46, ll. 9-10; 28). Igor's commitment to personal honour is also emphasised in the Hypatian Chronicle account:

44 See Brault, The Song of Roland, I: Introduction and Commentary, 16-17. 'France' in the sense of Charlemagne's empire occurs 170 times, although individuals are identified by their regions. E. A. Kantorowicz observes that while notions of the 'fatherland' (patria) existed in the earlier Middle Ages, when a warrior's self-sacrifice was personal and individual rather than public, they tended to be expressed in formalised phrases and did not really reflect any kind of medieval 'patriotism' until the 12th and 13th cc. Since he incorrectly puts the composition of the CdR as late as 1170, however, his claims for its strong patriotism are contradictory ('Pro patria mori in medieval political thought', American Historical Review, 56, no. 3, 1951, 476-82).

45 op. cit., 125.


47 See V. L. Komarovich, 'Kul't roda i zemli v kniazheskoi srede XI-XIII vv.', TODRL, 16, 1960, 84-104.

48 See infra, Ch. 2, 82-4, 89, on the invocation of ancestors at critical moments.

49 op. cit., 30.

50 In ORL 'honour' and 'glory' are very rarely treated outside the patriotic ideal. See, however, Hyp., cols 407-8; 427. For the interrelation of these concepts see, H. Y. Prochazka, 'On the concepts of patriotism, loyalty and honour in the old Russian military accounts', SEER, 63, no. 4, 1985, 481-497.

51 For this convention in heroic speech see Ch. 5f., 200-01.
In the *Slovo*, Sviatoslav of Kiev, commonly regarded as the mouthpiece of the author, reproaches Igor and Vsevolod in his *zlato slovo* for jeopardizing the welfare of Rus' for their own aims, thus placing her honour at stake:

«Оже ны боудеть не бывись возворотитись, то соромъ не боудеть поующей смерти...се Богъ силою своею возложитъ на врагы наша побадоу, а на нас честь и слава се же ъвидюомъ полки Полоубцкимъ.»

(cols 639; 640)

They have brought disgrace upon themselves and upon all their kin, he says, and so, by implication, upon all the Russian princes with whom Igor and Vsevolod have dynastic ties. Likhachev interprets this passage as meaning that the author of the *Slovo* places no value on attempts to gain personal honour. 52 The author, however, does not restrict himself to expression through Sviatoslav, but speaks through all that is worthy in every hero. He does, after all, define Igor and Vsevolod in heroic terms, whereas Sviatoslav’s prudence and didacticism prevent his attaining any real heroic stature. 53 The author does not perhaps altogether condemn the idea of personal honour, but feels that the princes’ heroism has been squandered on a rash venture. The quest for personal honour has its place, and that, within the context of the nation’s interests. A secure and prosperous Rus’ invites glory which she in turn reflects on her heroes and their clans.

There exists a kind of hierarchy of honour which depends upon the hero obeying certain rules for its equilibrium. Personal, family and national honour are all interdependent and a fine balance among them must be maintained and reinforced. Although Roland fights for France and Christendom, he is always mindful of his personal honour and glory as well as that of his family. It is he who summarizes this notion of tri-partite honour. When the Saracens first move to attack the rearguard and Oliver sees how hopelessly outnum bered the Franks are, he urges Roland twice to sound the *oliphant*, to summon back Charlemagne and his army. On both occasions Roland refuses:

‘Io fereie que fols!
En dulce France en perdreie mun los.
Sempres ferrai de Durendal granz colps.

...Ne placet Damnededu
Que mi parent pur mei seient blasmet
Ne France dulce ja cheet en viltet!’

[I would be behaving like a fool!
I would lose my name in fair France.


53 Rather like the figure of Oliver in the *CdR*, whose caution and prudence render him that much less heroic than Roland, who prefers to court danger. Likewise, in the first section, Charlemagne is seen to tire of the war in Spain, and to be seeking ways of making peace with the Saracens, a decision Roland hotly opposes. On the decline of Charlemagne’s status in the *chansons de geste*, see Ch. 4, 146–7.
I shall immediately strike great blows with Durendal!

... May it not please the Lord God
That my kinsmen incur reproaches on my account,
Or that fair France should ever fall into disgrace.

(ll. 1053-5; 1062-4)

Here Roland places his personal honour first, but it is less a question of whose honour has priority than how to preserve the honour of all three at once. In one sense, Igor and Vsevolod may be seen as disrupting this harmony through an initiative from which no one gains. On the other hand, Igor's return to Rus' from captivity is welcomed with great rejoicing. His stop in Kiev prior to returning to Novgorod-Seversk (an episode inserted by the author of the Slovo) is significant in that it is a symbolic confirmation of fealty to the Grand Prince of Rus'. Balance and order are then restored, and the work ends on a note of hope:

Солнце святитца на небес—Игорь князь въ Русской земли. Давици поютъ на Дунаи—вълются голосъ чрезъ море до Киева. Игорь идетъ по Боричеву въ святи Богородицы Пирогошеи. Страны ради, гради весели.

(56, ll. 18–21)

Roland's seemingly rash and vainglorious decision may be seen as having been the only option open to him. Seeing Charlemagne tempted to accept a life of peace, he feels duty-bound to preserve his lord's and France's honour from such an inglorious fate. Knowing that Ganelon has betrayed them, Roland decides to sacrifice his life and the lives of the 'flower of France' in a sure bid to spur Charlemagne back into action. In this way he ensures the immortal glory, not only of his king and country, but of the Twelve Peers with himself at their head. 54

Affection and nostalgia for one's homeland are expressed in a variety of ways in most heroic epics, even in a work as early as Beowulf, in which both Danes and Geats manifest a certain ethnic or national self-awareness, although its principal ethos is more one of personal rather than public loyalty. This awareness is first demonstrated in the opening lines of the poem, in which the author recollects the deeds and valour of the 'spear-Danes' (gar-Dena), then proceeds to relate the story of the founding of the illustrious Danish dynasty. As will be seen in the next chapter, the national sentiments expressed in the Slovo also carry strong dynastic associations, possibly linked to pre-Christian notions concerning the earth as a sacred force in itself. 55

While the Slovo is widely regarded as a strongly patriotic work, a closer reading reveals that in this respect, as in others, there exists an ambivalent relationship between the author and his own work. Here is yet another example of the underlying conflict noted earlier between writers of heroic literature and their material. It soon becomes apparent that any 'patriotism' here is expressed in the author's voice. Not once does the much-invoked name of Rus' escape the lips of the protagonists. They speak of honour and glory in purely personal and 'feudal' terms, while their concerns are confined to local and dynastic matters, such as Vsevolod's apparent sense of local pride in his warriors (46, ll. 1–10), and the desire to reclaim Tmutorokan' for Chernigov.

54 See L. S. Crist, 'A propos de la desmesure dans la Car', Olifant, 1, no. 4, 1974, 17–18. W. W. Kibler sees Roland's 'pride' as 'wholly legitimate and warranted' in the light of the feudal ethic, which by no means conformed to the Christian ethic ('Roland's pride', Symposium, 26, 1972, 147–60).

55 This idea is carried to the limit by Boris Gasparov who, adopting a mythological view of the Slovo, argues that the author is entirely independent of contemporary political ideas, and that for him Rus' represents the whole living world, while the 'unknown land' of the Polovtsy (46, l. 15) represents the 'Other World' (Poetika 'SP', Vienna, 1984, 141–9). See also Ch. 3, infra, 132–3.
In a sense, his characters have a life of their own. The author, meanwhile, is effectively removed from his tale to the vantage point of a spectator, albeit an interested one. Interpreting events as he surveys their course, he assumes the role of commentator, introducing ideals and aspirations obviously not shared by the work’s heroes. However, once the major disaster anticipated by the Slovo’s author actually comes to pass in the form of the Tatar invasions, this ambivalence on the Russian author’s part towards his subject vanishes forever, to be superseded by Christian conviction and a singleness of purpose between writer and subject.

c. The heroic ideal in Russian literature of the 13th and 14th centuries

By the time of the Slovo’s composition, Kiev had already ceased to be anything more than perhaps the cultural and spiritual centre of Rus’, with power already beginning to shift north-east to Vladimir-Suzdal, as well as to Riazan’ and Murom. Novgorod and Pskov were semi-independent republics, and the western lands of Galich and Volyn’ tended to be absorbed in their own affairs. In the century and a half that followed, these lands continued to produce literature without creating new genres, while literature in the south Kievan empire proper dwindled down to nothing; meanwhile, with the exception of the west Russian lands, cultural contact between Rus’ and the West seems to have evaporated. During this period, Russian literature turns in on itself, borrowing less and less from outside sources and developing existing genres. Sermons and rhetorical literature in general, which relied on the Byzantine model, took second place to chronicle-writing and to the two genres which flourished alongside and often within it—the military tale (voinskaia povest*) and vitae (semi-secular biographies and hagiographies of various kinds). In the thirteenth century military activity was directed against the Swedes and Germans in the north-west, while in the south-west Hungary and Poland vied for control over Galich-Volyn’. The military exploits of particular interest here, however, are described in north-eastern literature concerning battles against the Tatars. The first Tatar invasion in 1223–4 is documented in the tale of the Battle on the River Kalka. It is an impartial and unemotional account of a military disaster brought upon Rus’ by God ‘for our sins’. The Russians do not consider the possibility of defeat, nor do they invoke divine assistance. Very little attention is given to personalities and isolated events. The author is more interested in the overall picture of the battle as it relates to the pattern of Russian history. The individual hero, admired primarily for his outstanding courage and martial prowess, appears to have vanished. The people of Rus’ are afraid, the princes fight hard but without hope, and most of them are killed. Increasingly, divine support rather than human strength and military skill will be recognised as an indispensable factor for success in battle.

The first clash of the main Tatar force with the Russian principalities in 1237 is described in the Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem, a highly emotional and dramatic presentation compared with the Kalka tale, in which time and events are distorted and exaggerated in order to move the audience. It is generally accepted that this work is a fusion of three centuries, and that features such as the religious chauvinism of both sides, the pathos and the general emotional treatment do not belong to the original layer of the Povest’. Heroism appears to exist on two levels here, although the first turns out to be merely a particularization of the second. Heroism on an individual level is represented by the princes themselves who, besides being noble and pious, fight valiantly and face their doom with great courage. Evpatii Kolovrat slays thousands of Tatars practically single-handedly before being killed, earning the

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57 Fennell, ‘Literature of the Tatar period’, 80–1.


59 See supra, n.32.
admiration of Batu himself who laments and praises him after his death (14). These episodes, however, do not signal a return to the concept of personal heroism.

The work opens with Grand Prince Iurii of Riazan’ securing a coalition of princes from Murom, Kolmna and Pronsk, without the much-needed cooperation of the Grand Prince of Vladimir. These are shown to put up a spirited resistance on an individual level, but they merely do what any other prince would have done under the circumstances. Although Evpatii is portrayed in heroic terms through the stock theme of single combat, this epic treatment is taken a step further, rendering him a personification of bravery described solely in terms of his courage. It is significant that the princes and people of Riazan’ are seen to die together ‘in communion’ in defense of their city. Recurring Eucharistic images also reinforce the idea of martyrdom in defense of the Faith: za sviatyia bozhiia tserkvi, i za veru khrist’ianskuu (11). The predominant theme here is the heroism of the princes and the people of Riazan’ in particular and of Rus’ in general in their uncompromising attitude on a collective level towards the enemy. The warriors and their individual feats only translate this ideal from the general to the particular.

The Zhitiie Aleksandra Nevskogo is based on the life of the warrior-saint Alexander Nevskii, prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Vladimir. Written in the 1280’s, it recounts two decisive victories for Novgorod at the Battle on the Neva (1240) and the Battle on the Ice (1242) over the Swedes and the Teutonic Order respectively, whose invasions coincided with those of the Tatars in the south. Alexander is portrayed as a deeply pious ruler, a conventional defender of the Faith, but also as a valiant warrior. However, the few secular passages in this work are entirely typical of early chronicle battle accounts in their use of conventional phraseology and formulae, although one of the more unusual features is the relatively lengthy description of feats of valour performed by ordinary people at the battle on the Neva.

As Tatar domination began to weaken in the fourteenth century, the Russians, for the first time in a century and a half, were able to defeat the Tatar forces at Kulikovo Field in 1380. The Zadonshchina is probably the most artistic treatment of this moral victory. Nevertheless, Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi of Moscow embodies the, by now, conventional virtues of a Christian ruler and warrior along the lines of Nevskii, and the motivation of the work is primarily patriotic—the glorification of the land of Rus’ and her Orthodox Faith. Although there is less religious flavouring here, the idea of an inextricably united land and faith is very strong. Dmitrii and his brother Vladimir are portrayed as justified in the defense of their patrimony against those wishing to enslave it, in contrast to the policy of aggression adopted by Igor and Vsevolod in their attempt to regain control over territory already lost. Consequently, the Zadonshchina may be seen not so much as a slavish imitation of the Slovo, as many believe, but as a kind of ‘answer’ to it. By consciously imitating the latter’s style, but reversing the imagery and its application, the author of Zadonshchina presents an ideal outcome of the events in the Slovo, signalling the end of sorrow and suffering for Rus’, of which

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60 See infra, Ch. 5e., for a more detailed discussion of this imagery.

61 In V. Mansikka, ed., Zhitiie Aleksandra Nevskogo: razbor redaktsii i tekst, (Pamiatniki drevnei pis’mennosti i iskusstva, 180), SPb., 1913 (Spisok pervonachal’noi redaktsii, 1–10) [henceforth ZHAN]. For the feats of 6 ordinary men (who are named and identified by place of origin), see 4–5. A similar catalogue of individuals going into battle, as well as the concept of the valour of the rank-and-file, may also be found in Maldon. The following conventional battle formulae, which appear on p. 6 of the text (during the Battle on the Ice), may be found in Orlov’s study, ‘Ob osobennostiakh formy’, with a list of all the OR works in which they appear: 1. warriors are instilled with courage and the hearts of lions (29) 2. the breaking of lances and the clashing of swords (13) 3. blood flowing everywhere over the (in this case) ice (21–2). This tale abounds in miracles and instances of divine intervention.

62 V. P. Adrianova-Peretts suggests that the prayers in the Zadonshchina are later interpolations by copyists attempting to bring the work stylistically into line with Muscovite writing (Voinskie povesti drevnei Russi, 162–3).
the Slovo was thought to signal the beginning. 63 By now, then, the inevitability of tragedy in relation to heroism has been dispensed with.

d. The wages of heroism: the hero's fall

It is tragedy which characterises the majority of earlier heroic songs and lays. Heroes usually die as a consequence of the heroic decisions they have been forced to take by the prevailing heroic ethic. It stands to reason that if they subscribe to a certain code of living, then they must see that life through to its inevitable conclusion. It is perhaps inaccurate to define the hero's death as tragedy, since it is not meant to evoke emotion in any Aristotelian sense. 64 Rather, it should be viewed as a sacrifice to his ideal of manhood, which dictates that a man who lives by violence cannot escape the doom that awaits him. Poetry that contains the fewest Christian embellishments, such as the heroic Edda and Beowulf, holds the darkest view of man's place in the world and of his hopeless struggle against fate and his own mortality. 65 The irony of the heroic life is that it is fulfilled only by an heroic death. Bowra confirms that, 'such an outlook seems on the whole to exist in aristocratic societies, perhaps because they are not quite easy about the heroic ideal and feel that, great though its rewards are, it demands a price which is no less great, and that in the last resort the hero fulfills his destiny by meeting his doom when circumstances arise which he challenges but is unable to defeat'. 66 Since pagan warriors in particular entertained no hope of eternal life in Paradise, and life and war in this world were everything, they naturally sought to win the kind of honour and glory that would gain them immortality at least in the minds of succeeding generations.

This preoccupation with glory after death finds expression in the last words of dying heroes, through which they provide the outlines for their own eulogies by recounting their own qualities and successes. 67 The ultimate aim of the heroic life is summarized best by Beowulf himself:

'wyerce se be mote
domes ær deapæ;
æt hie dihtguman
unliðendum æfter selest.'

['let him who can
achieve glory before death; for that is best
to the retainer after his death.']

(ll. 1387b-89)

Although Beowulf's death brings catastrophe to his people in the form of attacks by enemy tribes hitherto subdued by Beowulf in his capacity as king, it cannot be said that he dies in vain if, in his capacity as hero, he has obeyed the call to honour. 68 It must be remembered that since heroes court disaster with open eyes, the common expression used to describe the

63 See Likhachev, Natsional'noe samosoznanie, 76-7.
64 See Bowra, op. cit., 75-7.
66 op. cit., 118-9.
67 CdR, ll. 2303-34; Beo., ll. 2732-43.

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source of fateful decisions—'heroic excess' (desmesure, übermut, ofermod)—should be applied with caution.\(^6\) The nature rather than the degree of 'pride' in individuals of such heroic stature as Beowulf, Roland, Byrhtno스, Hagen and Kriemhild, may be seen as quite legitimate and warranted within the context of Germanic and also feudal societies.\(^7\)

Another drawback to the obedience of the heroic code of honour is that it usually proves catastrophic for the people for whom princes are otherwise expected to secure peace and prosperity.\(^7\) Herein lies the paradox at the core of heroic society—if a hero be a prince or king, then to succeed in his office he must act with prudence and wisdom, qualities which go against the heroic grain. We may admire Hro스gar for these qualities, but he does his reputation no good in hiring a foreign hero to rid the Danes of Grendel, a task for which he knows he has grown too old. As John Leyerle observes, 'The greater the hero, the more likely his tendency to imprudent action as King. The three battles with the monsters, the central episodes in the poem, reveal a pattern in which Beowulf's pre-eminence as a hero leads to the destruction of the Geats when he becomes king'.\(^7\)

Much of the aforementioned fits in closely with the problem of heroism in the Slovo (although the heroes' 'fall' means capture, not death), and may explain in part the author's apparent ambivalence in his portrayal of Igor, Vsevolod and others. Sviatoslav disparages them for their obedience to the call of honour,\(^7\) but, having charged them with bringing dishonour upon themselves and Rus', he goes on to acknowledge their valour: "эaiu khrabruia serdsu v" zhestotsem" kharalse skovana, a v" buesi zakalena' (51, ll. 14–16). That the author takes a firm line on what he sees as heroic excess or vainglory, however, is evinced by his account of the death of Boris Viacheslavich at the battle of Nezhatina Niva (1078):

Бориса же Вячеславича слава на судь приведе, и на Канину зелену па­полому постила...храбра и млада князя.

(48, ll. 11–13)

This caveat follows hard on the heels of the epic portrayal of Vsevolod.

It may, of course, be argued that the Slovo loses much of its heroic impact because its central hero, in accordance with historical fact, survives and returns to Rus'. In this respect it does not appear to conform wholly to the kind of subject matter normally favoured by singers and writers of heroic epic. Such a departure from convention notwithstanding, death in the

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\(^6\) See R. W. V. Elliott, 'Byrhtno스 and Hildebrand: a study in heroic technique' in Studies in OE Literature, 59 (When Hildebrand is forced to slay his own son in combat, and when Byrhtno스 decides to forfeit his advantage by allowing the Vikings to cross over onto the mainland, it is because they are provoked into only one solution befitting a warrior under the circumstances: to give battle. Byrhtno스's men never even question his motives); Bowra, op. cit., 122–7.

\(^7\) Kibler, op. cit., 150–1; Crist, op. cit., 11–15. The view that Roland and Byrhtno스 were foolish and guilty of the sin of pride is put forward by J. D. Bessinger, ('Maldon and the Oldfrdrpa: an historical caveat') and A. Renoir, ('The heroic oath in Beo., the CdR and the Nibel.'), in Studies in OE Literature, 30–1 & 253–6. For a view of Hagen and other heroes of the Nibel. as weak, vain and full of übermut, see J. K. Bostock, 'The message of the Nibel.', MLR, 55, 1960, 200–12.


\(^7\) ibid., 89. Although Beowulf is old when he tackles the dragon, he nevertheless insists upon confronting him alone (ll. 2532b–35a).

\(^7\) It should be recalled that, having been unable to participate in the previous campaign against the Polovsty after his earlier successes, Igor felt his honour to be at stake, and this probably motivated him to embark on this particular venture (Hyp., col. 637).
Slovo is ever-present in a broader temporal and universal context; it overshadows the earlier internecine feuds of the heroes' ancestors, taking young princes such as Iziaslav and Rosislav, and it overwhelms the present and the whole of Rus'— people, towns and nature itself. Its metaphorical presence permeates much of the imagery as in, for instance, Sviatoslav's dream and the boyars' reply to it (in which they describe the fall of the princes in terms of suns and moons being eclipsed and 'pillars' being extinguished (50, ll. 28–9/51, ll. 1–2)). The author, therefore, may be said to interpret Igor's capture and imprisonment metaphorically, symbolising through him the present destruction of Rus' and the ultimate 'death' he foresees for her and her heroes. Boris Gasparov sees a parallel between the eclipse of the sun at the beginning and the 'eclipse' of the prince in his sojourn in the darkness of the 'Other World'.74 Both the sun and Igor eventually resurrect at the end of the work, however, making this demise only temporary.

This sudden happy turn of events sits somewhat uncomfortably with the rest of the work, since it conflicts not only with historical reality (Rus' suffered terribly under the ensuing Polovtsian raids and had little to rejoice over), but also with the author's aesthetic purpose (he is after all describing what he considers to be a catastrophe with potentially even more terrible repercussions). Since this final section describing Igor's victorious return to Rus' is at odds with the general tone and imagery of the Slovo, not only in this respect, but in others (as will be observed in the course of this work), the possibility of a slightly later interpolation or reworking here cannot be ruled out altogether.75

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While the Slovo deviates from the traditional pattern of European heroic epic in some respects, such as the heavily tendentious tone adopted by its author, the survival of the central hero and the uncharacteristic 'happy ending', it shares with its European counterparts a common conception of the hero. However much the author may censure the brand of heroism he is describing, he is nevertheless able to endow his protagonists with genuine heroic qualities. Like Beowulf and Roland, Igor serves an inner direction which irresistibly drives him to act heroically. It is through his actions that the playing out of fate (whose presence is signalled by the eclipse), and man's struggle against it may be perceived. It is this strained relationship between the hero and fate that sets him apart from the warrior-saint who, being a manifestation of divine purpose, acts in harmony with divine Providence. The Christian author, more at ease

74 op. cit., 20.

75 That the epilogue to the Slovo comes as a surprise, proving an embarrassment to the work's early commentators, is noted by Mazon, who finds the crusading sentiments at the end out of keeping with the 'pagan' poem (Le Slovo d'Igor, 171–2). Even among those who accept the Slovo as a genuine 12th c. work, the question occasionally arises whether Igor's escape and the Christian sentiment at the end might not have been added to the main body of the Slovo once Igor, or possibly his son Vladimir, had returned to Rus'. For a discussion on these views, see A. A. Gorski, 'Problema daty sozdaniia SP', in D. S. Likhachev, ed., Issledovaniia 'SP', L., 1986, 36–7 [henceforth Issledovaniia]. For a more recent argument for the organic unity of the Slovo, see D. S. Likhachev, 'Protiv diletanitizma v izuchenii SP', Issledovaniia, 183–96 (the same article is in Voprosy literatury, 1984, no. 12, 80–99, under the title, 'V zashchitu SP'). This is directed against what Likhachev calls A. Nikitin's 'vivisection' of the Slovo in a series of three articles for Novyi mir (1984, nos 5–7).
with a saintly subject, is able to focus attention on such a prince's qualities of mind, on his just and merciful reign, and on the miracles that either attend it or appear after his death.

The problem that relatively early Christian poets faced in writing heroic tales, was in effecting some kind of reconciliation between the two diametrically opposed parts of society—the Christian and the heroic. As a result, there is often an antithesis in the poet's handling of his hero. Byrhtnoth and Roland, for instance, while portrayed in unambiguous heroic terms, are later seen to die Christian, almost saintly, deaths. A similar kind of antithesis, as already observed, also exists in the mind of the author of the Slovo. Like the poets of Beowulf, Maldon and the Chanson de Roland, he sees heroic society as essentially flawed. While the qualities of courage, manliness and personal drive may be worthy ones, the quality of resoluteness that accompanies them is often transformed into what in Christian terms looks like vainglory and recklessness. From the point of view of the heroes, however, there is no other course for them to take; they are obliged to see through their heroic calling despite the obvious dangers.

While the author of the Slovo is able to depict Igor and Vsevolod as embodiments of the heroic nature in which there is much to admire, he also shows that in his view the old heroic ethos is no longer a viable solution to the problems besetting Rus'. He does not, however, completely reject the heroic outlook, but urges a more sober revision of it. This ability to accommodate such a conflict of interests is not shared by everyone, however. In the view of V. I. Abaev, it is difficult to find anyone less heroic than Igor; he is in fact an anti-hero whose only claim to glory is a great defeat; he betrays his former allies, the Polovtay, endangers the lives of his people, and returns from prison alone, leaving everyone else either dead or captive. According to Abaev, the author's praise of Igor and his celebration of the prince's return to Rus' is merely an attempt to quell any potential anti-princely feeling. Abaev attributes princely aggression in general, and Igor's behaviour in particular, to the Viking legacy of a cruel and barbarous temperament which continued to be passed down the princely line, bringing grief to the Russian people. Norman rule, he alleges, coarsened and brutalised an otherwise gentle and peace-loving people: "Ono iskazalo lito russkogo naroda, naroda po prirode svoei dobrego, miroliubivogo i trudoliubivogo, men'she vsego sklonnogo k voennym avanturam." Consequently, it is hard to say who was Rus's greatest enemy—the Polovtsian invaders or the Russian princes for whom war was a 'profession'. This extraordinary view, which carries Slavophilism to the extreme, demonstrates the dangers of interpreting the past from a late twentieth century standpoint and measuring it subjectively against current ideologies. In order to come to any objective understanding of it, heroic society must be judged on its own terms, or at least on the terms of the writers through whom we make its acquaintance. Any judgement must be

76 See B. F. Huppé, 'The concept of the hero in the early Middle Ages', in N. T. Burns & C. J. Reagan, eds, Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, London, 1976, 9. See also Ch. 2 of this work which deals with this problem in greater depth.

77 For a detailed examination of this theme, see L. Georgianna, 'Hrethel's sorrow and the limitations of heroic action in Beowulf', Speculum, 62, 1987, 829-50.

78 See Hatto, 'Medieval German', 182-4 (In his analysis of the medieval German poem Kudrun (c. 1240), Hatto interprets the eponymous heroine as a 'modern' figure who strives for peace and reconciliation in place of military solutions for settling scores. She stands in sharp contrast to the character Wate, an admirable leftover from the Heroic Age. In placing Wate and his martial qualities and solutions alongside Kudrun, the author does not condemn the former; he sees simply that Wate's ways must yield to a more practical way of life guided by Christian hope.

79 'Zhanroye istoki SP v svete sravnitel'nogo fol'klora', Izvestiya iugo-osetinskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta AN GSSR, 27, Tbilisi, 1985, 102-3. As regards this latter point, Abaev ignores the obvious fact that a poet has some choice in his subject matter. If he had felt Igor's campaign to be potentially politically explosive, no doubt he would have avoided it and opted for a safer subject.

80 ibid., 104.
made on the premise that war was indeed the profession of princes, as Abaev so disapprovingly observes, or one of them at any rate.81 While the author of the Slovo may deplore the princes' actions both in this instance and in the past, and yearn for a strong, peaceful and prosperous Rus', he is not making pacifist propaganda. His panegyrics to Sviatoslav of Kiev and the other grand princes of Rus' celebrate their ferocity and military successes. 82 Nor is the glorification of martial qualities restricted to the Slovo (which in Abaev's view reflects the interests of the 'Norman' aristocracy), for it also figures largely in the chronicles and the military tales, most notably in the Zadonshchina where, as it happens, these qualities pay off. War was as much a 'profession' for the princes of the Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem and the Zadonshchina, then, as it was for the princes of the Slovo. The difference lies in what is perceived to be a 'just' cause ending in victory or martyrdom and a 'vainglorious' one ending in defeat. Had the Russians been victorious in 1185, perhaps Igor would have been praised for his great 'daring'. It is easy to censure a defeat.

The hero's calling and his love of arms are epitomised by Hroðgar's messenger when, having met Beowulf and his Geats on their arrival in Denmark, he eyes their splendid weapons and accoutrements, and pays them the highest compliment a hero could receive:

‘Hwanon ferigeaþ ge faette scyldas, graege syrcan, ond grimhelmas, herescealfta heap? 

... Ne seah ic elþeodige 
bus manige men modiglicran. 
Wen' ic þæt ge for wlenco, nalles for wraecïðum, ac for higeprymmum Hroðgar sohton.'

['Whence do you come bearing your gold-plated shields, grey-mailed shirts and visored helmets, a multitude of spears? 

... Never have I seen so many foreign men look so gallant. 
I should think that daring, not exile, but greatness of spirit, has made you seek out Hroðgar.]

(Beo. Il. 333–9)

81 loc. cit.

82 See infra, Ch. 4b. (The royal patriarch).
Chapter Two

Religion and the Heroic World View

One of the grounds on which the sceptics disputed the authenticity of the Slovo was what they considered to be its 'pagan' character. Mazow argued that the work manifests a pantheistic paganism that was alien to twelfth-century Rus'; that prince Igor is rendered impossibly pagan; that the euhemeristic features are without precedent; and that the author's view of nature reflects pre-Romantic notions. This line of argument was taken up by Zimin, who insisted that it is unexpected to find a work so steeped in paganism in a period when the Church was still struggling with the relics of heathenism. Why, he asks, was the Slovo not numbered among the books officially proscribed by the Church? The work's defenders, however, argued that owing to both the fortuitous disappearance and the deliberate suppression by clerics of secular literature our knowledge of twelfth-century Russian literature is scant, although research has shown at least that paganism and religious 'dualism' (dvoeverie) were widespread even among the noble houses of twelfth-century Rus'. Roman Jakobson adds that pagan features such as those found in the Slovo were common in Icelandic and Byzantine literature of the same period, and that they were euhemeristic in nature. Citing Jan de Vries, he alleges that this 'neo-paganism' was part of a literary trend that swept across Europe towards the second half of the twelfth century, and that the Slovo is typical of this trend. According to de Vries, mythological motifs were avoided in skaldic verse of the eleventh century, but later, when paganism no longer posed a threat to the Church, they were admitted into literature where they intermingled with Christian motifs. While there is no concrete evidence to support this theory's application to the Slovo, it need not be ruled out altogether. What it demonstrates in any case is that the use of pagan images and motifs in literature of the Christian period is a fairly early phenomenon, and not a practice first adopted in the late eighteenth century. To understand better the religious character of the Slovo it is necessary to examine the way in which other writers of early epic tackle the problem of reconciling (or not) traditional heroic themes with the not always accommodating Christian tradition.

Although the non-Russian texts under scrutiny here represent some of the earliest extant works of heroic literature, the proportion of pagan and Christian motifs contained in them varies dramatically. As might be expected, the highest proportion of pre-Christian elements

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1 Le Slovo d'Igor, 43, 108.
2 'Kogda bylo napisano Slovo?', 143–4; 'Obaushdenie odnoi kontseptsi o vremeni sozdaniia SP, Voprosy istorii, 1964, no. 9, 129, 137. The struggle of the Church against paganism will be discussed further in this chapter.
3 See Likhachev, 'The authenticity of the SP', 42.
5 In Grégoire, et al., La Geste du prince Igor', 351 ff.
6 'The puzzles of the Igor' Tale', 87 (citing J. P. M. L. de Vries, De Skaldenkenningen met mythologischen Inhoud, Haarlem, 1934).
are found in works composed nearer the threshold on either side between the Heroic Age and the Christian era, or earlier, such as Beowulf and the earlier Edda. The Chanson de Roland, the Nibelungenlied, the Waltherius and the Battle of Maldon, on the other hand, were written long after France, Germany and England had been christianised. All but the latter, however, are based on much older heroic stories and so, while traditional themes have been embroidered upon to some extent, with new ideas and motifs being introduced in the course of time, these works retain to varying degrees the spirit of the earlier heroic ethos. Despite the fact that the Battle of Maldon is based on a contemporary tenth century event and its heroes are fighting a pagan enemy, it is essentially an austere heroic poem and lacks the crusading spirit with which the Chanson de Roland is suffused. The latter is based on earlier poetic treatments of an unremarkable historical event perfunctorily recounted by Einhard between 814 and 821 in his Vita Karoli Magni. In 778, while travelling through the Pyrenees on his return from a military expedition in Spain, Charlemagne’s baggage train and rearguard were ambushed by Basques who, like the Franks, also happened to be Christians. We are informed simply that, among others, Roland, lord of the Breton Marches, was killed in the attack. With the emergence in France of religious chauvinism inspired by the Crusades, this kernel of historical fact was eventually elaborated into a lengthy poem centred on the struggle between the Franks and the Saracens, detailing countless battles and heroic speeches.

When the Slovo was composed shortly after the events of 1185, Russian Christianity was officially around two hundred years old. Although Princess Ol’ga (regent 945-62) had espoused Christianity some time earlier, her decision did not affect more than a small minority of her subjects in Kiev and possibly in some of the larger towns of Rus’.

7 English Christianity was established ca. 640, approximately 100 years after Beo. is believed to have been written. This dating is partially based on the fact that the Christian poet, Caedmon was writing in 660 (Chadwick, The Heroic Age, 55). Most scholars now agree that Beo. was written in the first half of the 8th c., although it must have existed in some form in pre-Christian times, as it is unlikely that a poem which praises the Danes could have been written after the start of the second series of Danish invasions towards the end of the 8th c. (Klaeber, op. cit., cvii; F. P. Magoun, 'The oral-formulaic character of AS narrative poetry', in Nicholson, Anthology, 204; D. Whitelock, The Audience of ‘Beowulf’, Oxford, 1967, 29). Chadwick believes that the description of the cremation ceremonies in Beowulf could have been composed no later than 630 or 640, as they must date from a time when such practices were remembered but no longer engaged in (op. cit., 55). The conversion of Norway, together with that of the Russians, the Baltic Slavs, the Poles, the Hungarians and the Danes, took place in the late 10th c. (Turville-Petre, The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, 130 ff.). The conversion of Iceland is documented in Njalssaga as having taken place in the year 1000, although paganism had been more or less on the decline throughout the 10th c. (M. Magnusson & H. Palsson, trans., Njal’s Saga, Harmondsworth, 1971, 1, 19 [hereafter Njal’s Saga]. For an account of this and its effects, see Chs 100—05 (216—25)). The composition of Atlaksæla and Hamrismóði dates from around the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th cc., although the lost prototypes from which they were copied cannot have predated the beginning of the 13th c. (Dronke, op. cit., xi-xii; 42-45).


9 Vernadsky, Kievon Rus’, 48-70; J. Meyendorff, Byzantium and the Rise of Russia, Cambridge, 1981, 4 ff. See also F. Dvornik, The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization, Boston, 1959, 204-6. The conversion of Vladimir and Rus’ is recounted in the PVL under the years 988-9.
population as might be anticipated, but within the ranks of the aristocracy itself. Pre-Christian notions relating to the poetic art may also be discerned in the figure of Boian, an apparently well-known bard of the early twelfth century whom the author of the Slovo invokes. As for placing battles with pagan foes into any kind of religious context, this has no more place in the Slovo than it does in Maldon.11

Prior to examining the ways in which Christianity and paganism operate in the Slovo, it would be useful to summarize some of the prevailing ideas concerning the evolution of the heroic ideal in literature and the social, mythological and psychological factors that attended it.

The 'Heroic Age' in literature may be said to begin when man's ideas about himself change; when fear of and helpless subjugation to powerful external forces are replaced by self-reliance, self-esteem and an appreciation of one's own potential for greatness through personal endeavour.

The evolution of man's concept of the world around him in Homeric and early Northern poetry has been the subject of investigation by H. V. Routh. He maintains that in both cases there was a tendency at first towards a fairly benign and narrow form of animism which at length gave way to 'gigantism', a belief in forces infinitely more powerful than mortals, governing a world in which men saw themselves as 'a hostile settlement surrounded by supernatural enemies'.12 It was at this stage that the creation myths took shape and, in the case of Northern literature, the belief that this violent and chaotic creation will one day perish.13 There followed a period of what Routh calls 'spiritual equilibrium', in which a doctrine of Fate began to crystallise as a bulwark against fear. Humans, finding themselves equal to their destinies, thus regained their self-confidence. "The first step was to imagine some consistent and dependable power, no empirical system of sorcery, but an established part of the spiritual, which could be relied upon to oppose or limit the malignity of the superhuman".14 The 'doctrine of Fate' or 'personal Life Spirit' was naturally reserved for the warrior class when it was engaged in some great enterprise, since only such men could have invented and embraced such a creed.15 In the post-Homeric age of Hesiod there was a reaction against the idea of hero-gods as friends and allies, and men ceased to have dealings with them; while in Northern literature Fate began to develop a dark side, resulting in the belief that elves and dwarves also wielded the power of Fate in opposition to the Norns (the 'official' Fates) and were malevolent towards men. From this belief grew the 'doctrine of evil', and Fate soon became a 'a burden from which the victim cannot escape'.16 A natural consequence of this distrust of the unseen world was a return to self-sufficiency and the rise of the hero who discarded religion altogether because he neither feared nor needed it.17 A new sense of certainty and foreknowledge was proffered to man with the advent of Christianity, but its gifts were conditional on man's recognition of his own worthlessness and dependency.18

10 See supra, n.4.
11 All these points will receive fuller treatment in the course of this chapter.
12 God, Man and Epic Poetry, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1927 (I, 58-61; II, 26-8. The quotation is from II, 26).
13 ibid., II, 28.
14 ibid., I, 63-8; II, 32-4. The passage cited is in I, 63.
15 In the case of Homeric heroes, they must be either god-born or god-favoured to have their life-spans marked out by Fate (ibid., I, 68).
16 ibid., II, 38-52.
17 ibid., II, 64-7.
18 ibid., II, 73. Since most secular ideas and activities contravened Christian teaching, it is scarcely surprising that duowotvce continued to flourish even among the warrior classes in Rus' for some time. For a breakdown of Russian religious development into four stages, see Rybakov, 'Iazycheskoe mirovozzrenie...', 10.
A similar view is held by V. Ia. Propp, although it is expressed in an obviously Marxist context of social change. Propp maintains that heroic literature grew out of myth, not through any evolutionary process, but through a rejection of the latter and its ideology around the time communal tribal rule was on the decline and a class society had begun to emerge. The heroic epic often relies on borrowings from mythological themes and images (such as dragons) in order to reinforce its repudiation of the laws and notions supposedly governing the world of this earlier society. The hero of primitive myth is a man who sees himself as both the creation and the subordinate of the same natural forces against which he is forced to struggle and which he attempts to manipulate to his advantage. In the course of social development, the idea of subservience begins to disappear and stories of active strife between men and various personifications of nature (such as gods and spirits) begin to emerge. The tendency of these stories is to destroy the myths and make way for the creation of a new poetic form: the heroic epic.19

Bowra sees this kind of development in narrative poetry as undergoing three stages. In the first, which he terms the 'shamanistic stage', the chief character is normally a magician, with magic as his means of achieving success. The next stage of development produces heroic poetry in which both gods and men take part. This type of poetry may still be regarded as shamanistic, but it is not untouched by the new spirit of the 'man-centred universe', which has by now penetrated narrative, and also appears separately in panegyric and lament. This stage branches off to form the third: the poetry of the gods and the poetry of men. Heroic poetry, as defined by Bowra, comprehends all of the second and the second half of the third stages. It is composed with the conviction that its characters belong to a superior class of men set apart in a strange and distant past.20

Following a not altogether dissimilar pattern to Bowra's, P. F. Fisher sees the possibility of classifying epic narrative according to the way the trials of the hero are presented. The first class has barely emerged from its source in myth and legend, and represents the universal trials of a race or tribe (cf. Hebraic writings or the Edda, which describe human experience from creation through destruction to renewal); the second category includes the trials of the hero as the incarnation of his race or tribe, and is therefore tribal or national in its emphasis (cf. the Mahabharata, the Aeneid, the Volsungasaga or the Niebelungenlied); the third and final category is the most individualistic, emphasising the trials of the hero as the central and dominating figure (cf. the Ramayana, the Iliad and Beowulf). All these stages, Fisher believes, feature the underlying struggle between the divine, the natural and the demonic within the field of the hero's experience.21

While these views may differ in some matters of detail, the general consensus appears to be that the heroic ethos is the product of a change in man's response to the world around him. Rejecting domination by external forces, he turns inward on his own resources. Whilst perhaps continuing to to be aware of forces more powerful than himself, he neither opposes nor invokes them, choosing instead to act despite them and to resign himself to his destiny while, at the same time, striving to attain divine honours. As noted in Chapter One, the ideal that places man at the centre of things drives the hero to act in the face of great danger according to the

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19 Russkii geroicheskii epos, M., 1958, 32ff. See also B. N. Putilov, Byliny, L., 1957, 26 ff.
20 op. cit., 5–25. While the bulk of heroic literature glorifies heroes of old legend, the celebration of contemporary heroes and events by no means disqualifies a work from this category, as Maldon, which Bowra includes in his study, demonstrates. H. M. Chadwick takes Bowra's theory a step further, subdividing heroic literature itself into four stages: (1) court poetry of the Heroic Age (panegyrics and laments celebrating living men) (2) epic and narrative poems based on the above (3) popular poetry of the 8th c. onwards (inc. ballads & biographical sketches) (4) MHG poems of the 12th c. onwards in which heroic themes have been revived (such a revival did not occur in England, for example) (op. cit., 94–100).
21 'The trials of the epic hero in Beowulf', PMLA, 73, 1958, 172.
dictates of the heroic code, but often at the cost of his other obligations. In the twilight years of heroic poetry, whence many of the texts used here originate, poets begin to discern flaws and sometimes irreconcilable contradictions in heroic society. While the arrival of Christianity heralded new hope, certainty and courage, it demanded in turn the kind of obedience, humility and self-sacrifice that were wholly alien to the heroic imagination. It also brought with it a revised concept of heroism. This was developed best perhaps in the English Arthurian cycles of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, in which the hero knight undergoes spiritual testing to determine whether he fully understands the meaning of the ethos he represents and his attendant obligations to it. The prevailing theme of *memento mori* emphasises that while earthly acclaim for knightly virtue and prowess is a desirable thing in itself, man’s actions in the end are subject to God’s judgement.  

a. Christianity

The religious tone of the *Slovo* is markedly different to that of the chronicle accounts of Igor’s campaign. The *Hypatian Chronicle* depicts Igor as a traditional Christian prince who perceives his struggle against the pagan Polovtsy as a Christian duty:

Игорь же молвишеть Святославлю моужеви: «Не даи Богъ на поганыя зяда ся отрешти: поганы есть всимъ намъ обецъ ворогъ!»

(col. 637)

A traditional Christian interpretation is also ascribed to the solar eclipse, which is supposed to disclose God’s will. In the *Laurentian Chronicle* it is represented as a fearful omen from God to men:

Сстрашно бѣ видѣти человѣкомъ знаменье Божье.

(col. 396)

This reading of the eclipse is less explicit in the *Hypatian Chronicle*. Nevertheless, it is recognised as an unfavourable sign by the boyars, and as an omen by Igor who, having acknowledged it as such, proceeds to expound on the mysterious ways of God and his signs (col. 638). Igor’s behaviour throughout this account is characterised by piety and penitence, while practically every speech and action is suffused with a sense of God’s will. The same sententious overtones, supported by biblical analogues, may be discerned in the *Laurentian Chronicle* (cols 398–99). No value is placed on personal attributes or martial achievement in these accounts. The entire event is seen, not as a military encounter in which the protagonists display their abilities, but as some kind of grandiose metaphor for the will of God.  

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23 A prevalent notion in later chronicle accounts and in the military tales. The *PVL* first attributes the Polovtsian incursions (which began in 1061) to the sins of the Russians in the entry for the year 1068, at the height of the internecine feuds (*grekh* *zhe radi nashikh*—163, l. 11). This notion is elaborated in the entry for 1093 (214, ll. 18 ff.). The stock phrase *za grekh nashi* or *grekh radi nashikh* takes root in the account of the Battle on the River Kalka (*NPL*, 61 (2X); 63) and is further developed in the *PRRB* (12 (2X); 13; 15). For an appraisal of the presentation of the characters in the chronicle accounts and in the *Slovo*, which emphasises the contrast between the moralising Christian tone of the former and the epic hyperbole of the latter, see V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, *‘SP i ustinaia narodnia poeziia’* in *idem, SP*, M–L, 1950, 295–302 (The same article is also found in *idem, Drenerusskiaia literatura i folklor*, L., 1974, 99–119).
Unlike their chronicle counterparts, the heroes of the *Slovo* are not regulated by Christian symbol. While the solar eclipse here may be understood as an omen by the characters, the author and the audience, Igor cannot address himself to God because he does not apparently regard the sun as an object of God's will but, as will be discussed later in this chapter, as something possessing a will of its own. The stated concern of the Russians here is not to act in accordance with any cosmic will, nor to overthrow the 'ungodly' pagans, but to seek honour for themselves and glory for their princes (46, ll. 9–10; 28).

In the military tales of the Tatar period, the quest for personal glory becomes closely associated with patriotic and Christian duty. The princes celebrated in the *Zadonshchina* are said to do battle—*za zemliu Russ'kuiu i za veru khr(i)st'ianskuiu.* While acclaim for martial achievement on an individual basis still counts for something in this work, the warriors here and in other more conventional military tales are motivated to take risks and make sacrifices primarily on behalf of ideals that lie outside themselves, to which they dutifully subordinate their personal ambitions. In the *Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem,* the patriotism of the work is subordinated to its religious fervour; thus the princes' motive for the defense of Riazan' is said to be—*za sviatyia bozhia tserkvi, i za veru khris'tianskuiu* (11, 18).

Patriotism is far less conspicuous in the *Slovo* than it is in the military tales of the Tatar period, while religious zeal (if we disregard the religious tag at the end of the work) is altogether absent. As observed in Chapter One, although the characters of the *Slovo* exhibit some sense of regional identity and even ethnic origin (*cf.* Igor's reference to his men as *rusichi*—44, l. 21), the bulk of the patriotism that characterises the work rests with the author, just as Igor's piety in the chronicle accounts may be attributed to clerical fancy and convention. As someone who was probably close to the events of 1185, the author would have found it difficult to ascribe to his characters any patriotic or religious sentiments which did not ring true. Furthermore, if, as suggested by his occasional invocations of Boian, he is drawing to some extent on the earlier poetic tradition of that bard, then such sentiments would have conflicted with the earlier heroic aesthetic.

Just as full-blown literary patriotism was still in its embryonic stage in late twelfth century Rus', so too was the crusading Christian spirit. The Church in Rus' at this time was as yet relatively young, and the Crusades, in which western nations had been participating for some years, had made no impression on that region. The ethnic and religious toleration enjoyed in Rus' at this time is characteristic on the whole of earlier heroic societies in which all men, regardless of national origins and religious proclivities, were judged on individual merit. Ecclesiastical writings of this period, however, would suggest that the opposite were true. Among the canons of the early Russian Church inherited from Byzantium, for example, was one which


25 Und. 535, 536, 537, 540; KB 548, 550; Hist. I 541, 542; Syn. 551, 553, 554. As noted in Ch. 1 supra, the quest for personal honour and glory is a fairly standard notion in earlier military accounts (cf. *PVL*, 69, ll. 1–6). In later military tales it is represented by stock phrases and is closely related to the patriotic ideal of Rus', wherein the attainment of personal honour reflects upon the honour and glory of Rus' as well as her princes, past, present and future (see Likhachev, 'Istoricheskiii i politicheskiii krugozor avtora *SP*,' 32–6).

26 Patriotism in the sense of nationhood and pride of race is a much later concept not found in pre-Christian heroic literature (see *supra*, Ch. 1, 37–41).

27 On the possible influence of Boian's poetry on the *SP*, see A. L. Nikitin, 'Nasledie Boiana v *SP. Son Sviatoslava*, in Derzhavina, *SP*: pamyatniki, 112–33.

28 Toleration, of course, did not extend to pagan practices among the Russians themselves, although such activities appear to have been fairly widespread, especially outside urban centres (see Zguta, *op. cit.*, 15; *idem*, 'The pagan priests of early Russia: some new insights', *Slavic Review*, 33, 1974, 259–66).

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forbade Orthodox Christians to eat with 'heretics', under which head came pagans, Jews and even Western Christians, although eating with the latter was not as strictly proscribed. Historical evidence, on the other hand, demonstrates that in the Kievan period Rus' was not given to nationalistic seclusion and that, despite such prohibitions, matrimonial connections between Russian and non-Orthodox royal houses in Central and Western Europe were extremely common. As for observing canonical prohibitions at home, ecclesiastical documentation testifies to the practice in Novgorod, where total conversion to Christianity took rather longer, of women indiscriminately bringing their children to Catholic priests for prayer and, in the case of illness, to pagan volkhvi, or sorcerers.

Despite the fact that the Polovtsy are referred to as pogani on twelve occasions in the Slovo, and once as deti besovi (47, l. 23), there is no sense, other than in the closing lines, that this conflict was seen, either by the participants in the action or the author, as having any religious basis. Although Rus' had been subject to a series of relentless and devastating Polovtsian raids since 1061, this situation was further compounded by perpetual quarrels among the Russian princes themselves, during which many were not so fastidious that they did not often seek Polovtsian aid against their own kinsmen (a fact which testifies to the lack of all-Russian patriotism among the ruling classes of the twelfth century). Traditionally, the Ol'govichi of Chernigov allied themselves with the Polovtsy, while the Vseslavichi of Polotok often recruited the help of the pagan Lithuanians in their disputes among themselves and with the Monomakhichi.

The Polovtsy under Konchak took part in the internecine feuds of 1172 (Hyp., cols 548–51). During a major civil conflict in 1180, the Ol'govichi (including Igor and Sviatoslav of Kiev) enlisted the aid of khans Kobiak and Konchak, who were later to become their enemies (Hyp., cols 621–4). It should be added that in the campaign of 1185, this time against the Polovtsy, the Russians used Turkic pagans from Chernigov as auxiliaries. Alliances of an even less successful nature were also attempted through marriages between the ruling houses of the Rus' and the Polovtsy. Two of Monomakh's and one of Oleg Sviatoslavich's sons were married off to Polovtsian girls, while later, Igor's own son Vladimir married Konchak's daughter (in these unions, of course, baptism of the bride would have been a precondition, and their offspring would also have been baptised and borne Russian names). Such military and dynastic relations with the Polovtsy, therefore, would have necessitated a certain amount of social intercourse, including the proscribed banqueting. It would be an exaggeration to say that the Russians and the Polovtsy enjoyed amicable relations even at the best of times; what these historical facts demonstrate, however, is that the Russian nobility, which, officially speaking, would have been the first social class to embrace Christianity, shared none of the squeamishness betrayed by their ecclesiastical contemporaries towards peoples of other faiths.

30 ibid., 189. That paganism and sorcery continued to thrive in many Russian towns (incl. Kiev) for some time may be observed in the PVL entry for the year 1071 (to which the entire entry is dedicated—169–76) and 1092 (207–8); as well as other later chronicles (cf. Hyp., 1114, cols 277–8). The volkhvi must have enjoyed considerable influence with the people, judging by the numerous chronicle accounts from the 11th c. describing uprisings of the heathen masses at their instigation. The practice of consulting 'sorcerers' continued, though in muted form, until the Russian revolution, and still lingers on today.
31 46, l. 29; 47, li. 8, 29; 49, li. 16, 28; 50, li. 4, 18, 26; 51, l. 14; 52, l. 16; 53, l. 23; 56, l. 25. Only 4 times does the name 'Polovtsy' appear without this epithet.
32 In all cases but one it is the author who bestows these terms on the Polovtsy. The exception occurs in Sviatoslav's account of his dream (50, l. 18), although no significance need be attached to this since Sviatoslav acts as a kind of mouthpiece for the author.
33 See Robinson, 'Solnechnaia simbolika... ', 32–3.
34 Robinson, 'O zakonomernostiakh razvititia... ', 190, n.27; 200–1; Fedotov, op. cit, 199.
This kind of religious toleration was furthermore reciprocated by the Polovtsy, among whom a number of conversions undoubtedly took place (the Christian Ovlur is a case in point). Also, while the conquest and even destruction of Rus’ may be legitimately regarded as their objective by the author of the Slovo, he never suggests that the Polovtsy are bent on destroying Christendom in the way the Saracens of the Chanson de Roland appear to be. In Fennell’s view, such a motive cannot even be ascribed to the Tatars of the late thirteenth century. In his analysis of the Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem he states that while conventional prayers before battle and stock phrases such as ‘because of our sins’ and ‘for God’s holy churches and the Christian faith’ are in keeping with the spirit of the literature of this period, the determination to ‘uproot the Christian faith and to destroy the Christian churches to their foundations’ imputed to Batu, and the desire ‘to convert [Oleg] to his false faith’ are entirely out of place at a time when the Tatars offered every protection to Orthodox Christians, and when churchmen did not portray them as anything other than ‘God’s scourge’; these latter, he concludes, must be later interpolations. Halperin supports and expands this point, stressing the Mongols’ religious tolerance, which enabled the Russian Church to thrive, as well as the social, political, economic and cultural contacts enjoyed by the Russians and the Tatars.

Not only does the author not view the conflict between the Russians and the Polovtsy in the Slovo as a religious war, he also does not share the traditional Christian view of the chroniclers with regard to the non-Christian enemies of Rus’. Nowhere does he allude to the Polovtsy as the scourge of God or to their ‘godlessness’. The Hypatian Chronicle, on the other hand, denounces them as the source of all evil, with special emphasis on their godlessness, accursedness and uncleanness. It would seem that the author’s attitude to the Polovtsy was shaped by two factors: the close and relatively relaxed contacts that at times existed between them and the Russians (a sound reason if, as most scholars assume, he was a layman), and the capacity on the part of writers of heroic literature for admiring heroic qualities in the enemy. How significant, then, is his nomenclature for the Polovtsy? G. P. Fedotov suggests that the word pogani had by then changed its original sense of ‘heathen’ into ‘unclean’ or ‘impure’ in the

35 See C. J. Halperin, Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Russian History, London, 1985, 10–20, on the many and regular mutually beneficial contacts between Rus’ and her nomadic neighbours, in particular the Polovtsy. Halperin convincingly shows that early Russian bookmen inclined to what he terms an ‘ideology of silence’, whereby, owing to their religious bias, they stressed the wars with the ‘pagans’, but glossed over their role in the Russian civil wars, and remained silent on the cooperation and close relations the two sides enjoyed. Occasionally, however, we get a glimpse of what the Russians really thought about the Polovtsy. Halperin cites Monomakh who, in his Pouchenie, lists the Polovtsian princes whom he has defeated or killed by name, in the expectation that his readers would recognise them as men of political weight and military prowess (Pouchenie, 146/8). Thus, for Monomakh the pagan enemy was neither undifferentiated nor dehumanised (Halperin, 16). Religious tolerance on the part of the Polovtsy, on the other hand, may be ascribed to the fact that, unlike Christianity or Islam, shamanic religious tradition did not subscribe to proselytisation.

36 ‘Literature of the Tatar period’, 90. The passages alluded to are found in PRRB, 12; 13.

37 op. cit., 8, 24, 113. Russian churchmen showed their gratitude by continuing to excoriate the Mongols in their writings and to uphold their ‘ideology of silence’ regarding less hostile relations (113–14).

38 See especially the entries for the years 1179, 1183 & 1184 (col. 612—besbozhni nechistii; col. 628—besbozhnei; col. 634—Poshel” bianhe okan’nyi i besbozhnyi i trokliatyi Konchak” so m’nozhestvom’ Polovets’...). See also Adrianova-Peretts, ‘SP’ i pamiatniki russkoi literatury XI—XIII vekov, L., 1968, 82–3, on epithets for the Polovtsy in the chronicles.

physical or physiological sense, and that the term was intended merely as a term of abuse. Only cowardice or some other form of unworthy behaviour could conceivably evoke such disdain. The kind of scorn heaped on the Tatars which characterizes the Povest o razorenii Riazani Batyem and, to a much greater degree, the bylina treating the Tatar invasions (in which the enemy is portrayed as rude and loutish, and becomes the object of slapstick humour) is a much later phenomenon, dating from no earlier than the fifteenth century. Excepting one occasion, the author of the Slovo avoids the types of epithets applied to the Polovtsy in the chronicles (such as 'godless' or 'accursed'), or the still less flattering epithets bestowed on the Tatars by the bylina singers (such as 'cur'). It is unlikely that the term poganye here is intended to carry any moral implications, or to serve as anything much more than a term of identification for the Polovtsy, who happen to be pagan. It would have gained more force had the author identified the Russians as Christians, but they are designated simply as rusichi. In time, poganye became such a recurrent epithet for Russia's non-Christian enemies that the Tatars of the bylina use it with reference to themselves, while khan Kalin invariably bears the unflattering epithet sobaka Kalin-tsar' even when addressed by his own people or when referring to himself.

Likewise, the author's use of the phrase deti besovi appears to betray little more than the influence of ecclesiastical writing, and should not be seen as a conscious expression of moral aversion on his part. A view shared by many churchmen held that the pagan gods were devils and that those who worshipped them were their progeny, and yet the author's attitude to the pagan gods of the Eastern Slavs elsewhere in the work strongly suggests that he inclined more to the other prevailing view, the euhemeristic notion of gods as ancestors.

The only place in the Slovo where the conflict between the Russians and the Polovtsy acquires a crusading element is in the concluding lines:

Здрави, князи и дружина, побарая за христяны на поганты плъки! Княземъ слава а дружинъ. Аминъ.

(56, II. 24–6)

As already noted in Chapter One, this sentiment is so out of keeping with the tone and imagery of the rest of the work that it would be reasonable to suspect that it does not belong to the original work. It may have been appended by the author himself who, fearing ecclesiastical

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40 op. cit., 317–18. Such is indeed the case for the evolution of the word into Ukrainian (pohanyi—'bad, poor') and Serbo-Croat (pohahn—'unclean'). See M. Pashmer, Etimologicheskii slovar' ruskogo iazyka, III, M., 1971, 294. In early Russian writings, however, this term is used to denote 'pagans' from as early as the 11th c., while its secondary meanings of 'unclean', 'unorthodox', 'foreign' or 'vulgar' are, on the whole, restricted to much later usage (I. I. Sreznevskii, Materialy dlia slovaria drevnerusskogo iazyka po pis'mennyam pamiatnikam, II, SPb., 1895, cols 1011–13).

41 For more on the enemy in heroic literature see infra, Ch. 4d.


43 See Il'ia Muromets i Kalin-tsar' (Gil'ferding, II, 75). Note especially the speeches of the Tatars and Kalin (ll. 456–79).

44 Anichkov, op. cit., 105–26 ('Dva vzgliada na iazychestvo u drevnerusskih knishnikov'). This view was also shared by some Western Christian apologists (see J. Seznec, La survivance des dieux antiques, London, 1940, 20).
proscription, wished to dilute the work’s otherwise ‘pagan’ character. Another explanation points to a later interpolator who, viewing this particular incident in the light of Russia’s later conflicts with the Tatars, interpreted it as a kind of holy war which anticipated the defense of Rus’ and Orthodox Christendom against the Tatars.45

The natural discrepancy between what the Church officially dictated and what was in fact practised was not, of course, unique to Rus’. In a famous letter to the bishop of Lindisfarne in 797, Alcuin, the English scholar and missionary to France, admonishes him for condoning banquets at which Christian priests were regaled with stories of pagan kings. ‘What’, he asks, ‘has Ingeld to do with Christ’?46 Alcuin’s anti-pagan zeal, however, cannot be regarded as representative of the views of contemporary English society at large any more than the strictures of early Russian chroniclers and homily writers against secular entertainment of all kinds reflected the secular life of Rus’ in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.47 The fact that English churchmen as well as laymen continued to enjoy old tales recounting the exploits of pagan heroes as late as the close of the eighth century suggests that the general attitude towards the heathen on the part of the English clergy did not reflect Alcuin’s disdain.

Extensive missionary traffic between England and the Continent from the late seventh and throughout the eighth centuries brought numerous accounts of pagan practices to England, since funerals such as those described in Beowulf and sacrifices to idols persisted on the Continent even into the ninth century. While it is impossible to trace the sources of Beowulf with any certainty, the story, together with the tales of Hygelac, Hroðgar and Finn, probably reached the poet through travellers from missions in Frisia. It is also possible that stories of Sigemund and other Swedish tales spread to England through the Frisians themselves, who traded regularly with both England and Scandinavia.48

Alongside attitudes such as Alcuin’s, there existed also at this early stage in England’s Christian history a kind of sympathy that grew out of a sense of kinship between the English and their Germanic cousins on the Continent. Charles Donahue suggests that the Pelagian heresy, which held that heathens could attain salvation through their own natural virtue, was more widespread than is commonly believed, and that the Beowulf-poet was affected by it. Such a belief would have enabled Christians, for whom the idea of their noble and illustrious forebears suffering eternal punishment would have been disconcerting, to continue to hold them in high esteem.49 This notion was apparently shared not only by poets and free-thinkers, but also by some orthodox churchmen who openly conceded that virtue could indeed exist among pagans.50 In both England and Rus’, up to around two hundred years following the conversion of each nation respectively, there was a reluctance on the part of many clerics to condemn

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45 See supra, 45, n.75.
49 ‘Beowulf, Ireland and the natural good’, Traditio, 7, 1949–51, passim. For a summary of Augustine’s and Dante’s ideas on salvation outside the Judaico-Christian tradition, see 266, n.20.
out of hand and to abolish from living memory the pagan past. This is borne out by some early Russian writers. The chronicler’s patriotic feelings, for instance, not only prevented him from censuring the early princes of Rus’ for their paganism, but also inspired him to portray Sviatoslav in the most flattering and elevated terms. In his eulogy to Vladimir in the Slovo o zakone i blagodati (c. 1037–1050), Metropolitan Ilarion praises not only the christianiser of Rus’ but also his illustrious forebears, Igor and the ‘glorious’ Sviatoslav:

...иже, въ свои лѣта владычествующее, мужествомъ же и храбростью проплощую въ странахъ многихъ, и побѣдами и крѣпостью поминаются нынѣ и словутъ. Не въ худѣ бо и невѣдомѣ земли владычествоваша, нѣ въ рускѣ, яже вѣдома и слышима есть всѣмъ четырьма конци земли.

His subsequent glorification of Rus’ in this passage calls for a panegyric to all the rulers, pagan or Christian, who made her great and renowned.51

Even if the clergy of Rus’ and England had wished to suppress the glorious pagan past, they would have found it a formidable undertaking at a time when stories extolling pagan heroes were still fresh in people’s memories and the focus of their entertainment and aspirations. Poets of this early period faced the still more daunting challenge of preserving the spirit and dignity of the old stories, while reconciling them with their own beliefs and views on morality. Those who were able to view their own pagan past with tolerance and even admiration, however, were also capable of exercising the same respect (if at times qualified) for a heathen enemy. This ability to adapt earlier heroic tales, or at least their style, to the Christian ethos without forfeiting their spirit and rendering them overtly ‘religious’ (and therefore unheroic) is manifested in a variety of works of different periods.

The Battle of Maldon was written at a time when raids on England by the pagan Danes were an annual occurrence. The poem’s heroes are self-avowed patriots and Christians;52 nevertheless, apart from ByrhtnoS’ s boast that, ‘It shall be the heathen host that falls in this fight’ (ll. 54–5), the heathenness of the Danes is not stressed and they are dealt with honourably.53

52 See, for instance, ByrhtnoS’ s speech to the Danish messenger:

Brinnamma boda, abeoa eft ongean,
sege þinum leodum micce laþpre spell,
þæt her stynt unforcuO eorl mid his werode,
þe wile gealgean efþysne,
Æþelredes eard ealdres mines,
folc and foldan. Feallan sceolon
haþene at hilde.

[Go, viking herald, answer back again,
Tell your men a much more hostile tale:
Here stands an earl undaunted with his troop,
One who intends to save this fatherland,
Ethelred’s kingdom, and my liege lord’s land and people.
It shall be the heathen host that falls in fight.]

(ll. 49–55)

The dying ByrhtnoS and his retinue resort to prayers, the latter pray that they may avenge their lord’s death (ll. 146–8; 173–80; 262–4).
53 To give them an even chance, ByrhtnoS allowed them to cross the causeway from Northey Is. to the dry mainland before starting battle. They would otherwise have made easy targets for the English archers while crossing (ll. 84–95).
In the *Waltharius*, a monastic work of the tenth century, Attila, the pagan scourge of Europe, is judged by the same criteria as the poem's Christian heroes, and is certainly the moral superior of the weak and cowardly Frankish king, Gunther. The poet lays emphasis on Attila’s preference for exacting tribute peacefully from conquered nations, even though—*Hic populus fortis virtute vigebat et armis* (‘This strong people [the Huns] flourished by bravery and arms’). He and his wife, Osperin, are furthermore distinguished by their kindness towards their young hostages:

Attila Pannonias ingressus et urbe receptus
exulibus pueris magnum exhibuit pietatem
ac veluti propios nutrire vivebat alumnos.

Virgo etiam captiva deo praestante supremo,
regine vultum placavit et auxit amorem...

[Attila, having entered Pannonia and been received by that city, exhibited great kindness to the exiled boys, and ordered that they be brought up as his own fosterlings...The captive maiden also was, by the aid of the supreme God, pleasing to the queen, and increasingly gained her love...]

(ll. 96-8; 110-11)

The *Nibelungenlied* also treats the story of Attila (Etzel) and the Burgundians, rendering the latter as Christians although historically they were not. Again, as in the *Waltharius*, the Huns’ paganism and the Burgundians’ Christianity is not emphasised here. The one scruple in regard to Etzel’s paganism, arises when he contemplates marriage to Kriemhild, the sister of Gunther. Doubt is expressed first by Etzel himself (st. 1145) and later by Kriemhild (st. 1248; 1261), whose reservations are quickly overcome once she realises she can manipulate the arrangement to serve her private end—to avenge Siegfried’s death on her brothers.

At one point the religious differences between the two nations is alluded to with remarkable, if somewhat naive, tolerance:

Si sungen ungeliche, daz dā vil wol schein,
kristen unde heiden die wären nicht enein.

[But Christians and heathens sang mass differently, as was very evident—they were at variance in this.]

(st. 1851, ll. 1-2)

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54 Hatto believes the *Waltharius* to have been written in the 10th c. and possibly even in the 9th (*The Nibelungenlied*, Harmondsworth, 1969, 370); de Vries places the work more specifically between 920-30 (*Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*, 52).

55 A. K. Bate, ed., *Waltharius of Gasraldus*, Reading 1978, l. 6 (of the text proper, following the introduction and dedication). See also ll. 68-70:

‘Foedera plus cupio quam proelia mittere vulgo.
Pace quidem Huni malunt regnare, sed armis
inviti feriunt quos cernunt esse rebelles.’

[‘I desire treaties more than to bring war unto a people. Indeed the Huns prefer to rule in peace, but smite with reluctance, using arms, those whom they regard as rebellious.’]

Hereafter, all references to this work will be designated in the body of the text.

Otherwise differences of faith are not remarked upon much. Etzel is portrayed as being as noble and honourable a knight as any Christian, with many Christians in his service. He also practise religious tolerance to the extent that he allows mass to be said at his court (st. 1818ff.).

It may be said that since the *Nibelungenlied* was written at a time when paganism no longer posed a threat to Christianity, the poet had a freer hand in playing down his own faith and showing tolerance towards his pagan characters. He was, however, also writing towards the end of the Crusades (which ended with the sack of Constantinople in 1204) but the partisan tone which might be expected under the circumstances is avoided in this work. No doubt, by the time of the Fourth Crusade, public enthusiasm for these wars had worn pretty thin.

Such is obviously not the case in the *Chanson de Roland*, which was composed and written at the start of the First Crusade (1095) by a poet apparently quite out of touch with the pagan past. It is scarcely surprising, then, to see the Christian Basques originally responsible for the attack on Charlemagne’s rearguard being substituted by ‘God’s enemies’, the Saracens. As might be expected, the Franks hurl copious insults at their enemies, who are characterised as evil, treacherous and full of unbridled passion. Despite his religious bias, however, the poet cannot resist occasionally giving the Saracens their due:

> Curant i vint Margariz de Sibilie,
> Pur sa beltet dames li sont amies,
> Cele nel veit vers lui ne s’escalissiet,
> Quant ele le veit, ne poiet muer ne riet.
> N’i ad paie del tel chevalerie.

> Margariz est mult vaillant chevalers,
> E bels e forz e issels e legers.

> Grandoine fut e prozdom e vaillant
> E vertuus e vassal cum batant.

[Margariz of Seville came rushing up,

The women love him for his beauty,
Not one of them sees him without becoming all aglow,
When she sees him she cannot help becoming all smiles.
No other pagan has such knightly qualities.

... Margariz is a very worthy knight,
Well proportioned, strong, swift and agile.

... Grandoine was reliable and worthy,
Strong and courageous in combat.]

(ll. 955–60; 1311–12; 1593–4)

When Baligant, the most dangerous foe of all, enters the battlefield he is described thus:

> La forcheiire ad asez grant li ber,
> Graisles es flancs e larges les costez,
> Gros ad le pig, belement est mollet,
> Lees les espalles e le via ad mult cler,
> Fier le visage, le chef recercelet,
> Tant par ert blancs cume flur en estet;
> De vasselage est suwent esprovet.
> Deus! quel baron, s’ouist chréstientet!

[The brave man has a very large crotch,
He is slender in the hips and wide in the side,
His chest is wide, it is handsomely moulded,
His shoulders are broad and his face is very clear,
His look is fierce, his head is covered with curls,
It was pure white as a flower in summertime;
He has often proved his courage.
God! what a brave knight if only he were a Christian!

(II. 3157-64)

While the poet may legitimately believe that *Nos avum dreit, mais cist glutun unt tort* ('We are in the right and these wretches are in the wrong'—l. 1212), and that unless they convert they will come to a bad end, he does not portray the Saracens as grotesque, and is able to give them credit as warriors.57

The *Slovo* is thus in line with most of its Western European counterparts in that it lacks any real Christian bias in its treatment of the enemy (even where such a bias exists, as in the *Chanson de Roland*, the enemy is accorded a certain admiration and respect). It differs from the later military tales not only in this respect, but also in the absence of any references to the Bible, Christian prayer and ritual, the doctrine of Salvation, or the Russian Church as an institution. Also conspicuously absent are saints, religious visions, and reflections on the destiny of the soul.58 The only explicit evidence that the *Slovo* was written in Christian times is provided by the nomenclature for the Polovtsy, the mention of three churches by name,59 two direct references to God (54, ll. 13-14; 55, l. 9), one nebulous reference to 'judgement' (48, l. 12) and finally, the religious tag at the end.

The references to churches in the *Slovo*, like the nomenclature for the enemy, is probably more coincidental than deliberate. In this respect the work is more closely analogous to the *Nibelungenlied*, which lacks a Christian tone on a deeper level, but which abounds with peripheral Christian elements. Churches and church services appear throughout the narrative: the fierce quarrel between Brunhild and Kriemhild, which sets off the train of events leading to Siegfried's murder and Kriemhild's revenge, takes place in front of the cathedral; 60 later in the poem a church once again acts as the setting for further provocations and evil thoughts (st. 1859). The regular pious observances of the characters, then, have no visible effect on their behaviour or designs. The only instance where Christianity appears to play more than a cosmetic role is in the scene in which Rüdiger, a later import into the story from the Christian 'chivalric' age, must choose between his divided loyalties to the Burgundians on the one hand and to Kriemhild on the other, and dies a noble, blameless death. First the pagan Etzel, then Gunther and his brother Gernot, express the hope that God will reward him for his noble heart (chap. 37, st. 2165; 2177; 2184). Rüdiger himself unloads his soul in prayer (st. 2154), but his death is not exactly in keeping with that of a Christian knight; his thoughts are not on heavenly rewards, nor does he ask for God's mercy. The poem stands on the frontier between heroic epic and Christian romance, testifying to 'the poetic greatness of this epic-writer that he was conscious of this frontier and left the pre-Christian heroic core untouched'.61 Here Christian forms are taken as a matter of course and, like the paraphernalia in the *Slovo*, have no real function in the poem apart from the most incidental kind.

God's role in the *Slovo* is practically negligible. The first overt allusion comes in the passage dedicated to Vseslav of Polotsk (d. 1101), who was probably a pagan, and around whom many legends abound:

57 See Ross, op. cit., 87.
58 The princely martyrs, Boris and Gleb, are particularly favoured by the authors of the *Zad.* and the *ZHAN.*
59 St. Sofia of Kiev (48, ll. 15-16); St. Sofia of Polotsk (54, 1. 9); Church of the Holy Mother of God of Pirogoshch (56, ll. 20-1).
60 See Ch. 14; Ch. 11, st. 716 describes the baptism of Gunther, son of Siegfried and Kriemhild; Ch. 17, st. 1039-40 describes Siegfried's cathedral funeral.
61 de Boor, op. cit., xiv.
The second reference follows Igor’s escape from captivity:

Игореви князю богъ путь кажеть изъ земли Половецкой на землю Русскую, 
kъ отню злату столу.

(55, ll. 9-10)

While the third reference does not mention God explicitly, it may be said to contain strong religious overtones depending on how it is interpreted. It alludes to the death of prince Boris Viacheslavich, first cousin to Vladimir Monomakh and Oleg 'Gorislavich', who accompanied the latter and his Polovtsian allies on an ill-fated expedition to Chernigov where they were defeated by their uncles Ixiaslav and Vsevolod at Nezhatina Niva: Boris was killed and Oleg fled to Tmutorokan’ (PVL, 1078, 195, ll. 16ff). It is generally held that the author acknowledged Boris’ fate to be God’s punishment for his vainglory.

Бориса же Вячеславича слава на судь приведе, и на Канину зелену наполому 
постла за обиду Ольгову, храбра и млада князя.

(48, ll. 11-13)

While the exact nature of God in the Slovo is somewhat obscure, what is certain is that he is seen as an active force. If the **sud** in the Boris episode is understood as ‘God’s judgement’, then in two of the three episodes cited above, his primary function is that of judge (a role with which he is principally associated in old Russian literature), judging all men on equal terms, whether Christian or pagan. Nevertheless, God’s role in the Slovo is set within certain limits. The first, somewhat general, reference to judgement follows the author’s comment that, for all his cunning, Vseslav also suffered, an implication perhaps that this was as a consequence of God’s judgement. It is not clear, however, whether the judgement comes before or after death. Such is also the case in the passage recalling the death of Boris; it is uncertain whether he died as a result of God’s judgement, or whether his actions and pride would be judged later. It is stated, after all, that his untimely death was caused by his quest for glory and Oleg’s ‘offense’. The **sud** to which these are said to have to have brought him, then, could be interpreted more readily as ‘fate’ or ‘doom’. Finally, in showing Igor the road back to Rus’ following the prince’s escape, in which he had already enlisted the temporal help of Ovlur, God merely participates in a **fait accompli**. Nowhere, then, does he manipulate the course of events.

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62 These references are not chronological, as the second follows the third. The order in which they are given is meant simply to distinguish between the more explicit references from the more ambiguous one.

63 See Dmitriev & Likhachev, eds, SP, 490n.; Adrianova-Peretts, ‘SP’ i pamyatniki russkoi literature XI-XII vekov, 102-3; PVL., 195, ll. 16-17. A somewhat different interpretation of the term ‘judgement’ will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

64 The term **sud** here could mean either ‘judgement’ or ‘fate/destiny’ (both in any event mean ‘death’). As will be observed, the distinction between Christian Providence and pagan Fate is not always clear-cut. In Beowulf, God and **wyrd** are distinct, but it is the latter which appears to govern men’s lives.
events, nor are the consequences of any actions ever attributed to him. More significant still is that none of the references to God, just as none of the references to Rus', is made by the characters themselves.

Divine activity is similarly restricted for the most part in Western European heroic literature. At one extreme, we have the heroic *Edda* in which the Christian God is never alluded to, while in *Njál's Saga*, which devotes considerable space to the christianisation of Iceland, life carries on at much the same level of treachery and violence as it did prior to conversion. Because it would undermine the hero's self-reliance and therefore detract from his glory, divine intervention, if it exists at all, must be restricted to events outside the sphere of heroic action. For this reason the Norse gods of the *Edda* do not, on the whole, take part in men's affairs and are confined to poems dedicated exclusively to their own activities.

This rule is consistently observed by all, even the earliest, writers of heroic literature. While the characters in the *Iliad*, for instance, appear at first to be subject to the whims of the gods, it soon becomes evident that, when confronted with the demands of heroism, the protagonists are left to control their own destinies. The gods' sphere of influence is reserved for persons or situations which are not heroic: examples include Aphrodite whisking her cowardly favourite, Paris, off the battlefield to safety, and Athene contriving to break the truce between the Trojans and the Achæans by instructing Pandarus to shoot Menelaus, then shielding the latter. When the story turns to actual fighting, however, the heroes are left to prove their mettle, with Athene and Ares adopting their metaphorical aspects and flitting to and fro inspiring the combatants with martial fury. Likewise, Achilles' decision to leave the battlefield and later to re-enter it to avenge his friend, Patroclus, is made independently.

Of the later European epics, it is in the *Chanson de Roland* that divine intervention is featured to a more remarkable degree. God's messenger, Gabriel, is especially active but, like the gods of the *Iliad*, restricts himself to the periphery of the action, helping to carry Roland's soul to Paradise and exhorting Charlemagne to prepare for the next fight. He is also sent to Charlemagne by God, who—*ne volu qu'il soit mort ne vencut* ('does not wish him to be killed or vanquished')—1. 3609), when the emperor is engaged in fierce combat with Baligant, to inspire him with strength and courage in the way Athene and Ares inspire the warriors of the *Iliad*. On only one occasion is God actually seen to direct the action—when he halts the sun's course in order to help Charlemagne overtake the fleeing Saracens and avenge the destruction of the 'flower of France' (l. 2458ff.).

All instances of divine participation in the *Chanson de Roland* are confined to events following Roland's death, leaving the original tale of Roncevaux relatively free of external

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65 It should be recalled that neither Igor nor the author sees the solar eclipse as an expression of God's will. The author is thus relieved of having to lay additional blame on Igor for disobedience towards God, which would force him to qualify still further his praise of the heroes.


67 The ancient Greeks, as a rule, did not believe that the capricious and unpredictable gods controlled the world or set limits to human achievement. Rather, they were seen as embodiments of the many forms chance or luck might take and were blamed for or credited with any unexpected outcome of a given action. The supernatural likewise does not figure much in the purely heroic literature of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. It is quite exceptional for a hero to gain the upper hand in battle through supernatural means, or by subterfuge; magical elements, where they occur, are incidental to the action (Chadwick & Zhirmunsky, *op. cit.*, 26, 89, 94, 128–9, 151; G. F. Cushing, 'Ob Ugrian (Vogul and Ostyak)' in Hatto, *Traditions*, 221–2; Hatto, 'Kirghiz: mid 19th century', *Traditions*, 311).
The Roland section is nevertheless profoundly influenced by the crusading spirit, with its emphasis on the Saracens as God's enemies and the space it devotes to the prowess of the warrior-priest, Turpin. The poet also portrays Roland's death as that of a traditional Christian knight who acknowledges his sins and humbles himself in prayer (laisse 175). Earlier, however, when Roland makes his fatal but heroic decision not to summon help, divine help is withheld, leaving him, like Achilles, to make his choice alone. Having made his penance, he then devotes rather more words to reminiscences of past glory and conquests, and delivers a lengthy eulogy to his sword Durendal (laisSES 171–3), concluding with another short prayer (ll. 2384–8). It is as if Roland's heroic self-sufficiency has been extended to his faith, thus obviating the need for direct divine assistance. In this respect Roland is very different from the kind of warrior-saint represented by Alexander Nevskii, whose chief characteristic is piety and who receives direct help from God in battle (ZHAN, 3–5). While the character of the living Roland epitomises more the ideal of secular heroism, the poet manages to portray his death as that of both a pre-Christian hero and a Christian martyr, depicting the (almost) perfect fulfillment of both ideals simultaneously without really detracting from either.

It is in the second part of the Chanson de Roland that the Christian God really makes his presence felt. Whereas the Roland section is localised in time, geography and quasi-historical fact, when Charlemagne enters the fight 'uncloaked', as it were, the story takes on broader allegorical proportions. The confrontation between Charlemagne, the champion of Christianity, and Baligant, Emir of Babylon, becomes a struggle between good and evil, Holy Jerusalem and Babylon, Christ and Anti-Christ. The theme of this episode, therefore, cries out for marks of divine favour, although these are limited to admonition and encouragement, and Charlemagne's triumph springs ultimately from his faith, courage and prowess. Thus divine intervention never really alters the course of events in this work: Roland and his warriors die defeated, and it is certain that one way or another Charlemagne would have defeated the Saracens no matter where the sun stood in the heavens.

The problem of accommodating the literary heroic ethos to Christianity in the Slovo possibly has its closest parallels in Beowulf. Consequently, it is worth devoting some attention to this, as yet, unresolved, debate.

Practically all scholars now concur that Beowulf was originally completed in pre-Christian times, but there are nearly as many theories as to what happened to this work in the eighth century as there are Beowulf scholars. Bodies of opinion relative to its religious character may be divided roughly into four categories. A small proportion of scholars consider the poem to be in some way virtually steeped in Christianity. Others view it as a traditional work edited...
for a Christian audience, thus containing many ambiguities but also a Christian outlook on the pagan past, causing the poet and his audience to regard the pagan heroes' struggles as admirable but quite hopeless, since they could not look forward to salvation as a reward for their endeavours. A third group sees the work as essentially pagan, though containing some Christian ideas. Many opinions within this group overlap with those of the second, but the emphasis here is on the poem's paganism and on the view that the marriage of pagan and Christian ideas here is not an altogether successful one. The general conclusion is that these vague fragments of Christian sentiment or doctrine here do nothing to alleviate the prevailing sense of doom, tragedy and regret. Finally, there are those scholars who believe variously that life without faith is a life without hope. Even virtuous pagans cannot be ensured salvation, and the poet's silence on the afterlife may be seen as an indirect condemnation of heroic society. He wished to present an ideal that was still attractive to a Christian audience but insufficient because it was pagan; Brodeur, The Art of 'Beowulf', 182ff. (Although Christianity is deeply engrained in the fabric of Beo., the hero does not represent a Saviour or a self-sacrificing king. The moral virtues are Christian and the social virtues are pagan; these complement rather than oppose one another).

72 Bowra, op. cit., 30 (The poet stands on the threshold between the heroic and Christian views, hard-pressed to reconcile the two, although he manages to adopt a moralising tone); L. L. Schücking, 'The ideal of kingship in Beo.', in Anthology, 40-1 (Despite the work's heathen characteristics, Beowulf and Hroðgar conform to the Church Fathers' ideal of kingship); K. Sisam, The Structure of 'Beowulf', Oxford, 1966, 72ff. (The poet was not really concerned with either Christianity or paganism: Beowulf is a pagan hero driven by pagan motives, while Hroðgar's speeches, although reflecting some Christian elements since they are not governed by pagan tradition, do not express any characteristically Christian doctrine (78)); E. G. Stanley, 'Hæthma Hyht in Beo.', in Greenfield, Studies in OE Literature, 136-51 (The poet is deliberately vague in presenting the two value systems: secular and monastic. Beowulf and Hroðgar ar shown to possess virtues and a nebulous piety, but no system of faith. The story is pessimistic showing that life without faith is a life without hope. Even virtuous pagans cannot be ensured salvation, and the poet's silence on the afterlife may be seen as an indirect condemnation of heroic society. He wished to present an ideal that was still attractive to a Christian audience but insufficient because it was pagan); Brodeur, The Art of 'Beowulf', 182ff. (Although Christianity is deeply engrained in the fabric of Beo., the hero does not represent a Saviour or a self-sacrificing king. The moral virtues are Christian and the social virtues are pagan; these complement rather than oppose one another).

73 A. Bonjour, 'The Beowulf-poet and the tragic muse', in Greenfield, Studies in OE Literature, 129ff. (The poet is an orthodox Christian writing a tragedy in which Beowulf's death is seen as a death in vain, showing that for the pagan all joy is earthly. He allays the tragedy slightly by hinting at Beowulf's salvation and by reiterating the idea that God controls Fate); C. Moorman, 'The essential paganism of Beo.', MLQ, 28, 1967, 3-13 (The tone, language and outlook are essentially pagan; the Christian elements, peripheral or superficial. The poem ends with a sense of doom, showing the 'unyielding, though profitless, struggle of man against the forces of a malevolent nature' (6). The audience is still very close to its pagan heritage); Routh, op. cit., II, 64-80 (Beo. is not a Christian work, but 'typifies the last phase of pagan sentiment before or while the whole world gave way to Christianity'; it is nevertheless independent of religion, emphasising self-sufficiency (65)); H. M. Chadwick, op. cit., 29-54 (The poet had little direct knowledge of Christianity, but was familiar with some religious poems, hence the similarity between Cædmon's Hymn and the scop's Creation song. It is a pagan work revised in Christian times but, as the Christian elements are underplayed, the original story remains unaffected); Tolkien, op. cit., 51-103 (There is no confusion between Christianity and paganism, rather the shift to Christianity is incomplete, which is why the view of Eternal Life does not change the pagan view of defeat. While the poet suppresses Christian elements and draws on the tradition of a noble pagan past, pagan deities are also omitted both because they were regarded by Christians as evil inventions, and because they are not essential to the theme. There is not enough Christian hope to alleviate the intense regret and tragedy); F. A. Blackburn, 'The Christian coloring of Beo.', in Anthology, 1-23 (A monastic copyist with no poetic skills added the Christian allusions himself, which would account for their colourlessness. Since he was restricted by the nature of the poem to making only slight alterations, he was unable to include references to Christ, the NT or ecclesiastical practices and doctrines. Written in 1897, this article represents a more extreme view).
the poet resolved his dilemma to some degree by placing his characters outside Christianity and paganism.74 All but the most extreme of these views merit serious consideration.

It is generally agreed that Beowulf is an old tale (or collection of tales) edited for a Christian audience. The poet, therefore, cannot and does not draw in pagan mythology, but he is also prevented from rendering his heroes, whom he evidently admires, as Christians because they are pagans upholding the ideals of a pre-Christian society. His compromise is to present them as noble monotheists of an indeterminate kind who, while lacking any clear-cut theology or form of worship, often express sentiments which reflect Christian teaching. Since he must also preserve the heroic ethos around which the work revolves, however, it is inevitable that the characters’ attitudes will occasionally conflict with Christian ideas. Beowulf, for instance, may thank God for the strength to overpower Grendel and be conscious of divine Grace (ll. 1270–3); he may even grieve for having unwittingly incurred God’s wrath (ll. 2327–32); but he is also conscious of the inexorability of Fate, and there is no doubt that for him there is no fate worse than death, that he gives up his life against his will:

Ne wæs þæt eðce siþ,  
þæt mæra maþa þægðeceowes  
grundwong bone ofgyfan wolde;  
sceolde [ofer] willan wic cordan  
elles hwergen, swa sceal æghwylc mon  
alætan lændagas.

[Unpleasant was that journey,  
when the illustrious son of Ecgþæow,  
was to give up the earthly field;  
against his will he had to inhabit  
a dwelling-place elsewhere; so shall every man  
leaving his transitory days.]

(ll. 2586b–91a.)

Given that his heroes are worthy and have not had the opportunity to know God, it is possible that, as Donahue and Benson believe, the poet has indeed subconsciously consigned them to some kind of Pelagian ‘Third City’ inhabited by virtuous non-Christians who predated the New Covenant (see n.74). It would perhaps be more productive (and here is where the above concept proves tempting, for it resolves many apparent dichotomies) to treat Beowulf more as an expression of secular values. Heroic poetry is about actions and decisions men take alone regardless of the faith to which they may subscribe; its very nature precludes excessive preoccupation with a better life after death and supernatural interference of any kind.

Beowulf contains approximately seventy ‘Christian’ references which, apart from mentions of ‘heaven’, are not explicitly derived from the New Testament. Neither are there any overt

74 Donahue, op. cit., passim, esp. n.55 (It is not a ‘pagan work patched with scraps of Christian doctrine’ (269).

The poet sees his good characters as neither saved nor damned, but as belonging to the ‘Third City’, an idea later developed by Dante (Inferno, Canto IV), where virtuous pagans do not suffer, but are cut off from knowing God); Benson, op. cit., passim (Beo. is a celebration of the ideal Gmc warrior and a statement on Christian morality (200). Reiterating Donahue’s views, Benson adds that throughout the 8th c. the dominant attitude of English Christians towards the Gmc pagans was one of interest, sympathy and even admiration); M. P. Hamilton, ‘The religious principle in Beo.’, in Anthology, esp. 107–11 (The poet resolves the problem of fusing the old culture with the new by representing his noble characters as intelligent monotheists, loyal to one God, rather like OT characters, and avoiding references to Christian worship, thus reflecting the Augustinian view that virtuous pagans are also eligible for Grace); M. E. Goldsmith, ‘The Christian perspective in Beo., in Anthology, esp. 377–85 (While the work is fundamentally Christian and the poet derived much from Scripture, Caedmon and the Latin Fathers, he could not render his characters excessively Christian because they lived before Christ; he sees them instead as living under the Old Covenant).
allusions to Christian worship or doctrine, although it may be said that the latter is implicit in places such as Hroðgar’s sermon. While God is invoked on numerous occasions, there are no references to the other persons of the Trinity, saints or angels. The four recognisable biblical references are derived from the early part of Genesis; allusions to God refer to his judgement, grace, help, control and rewards, showing that, like God in the Slovo, he is seen as an active force. The various titles by which the poet denotes God reinforce this image: Anwalda (‘Ruler’, l. 1272); Metod (‘Ordainer of Fate’ (derived from ON), eleven times); Rædent (‘Ruler’, l. 1555); Scyppend (‘Creator’, l. 106); Wealdend (‘Wielder’/‘Ruler’, eleven times); Wuldur-cyning (‘King of Glory’, l. 2795). Although Beowulf acknowledges God’s help on three occasions (ll. 1270–3; 1658–61; 2794–8) and is said by Wiglaf to have gone into God’s keeping (l. 3109—a cryptic hint at his salvation?), there is nothing more explicit to suggest that Beowulf dies a Christian death in the manner of Roland or even ByrhtnoS. Despite rendering thanks to God for enabling him to gain the dragon’s hoard for his people, his eyes turn not heavenward to his eternal reward, but earthward to the treasure he has just won (ll. 2747ff.), to his blameless reign and former glory (ll. 2732ff.), to his more recent conquests, to his impending illustrious funeral and to his own posterity (ll. 2799–2808). Ambiguous allusions to his help notwithstanding, God is never seen to take a direct part in the poem’s action, and his ‘assistance’ is only recognised after the fact. In this regard, while Grendel and his dam are explicitly identified as God’s foes (ll. 711; 786; 811), nowhere is any mention made of God’s friends: Beowulf is certainly not conceived as God’s champion, except perhaps in the most indirect sense in that he vanquishes God’s enemies.

Possibly the most conspicuous illustration of Christian ideology in Beowulf is the poet’s tirade against the Danes’ pagan practices early on in the poem (ll. 175–88). It is quite possible that this rather unsympathetic passage may have been aimed at those of the poet’s contemporaries who, instead of relying solely upon God, continued to resort to pagan rites as an added safeguard against malignant forces. Tolkien suggests that this passage is an interpolation, added some time after the Danish invasions began in earnest in 835 by a poet wishing to discredit the Danes’ paganism, and that it would have given him satisfaction to think of the invaders as hellbound. Whatever the explanation, it expresses a sentiment very much out of keeping with the prevailing tone of the work; for although the characters do not otherwise address Scandinavian deities or take part in pagan worship, the funerals of Scyld and Beowulf are described not only with tolerance but with great dignity and care. And while the question of Beowulf’s salvation remains open, it is nevertheless inconceivable that the poet, after lavishing such praise and affection on his hero, should then consign him to the Christian hell.

Many of the concepts and images in Beowulf that are sometimes given Christian interpretations may just as easily have their origins in pre-Christian times, since a good deal of Christian iconography and ideas has close parallels in pagan beliefs. The so-called ‘allegory of salvation’ that some scholars discern in Beowulf’s ‘sacrifice’, for example, is analogous to the Germanic concept of sacral kingship. Early European civilisations, in particular the Swedes, tended to regard their kings as semi-divine, or at least as links between this world and the ‘Other World’; these would be sacrificed from time to time, especially when advanced age had begun to sap their ‘divine’ powers, in order to ensure fertile crops and the general well-being

75 The first is a summary of the Creation story (ll. 92ff.); the next two allude to the story of Cain and Abel (ll. 107ff., 1261ff.); the last recalls the Flood (ll. 1689ff.). On the OT digressions see A. Bonjour, The Digressions in Beowulf, Oxford, 1965, 64–6 [hereafter Digressions]. Chadwick perceives two additional biblical echoes which originate in the NT, the first based on Ephesians 6:16 (ll. 1745ff.), and the second recalling the Day of Judgement (l. 3069) (op. cit., 47). These, however, are too obscure to have been consciously conceived by the poet.
76 Whitelock, op. cit., 78–9.
77 op. cit., 79 (n.26).
of their people. Beowulf's descent into Grendel's mere and his victorious re-emergence may strongly suggest Christ's harrowing of hell, his Resurrection and the sacrament of baptism, but it also has analogues in Celtic tradition, in which the 'Other World' is sometimes located in lakes and other bodies of water, as well as early Northern poetry, where lakes are frequently associated with the habitations of other-worldly monsters. It would be wrong, of course, to imagine that the Christian poet, when writing Beowulf, forgot where his religious allegiance lay; on the other hand, it would be nonsense to maintain that he consciously set out to write an allegorical 'life of Christ'. No doubt he adhered to his story as he knew it, although the coincidental Germanic-Christian parallels contained in it probably did not escape him altogether.

The peculiarities of religious colouring in Beowulf are closely paralleled in the Slovo. Although both works were executed by Christians, albeit in a relatively early period, they lack on the whole genuine Christian elements; God is regarded as an active force, but is neither appealed to nor given an active role in the narrative; pagan gods also have no place in the action; real animosity towards pagans is largely absent; and the ideals with which the authors primarily concern themselves are secular.

The main difference between the two works in this respect is that, while Beowulf is a pagan and cannot therefore be expected to display Christian piety, Igor is a Christian who nevertheless on no occasion either addresses God or (save for his stopover at the church near Borichev on his return—56, ll. 20–1) acknowledges him in any way. The problem confronting the author is this: if Igor is seen to pray at the outset and then ignore God's omen (the eclipse), his defeat could be interpreted as a punishment for his vanity and disobedience, as it is in the chronicle account. The outcome would then be predetermined by an external force infinitely more powerful than Igor and his troops. It is one thing to fight and lose against impossible odds, but when those odds are fixed in advance and controlled by an omnipotent being, the hero is robbed of the self-determination that is central to the heroic ideal. Thus, the heroes of the Slovo must be seen to bring about success or failure through independent choice and action.

For the Christian writer of heroic literature, faced with the choice of relegating his heroes to a position of subservience, since he cannot portray them openly defying God in the way the older heroes opposed the pagan deities, the alternative is to secularise his work as much as possible. His religious proclivities may then be disclosed in more subtle ways within the fabric of the work through style and imagery. A number of investigations have been made into the stylistic parallels between the Slovo and the Scriptures as well as native Russian and translated


80 Hyp., col. 642–4. The presence of God is so pervasive in this account that even the wounding of Igor is attributed to divine purpose (col. 641).
ecclesiastical and didactic literature, it has been found that, like its secular predecessors and contemporaries, such as the chronicles and the writings of Monomakh, the Slovo contains many echoes of the Psalms. The Slovo differs in that these parallels are stylistic, subtly woven into the fabric of the work, rather than explicit; direct or indirect citations are absent here. In this period the Bible in its entirety was unavailable in Rus', but the Psalter, regarded as the most sublime example of religious lyric, was widely known owing to its extensive liturgical use and the monastic practice of reading it in full every day. Besides echoing certain sacred texts, the Slovo also shares some of its imagery with a number of contemporary or near-contemporary works on sacred subjects. It would appear, then, that the author of the Slovo relies on several literary traditions: the heroic style of Boian, chronicle writing and ecclesiastical writing. The question is, which of these styles prevails. Kuskov believes that when the author says: Nachati zhe sia t'i pesni po bylinam" sego vremeni, a ne po zamyshieniiu Boianiu (43, ll. 3-4), he may mean that he intends to employ the style of Christian writings used by and familiar to his educated contemporaries. An opposing view is put forward by Valentina Dynnik, who believes that the opening lines are corrupt and therefore wrongly interpreted. According to her reconstruction of this passage, the author's intention is not to narrate his story in the modern style, but to tell a modern tale in 'old words'. It is only fitting, therefore, that he should fall back on the style of Boian. Dynnik argues that the usual interpretation of this passage (that the author rejects Boian's style in favour of a more contemporary one) does not fit in with the author's reverential invocations of Boian; the author, conscious of the fact that he is writing an epic, must adopt a fitting traditional style, and turns to Boian as his authority. This argument is given weight by the fact that medieval writers always leaned heavily on tradition.


82 For parallels between the Slovo and the Psalms see Kuskov, op. cit., 79ff.

83 Fedotov, op. cit., 39ff.

84 Compare the following:

Boian' zhe, bratse, ne 10 sokolov" na stado lebedei pushchashe,
"svoia veshestia po"sty na zhivai struny v"skladashe...

(SP, 44, ll. 4-6)

and

Vospoe", druzhino, pesmi dnes', a plach otozhim, uteshimia:
udari roch David" v gusli, v"zlozh persty svoa na
zhivia struny...

(Slovo Adama va ade k' Lazariu, in G. A. Kushelev-Bezborodko, ed., Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatury, SPb., 1862, 11.)

...

Boian"...rastekashetia myslit'u po drewu, serym"
v"ikom" po zemli, shizym" orlon" pod" oblaky.

(SP, 43, ll. 6-7)

and

...letai mysl'iu pod nebesem, taki orel (Zhite Makariia Rimskogo);
...poletai mysl'iu svoeciu, taki orel po vozdukh (Pouchenie Kirilla filosofa)

(In Kuskov, op. cit., 78.)

85 op. cit., 75. Eremin perceives a close relationship between the Slovo and oratorical works (op. cit., passim).

86 op. cit., 56-7.
writing in the style demanded by the genre.\textsuperscript{87} That the \textit{Slovo} possesses the characteristics inherent in heroic literature will be demonstrated further in the course of this study.

In England of the eighth century, as in Rus' of the twelfth, much of Scripture would have been made available to laymen as well as clerics through vernacular works such as apocrypha, \textit{vita}, homilies and versifications of biblical events (\textit{cf.} Caedmon's \textit{Hymn of Creation} on which the Creation song in \textit{Beowulf} is believed to be based (ll. 92ff.); the Dream of the Rood, a contemplative lyric on the Crucifixion (before 750); \textit{Andreas and the Fate of the Apostles; Exodus; Daniel; and Judith}). A considerable number of the latter are based on Old Testament themes.\textsuperscript{88} Although the \textit{Beowulf}-poet confines himself to Old Testament allusions (since his characters live outside the New Covenant), his work also contains some Christian echoes. Through the medium of popular sermons, his audience would have been familiar not only with the Bible, but also with the teachings of Bede and Alcuin, as well as the principal doctrines of Augustine and Gregory which find their way into Hro\text{s}gar's sermon.\textsuperscript{89} Thus, as in the \textit{Slovo}, reflections of the Christian tradition in \textit{Beowulf} are oblique. In the case of explicit references to biblical events (with the exception of the Creation song performed by Hro\text{s}gar's \textit{scop}), these originate with the poet as commentator in the same way as the allusions to God in the \textit{Slovo} come from the author (Hro\text{s}gar, for instance, denies any knowledge of Grendel's pedigree, which descends from Cain—l. 1355). \textit{Beowulf}, then, is an uneven blend of secular and religious values, in which the former is explicit and the latter, implicit.

Occasionally these values may coincide. The most obvious theme shared by Christian and heroic poetry is that of loyalty to kin and overlord. It features prominently in the \textit{Iliad, Beowulf, Maldon, Waltharius, the Nibelungenlied, and the Chanson de Roland}, the most 'Christian' of the works under discussion here. In the \textit{Slovo}, emphasis is placed on the loyalty between the brothers, Igor and Vsevolod (46, ll. 1–3; 48, l.30/49, l. 1), which, in the light of the internecine history of Kievan Rus', cannot be dismissed as mere cliché. Their dereliction of duty to their sovereign prince and 'elder', Sviatoslav, in undertaking a hazardous expedition without deferring to him or seeking counsel from the rest of the princes, is amply illustrated in Sviatoslav's \textit{Zlato slovo}. It is not difficult to see how a code that was otherwise established to maintain social order and cohesion should have found confirmation in Christian notions of obedience to hierarchy, and vice versa. This, like the theme of pride, is expanded and elaborated upon in the later Middle Ages in more overtly Christian terms.\textsuperscript{90}

Pride is the subject of universal condemnation in Scripture and ecclesiastical teaching,\textsuperscript{91} but it can also be a component of the heroic character, in many instances leading to the

\textsuperscript{87} See D. S. Likhachev, \textit{Poetika drevnerusskoi literatury}, M., 1979, 95 [hereafter \textit{Poetika}]. See Eremin, \textit{op. cit}, on the difficulty of placing the \textit{Slovo} within a fixed genre. H. Prochazka, while noting its peculiarities, places the \textit{Slovo} among the military tales, primarily on the criterion that it is based on real historical events and not on 'imaginary campaigns' (\textit{Military Prose Narrative in ORL: The Problem of Genre}, 12, 18–20 (esp. 18)). Her assumption that heroic epic may be based on 'fictitious' events, however, is erroneous, in that they are usually based on some kernel of truth and were true insofar as the poets and audiences believed them to be so.

\textsuperscript{88} This may be due to the fact that (a) the OT is more historical and less theologically complex than the NT, and would therefore have had a greater appeal for new converts, and (b) the OT contains more conventionally 'heroic' themes and characters like Judith and Daniel, which may have attracted poets long submerged in the heroic tradition.

\textsuperscript{89} Whitelock, \textit{op. cit.}, 3ff.; Goldsmith, \textit{op. cit.}, 381–3.

\textsuperscript{90} In \textit{SGGK}, truth in the secular sense becomes entwined with Christian ideals, so that the concept is seen also on a spiritual plane. This religious aspect of 'fealty', far from contradicting the temporal, or 'courtly', meaning of the term, actually fulfills it, showing the latter to be hollow and meaningless without this other dimension.

\textsuperscript{91} See \textit{Luke} 1:51; \textit{ZHN}, 8 (which invokes the words of Isaiah concerning God favouring princes who are humble and munificent). Humility, as epitomised by Boris and Gleb, was considered to be the essential qualification for sanctity. Pride was generally regarded as the root of all sin and the most spiritually deadly, becoming a favourite subject among English poets of the 14th and 15th cc. See, for instance, \textit{SGGK, The Auntyrs off Arthure, The Parlement of the Thre Ages and Sommer Sonday}. 

70
Early Russian chroniclers, who subscribe to the notion that God controls the outcome of events, frequently draw contrasts between reliance on divine assistance and reliance on human and military might. They consistently demonstrate how the lack of trust in God and over-confidence in one's own abilities lead to disaster. A good example is the contrast between Andrei Bogoliubskii who, during his campaign against the Rostislavichi, relies solely on the might of his army, and Mstislav, who puts his fate in God's hands (Hyp., cols 572-3). The dangers of pride are also recognised and condemned by such exalted laymen as Vladimir Monomakh, who writes the following in his Pouchenie:

О владычице богородице! отъямы от убого сердца моего гордость и буйство, да не взыносишь суетою мира сего в пустошь,ь семь житьь. (132)

In his letter to his cousin Oleg, in which he urges the cessation to vengeance and hostilities, the same emphasis is placed on humility and on the vanity and transitory nature of worldly glory:

А мы что есмы, человѣцы грышни и лиси? Днесь живи, а утро мертви, днесь в славѣ въ чыт, а заутра въ гробѣ и бес памяти, ини собранье нанче раздѣлять.

(156/8)

While the sentiments Monomakh expresses may not necessarily have applied to all his actions, these passages nevertheless testify to the kinds of ideas current among educated laymen of the eleventh century, and his writings may well have been known to the author of the Slovo. While the latter admires the self-confidence, courage and prowess of his heroes, he also condemns the kind of reckless pride that leads to unnecessary grief, as witnessed in the internecine feuds that brought death to Boris Viacheslavich (48, ll. 5ff.) and in Igor's present defeat which Sviatoslav laments (N" rekoste: 'Muzhaimesia sami: predniiuiu slavu sami pokhitim", a zadniiuiu sia sami podelim"—51, ll. 22-4).

Overweening pride is a theme also accorded attention by the Beowulf-poet. Sviatoelav's warning against the wages of pride are echoed by Hroðgar in his sermon to Beowulf (ll. 1725ff.). While his words are heeded to the extent that Beowulf manages to reign the Geats wisely and protect them for fifty years, the hero's self-confidence overtakes him in the end and he dies fighting the dragon.

While this theme also receives attention in the Chanson de Roland and the Waltharius, the Nibelungenlied and the Edda are entirely free of moralising in this respect.

Moral statements on excessive pride are not, however, confined to literature of the Christian period. It is quite obvious that Homer places no value on vengeance at a high price for a personal affront. When, in the first book of the Iliad, Achilles is ordered by Agamemnon to surrender his concubine, he retires from the battlefield to sulk, thereby causing many heroes, including his dearest friend, Patroclus, to fall. Nor is he alone at fault in this respect—all the

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92 According to Rieu, the moralising tone of Homer signals the end of the Heroic Age (Iliad, 17ff.).
93 On this subject in the CdR, see Crist, op. cit. and Kibler, op. cit.. For an example of this theme in the Walth., see ll. 569ff.
94 In the Walth., written in the classical style of Vergil, Hagen is seen to do the same thing: his pride wounded when Gunther calls him a coward for wishing to come to an agreement with Walter, he goes to sit and watch the Franks get massacred (ll. 628ff.).
central characters of the *Iliad*, including Patroclus and Hector, are guilty of the *hubris* which leads to their destruction.

Generally speaking, in early heroic literature excessive pride and reliance on military might alone are characteristic of the enemy. These vices are usually expressed through boasting, a sure signal that the enemy will end up eating their words. Heroes boast at their peril.95

Christianity is accommodated in heroic literature to the extent that it does not play a decisive role in the action. As a result, poets, such as the authors of the *Slovo* and *Beowulf*, tend to avoid drawing in allusions to the New Testament, as these would be more likely to conflict with the world view they are attempting to portray. There exists, nevertheless, a certain amount of overlap between heroic and Christian views on ethical matters.

b. The gods

What especially distinguishes the *Slovo* from its Western European counterparts is its apparently pagan character, which is reinforced by the presence of a number of major East Slavonic pagan divinities: *Veles* (or *Volos*) (who is not numbered among the gods of Vladimir’s pantheon in the chronic entry for 980), *Stribog, Dazhbog* and *Khors*, as well as the enigmatic *Troian* and *Div*. Such explicit references to actual pagan gods are virtually non-existent in heroic literature of the early Christian period.

What makes this aspect of the *Slovo* so elusive is the real poverty of reliable sources on the pagan beliefs and practices of the Eastern Slavs, resulting in a wealth of theory and speculation on the subject. While many features of early pagan belief and ritual were preserved in East Slavonic folklore, as well as in later ecclesiastical and literary sources, and continued to be practised into this century, it is the later and relatively short-lived manifestation of animist belief in Rus’, culminating in Vladimir’s pantheon, that seems most to lack consistent and conclusive documentation. Such sources as exist are seldom accurate or informative, being for the most part the work of clerics. Sporadic references to the gods appear in the chronicles and other writings in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but these, on the whole, fail to shed much light on their origins and nature.96 A certain amount of information on Slavonic pre-Christian beliefs and divinities may be culled from foreign sources, but as most of these are either German or Scandinavian, they tend to focus on the Western Slavs, the Polabians in particular.97 Furthermore, the later the source, the more likely it is to contain derivative rather than first-hand material.


96 See V. J. Mansikka, *Die Religion der Ostslaven*, I (Quellen), Helsinki, 1922, passim; Anichkov, op. cit., 308-28; Met. Ilarion (Ohienco), *Dokhrystians'ki viruvannya ukrains'koho narodu*, Winnipeg, 1965, 362ff. See also the 12th c. apocryphal work, *Khoshdenie Bogorodity po mukam*, in L. A. Dmitiev & D. S. Likhachev, eds, *Pamiatniki liiteratury drevnej Russi: XII vek*, M., 1980, 168/9 (the gods worshipped in life by a group now in perdition are Troian, Kh'rs, Veles and Perun). The 12th c. tract, *Slovo o tom, kako pervoe poganii verovali v' idoly i treby im' khali*, tells of how the 'godless' worshipped various manifestations of nature as well as certain gods (Peren, Khurs, Mokosh, Dazhbog, Pereplut, Svarozhites), and lesser beings such as vily (in N. S. Tikhonravov, *Slova i poucheniia napravlennyia protiv iazykheskikh verovanii i obriadov*, *Letopisi russkoi literatury i drevnosti*, 4, M., 1862, 107-10).

97 Thietmar, bp. of Merseberg (975-1018), included in his *Chronicon* a history of the Polabian Slavs from 912-1018, devoting some attention to West Slavonic idolatry; Adam of Bremen (fl. 1076), whose *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* is frequently cited by Slavic mythologists, also based his observations on the Polabians and the gods of the West Slavs; the 'Three Lives' of Otto von Bamberg (1060-1139) features the West Slavs, particularly in the region of Stettin; Helmold of Bosau (c. 1120-70) has contributed substantially to our knowledge of the gods and rituals of the Polabian Slavs through his *Chronica Slavorum*; Saxo Grammaticus (c. 1150-1204) devotes space in his *Gesta Danorum* to detailed descriptions of pagan worship among the Slavs at Arcona. For a general survey of these writers, see M. T. Zayenko, *The Gods of the Ancient Slavs: Tatischev and the Beginnings of Slavic Mythology*, Columbus, 1980, 29-32. For analyses and interpretations of these sources, see L. Léger, *La mythologie slave*, Paris, 1901 (Ch. 1); A. Brückner, 'Mythologische Thesen', *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 40, 1925, 1-22; *idem, Mitologia slowianska,*
The earliest references to the pagan gods of Rus' appear in the *Povest' vremennykh let* in three tenth-century accounts of treaties sealed between the Greeks and the earliest Russian princes, Oleg, Igor and Sviatoslav, in 907, 945 and 971:

...и мужи его по Рускому закону кляшася оружьем своими, и Перуном, богомъ своимъ, и Волосомъ, скотомъ богомъ, и утвердыша миръ.

(31, ll. 13–15)

Аще ли же кто отъ князя или людий Рускіхъ, ли крещеный, или не крещеный, преступить се, еже есть писано на харыты сей, будете достоинъ своемъ оружья умрети, и да будете отъ Бога и отъ Перуна, яко преступи свою клятву....Заутра призва Игорь сьы, и приде на холмы, где стояше Перунъ, [и] поклашо оружье свое, и щиты, и золото, и ходи Игорь ротъ въ люди е-гого, елико поганыхъ Руси; а крещенную Русь водиша ротъ въ церкви святаго Ильи...

(52, ll. 7–11; l. 21/53, ll. 1–4)

...аще ли отъ тѣхъ самѣхъ прежереченныхъ [не] съхранимъ, азъ же и со мною и подо многою, да имѣемъ клятву отъ Бога, въ негоже вкрылъ въ Перунъ и въ Волоса, скотъ Бога...

(71, ll. 22–4/72, l. 1)

In the chronicle entry for 980, a short description of Vladimir's pantheon in Kiev is given:

И нача княжить Володимеръ въ Киевѣ единицъ, и постави кумиры на холмы вѣтъ двора теремного: Перунъ древина, а главу его сребрену, а усть златъ, а Херса, Дажьбога, и Стрибога и Симарглы и Мокошъ. [И] жрахъ имъ, наричающе я богы, [и] привожаху сыны своя и дѣтцы, и жраху бѣсомъ...

(77, ll. 17–21)

Despite the chronicler's claims there is very little evidence supporting the existence of any systematic pantheon in Kievian Rus'. He is unable to give a more accurate account of pagan beliefs because his own knowledge in this regard must have been genuinely limited. A check on the diffusion of pagan beliefs after 988 would have restricted any detailed understanding of these beliefs and practices to pagan priests and initiates who began to practise clandestinely at this time.98

It is difficult to assess how much better acquainted the Christian, though probably secular, author of the *Slovo* would have been with pagan mythology than the chronicler and other literary clerics. How much did he depend on written sources and how much upon his own first-hand knowledge or experience? It is highly improbable that he himself was a practising pagan, but he may have had easier access to those who were than any churchman might have done. Moreover, he probably had connections with the princely court where he may have witnessed and perhaps even engaged in 'dual worship' (*dvoeverie*).99 The widespread practice of *dvoeverie* is well documented, but two examples here will suffice. From the eleventh to the

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98 See Zguta, *Russian Minstrels*, esp. 15; idem, 'The pagan priests of early Russia', *passim*. This was especially true of urban areas. In country areas, where social change takes root more gradually, paganism continued to flourish until relatively recently.

99 See supra, n.4.
early thirteenth centuries Russian women (including noblewomen) continued to observe the festival of Rusalii, wearing proscribed bracelets bearing pagan symbols, such as the Tree of Life, horses, solar images, and bear’s teeth and claws.\textsuperscript{100} In the same period, pagan amulets continued to be transported to the south from the forests of Iaroslavl’ and Riazan’ in the north, where religious dualism flourished much longer.\textsuperscript{101}

The \textit{Slovo} names four gods who also feature in the \textit{Povest’ vremennykh let}: Veles, whom the chronicler identifies as the god of cattle (skotyi bog), is declared the ancestor of the vatic poet, Boian (44, l. 29); the winds are called ‘Stribog’s grandsons’ (47, l. 19); the Ol’govichi and the Russians in general are nominated as grandsons of the sun god, Dazhbog (48, ll. 17–18; 49, ll. 9–10); and, in the passage relating to the werewolf activities of Vseslav of Polotsk, Khors, believed to be some kind of sun god as well, makes an appearance (54, ll. 6–8). All but Veles were apparently admitted to Vladimir’s ‘pantheon’.

Like the Christian God, the pagan deities in the \textit{Slovo} are confined to positions outside the sphere of human prowess and endeavour. With the exception of Khors, these gods have been relegated by the author to the rank of ‘ancestors’. Since the veneration of clan ancestors constituted what was probably the deepest stratum of Russian pagan beliefs, their role here is neither purely literal nor literary.

Mazon alleged that when the author of the \textit{Slovo} called Boian the ‘grandson of Veles’, he was overcome by a flight of poetic fancy very similar to that which endowed eighteenth-century poets with the title of ‘sons of Apollo’, the Greek and Roman god of flocks and poetry.\textsuperscript{102} The term vnuk, however, suggests something quite different to ‘son’; it distances the relationship and, in the older sense of the term, can extend its meaning to denote any ‘descendant’.\textsuperscript{103} In defining his characters thus the author testifies to the existence and possibly even the prevalence of a gens religion that must have continued to flourish in Rus’ throughout the twelfth century until, in the case of the nobility, the Mongol occupation in the first quarter of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{104}

Ample testimony to the existence of ancestor cults among the Russian nobility as well as the masses may be found in a variety of chronicles and denunciatory ecclesiastical writings of the twelfth century and earlier, and in folklore.\textsuperscript{105} Among the \textit{Slovo}'s ecclesiastical contemporaries

\textsuperscript{100} Robinson, ‘Solnechnaia simbolika . . .’, 19; Rybakov, ‘Rusalii i bog Simargl-Pereplut’, 94ff.; Zguta, \textit{op. cit.}, 5ff.; Sapunov, \textit{op. cit.}, 325. The fertility festival of Rusalii was closely linked with ancestor worship in its early stages (Zguta, 5–6). One of the practices at this festival involved the wearing by women of very long, wing-like sleeves, normally fastened at the wrist by bracelets adorned with pagan symbols, which were unfastened and waved about loosely in the course of ritual dancing (Rybakov, 95).

\textsuperscript{101} Sapunov, \textit{op. cit.}, 325. The chronicles relate how, for some time in the north, women were in the habit of consulting sorcerers or medicine men (volkhvy). See supra, 54.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Le Slovo d’Igor}, 372–3.

\textsuperscript{103} Likhachev, ‘SP i osobennosti russkoi srednevekovoi literatury’, 311.

\textsuperscript{104} No doubt the invaders’ own paganism would have reinforced the nobility’s allegiance to their Christian faith. Another contributing factor to the demise of ancestor worship among the nobility would be the loss of ancestral lands; the earth cult, it will be seen, was integrally linked to the ancestor cult. See Sapunov, ‘Vseslav Polotskii v SP’, 81–2, on the demise of dovoershe under the ‘Tatar Yoke’. Also, N. Andreyev, ‘Pagan and Christian elements in old Russia’, \textit{Slavic Review}, 21, 1962, 19–20.

\textsuperscript{105} See supra, n. 4; Likhachev, ‘SP i osobennosti . . .’, 310–13; Sapunov, \textit{op. cit.}, 324–7. Ancestor cults, like the belief in spirits and magic, survived long after Christianity became the official religion of Scandinavia, especially in the rural areas (H. M. Chadwick, \textit{op. cit.}, 414). Chthonic and hero worship continued long after the gods were virtually abandoned, and there is evidence for the existence of a cult of the dead in Christian Norway, Iceland and Ireland (ibid, 398). For a comprehensive view of attitudes to ancestors and ‘origins’ among ‘primitive’ peoples, see M. Eliade, \textit{op. cit.}, ch. 2, esp. 34ff.
which describe the worship of gods, prayers to dead kinsmen and offerings made to the latter at ‘unofficial’ funerary feasts, are Slovo o tom, kako pervoe pogani susche izaytsi klaniialsia idolom and Slovo o nekogo khristoliubtsa. These, among others, denounce the ‘secondary’ funeral repast or wake which, unlike the permitted customary wake held immediately following the death of a relative, was not officially sanctioned by the Church, although churchmen must have been well aware of its widespread practice.106

Contemporary chronicles also provide evidence for the practice by members of the nobility of invoking ancestors. The Laurentian Chronicle entry for 1169, for example, relates how the dead Iurii Dolgorukii intervened to save his son, Mikhailo, from death (col. 360). While on the one hand this kind of intercession reflects the Christian belief in the mediation of saints or, more broadly speaking, the righteous dead, it also has its origins in pagan ancestor worship. The Laurentian Chronicle yields a number of examples, from the late twelfth century until as late as 1294, of people receiving aid through the intervention of ancestors—none of whom had been canonized. Additional references may be found in parallel chronicles such as the Radziwill Chronicle of the late twelfth century and the much later Moscow Chronicle.107 These accounts refer, of course, to the nobility, and become especially noticeable in the period when disagreements concerning the lawful foundations of princely authority were intensified (around the time of the reforms of Andrei Bogoliubskii (d. 1174)).108

Awareness of ancestral continuity is manifested further in the early custom of bestowing ancestral names on children and of dedicating the child’s first hairs to a particular ancestor from whom the family hoped to receive favour or assistance. It also penetrated into secular life and influenced early Russian legislature connected with land inheritance.109

Returning to the Slovo, there are others besides the Ol’govichi who are assessed in the light of their ancestors’ reputations. Sviatoslav of Kiev recalls how Iaroslav of Chernigov and his Turkic allies were entrusted with the perpetuation of their forefathers’ glory: zvoniachi v “pradedniuiu slavu (51, 11. 21–2). Iziaslav Vasil’kovich likewise upheld the reputation of his great-grandfather, Vseslav of Polotsk, when he perished valiantly in battle against the Lithuanians.110

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106 See Komarovich, op. cit., 87–8. Note the following passage: To sut’ idolosluzhiteli, izhe staviat trapesu rozhiansiam…ishe molitsia ogney pod ovnom, vilam, Mokosh’, Simu, R’yu, Perunu, Velosu skot’u boyu, Khorsu, Rodu, Rozhansiam i vsem prokliatym bogom ish…ishe staviat’ ishe kut’ia, iny trapesy zakon’negog obeza, izhe narteatsia kasakov’nia trapesa, menimaia Rodu i Rozhansiam v prognevanie boyu (Slovo o nekogo khristoliubtsa in iibid., 88.). These are Russian adaptations of Byz. tracts of the 11th–12th cc. For a more detailed account of works condemning this and other practices, see Anichkov, op. cit., Chs 1–4; Met. Ilarion (Ohienco), Dokhrystians’ki suvorostsi ukrains’koho narodu, 367–76 (these also contain texts). For the complete texts in all their variants, see Tikhonravov, op. cit.


108 ibid., 89. See also Ilarion’s invocation of Vladimir, the ‘ancestor’ of princes, whom he exhorts to rise up and look upon his works and progeny (Slovo o zakone i blagodati, in Rozov, 169). For a summary of the dynastic struggles following the death of Monomakh’s son, Matislav (d. 1132), see Vernadsky, Kievan Russia, 210–11; Dvornik, The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization, 215–16.

109 Komarovich, op. cit., 89–90. Komarovich adds that among the princes of Kievan Rus’ the sacral tie rarely went beyond the grandfather, hence Igor and Vsevolod are defined as Ol’govichi (Ol’govo khorobroe gnezdo—47, l. 6).

110 The word pritr et’ is usually translated as ‘cut down/off’, thus conveying the impression that Iziaslav ‘furnished’ his great-grandfather’s glory. In early usage, however, this word apparently had a dual meaning: ‘to cut down’ had somehow invoked the meaning ‘to caress’, and the word, with its contradictory meanings, was often used for poetic effect. Since the author’s allusion to Iziaslav’s courageous action cannot be intended as a condemnation, he must mean that Iziaslav ‘upheld’, rather than ‘trampled’ Vsevolod’s reputation (53, ll. 15–19). See Dmitriev & Likhachev, eds, SP, 512–13, n. On arguments for both interpretations, see Adrianova-Peret’s, ‘SP’ i pamiatniki russkoi literatury, 157.
One of the principal concerns of the *Slovo* is the shadow Igor and Vsevolod have cast upon the good reputations of their ancestors and kinsmen, its precedents and consequences. They have neglected their duty as princes to secure the safety of their people and to protect the reputation of their clan.\(^\text{111}\) The Germans, Venetians, Greeks and Moravians are said to sing of Sviatoslav's victories over the Polovtsy, but to curse and reproach Igor for forfeiting national security and his kinsman's glory (50, ll. 7–13).

The ancestral cult in its narrowest form was simultaneously closely linked with the more broadly-based 'clan cult' or 'cult of the Forefather'. The figure of the founder of any clan or dynasty is both remote and nearly always semi-legendary, but at the same time ever-present as an exemplum to his descendants. Riurik, traditionally regarded as the first prince of Rus',\(^\text{112}\) was also seen as the forefather of all succeeding generations of Russian princes.\(^\text{113}\) But it is his kinsman and successor, Oleg (ruled c. 880–913) who, having unified various Russian tribes into a federation and established himself in Kiev, is more often looked upon as the first ruler of all Rus'. Many legends surround this prince's life which have close parallels in the Norse saga of Oleg.\(^\text{114}\) By the time his life came to be recorded in the *Povest' vremennykh let*, Oleg, with his legendary vatic qualities, had come to be known as the progenitor of Russian princes even though his successor, Igor, is traditionally held to be not his but Riurik's son.\(^\text{115}\)

In the case of Rus' the cult of the forefather also takes on more broadly national overtones. When the author of the *Slovo* speaks of *russkata zemlia* he sees it in terms of a group of principalities ruled by princes sharing a common ancestry dating back to Vladimir (44, ll. 8–9), and perhaps even further still to Oleg and Riurik, the first princes of Rus'. In his appeal for princely unity, then, the author is not proposing that the princes surrender inherited local authority and prestige in favour of a centralised government in Kiev, but that they and their clans co-operate and join forces against the common foe, putting an end to indifference and internal strife on the grounds that they are already united through the sacral bonds of kinship and ancestry.\(^\text{116}\)

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\(^{111}\) In the *Iliad*, VI (122), Glaucus declares that a hero is obliged to surpass all others and to avoid disgracing his ancestors' hard-won glory.


\(^{113}\) Komarovich, *op. cit.*, 91; Dvornik, *The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization*, 197. See also Eliade, *op. cit.*, 6 ff. (on mythical ancestors).

\(^{114}\) Vernadsky, *Kievian Russia*, 22ff. For Oleg's campaigns against neighbouring tribes, see *PV L*, 860–2.

\(^{115}\) See Komarovich, *op. cit.*, 91ff., on Oleg as the focus of a princely ancestral cult. Komarovich sees parallels between Oleg and his namesake Ol'ga, Igor's wife, who in her career as regent also attempted to bring insubordinate tribes to heel (*PV L*, 945–7). Like him, she is noted for her cunning and is also the subject of legends with Scandinavian parallels (in fact, the Norse name *Helgi*, from which theirs derives, translates as 'vatic', 'far-seeing', 'holy'—or *veshchi*). Oleg's apocryphal reputation for vatic wisdom in itself invests succeeding Russian princes with a sacral quality (cf. Vernadsky, *Kievian Russia*, 22).

\(^{116}\) National unity in the *SP* lacks the stronger political overtones of the *Zad.*, in which Dmitrii Donskoi is praised for his political wisdom and for his role as unifier and autocrat. The *SP*, on the other hand retains many echoes of pagan ancestral worship. Like Ol'govichi and Veslavichi, the form *rusich* (found nowhere else on OR literature) is characteristic of tribal names indicating descent from a legendary ancestor (see Likhachev, 'SP i esteticheskie predstavlenia ego vremeni', 56; A. V. Solov'ev, 'Rusichi i Rusovichi', in *SP*-XII, 278ff. (esp. 281)). On Monomakh's view on inheritance from Riurik and the division of land among peers, see Likhachev, *Velikoe nasledie*, 117ff. The Russians, therefore, are viewed more in the sense of a closely-knit tribe, than as a modern political entity.
Given the improbability of literal belief in the pagan gods on the part of the author and his audience, and the absence of aimless embellishments in early medieval literature, it may be asked how the gods, particularly Dazhbog and Veles, fit into the general scheme of the Slovo. They are excluded from the affairs of both the present and the relatively recent past, which are solely man’s domain, and are instead relegated to an even more distant and mystical epoch than the reign of vatic Oleg. In allocating the role of ancestors to Dazhbog and Veles, the author may simply be carrying through to yet another level the principles of what appears to have been a fairly flexible gens cult in Kievan Rus’.

The concept of euhemerism, which explains the mortal origins of the gods, derives its name from Euhemerus (c. 300 B.C.), a Messinian who alleged that the traditional deities had once been ordinary men and women who had died like everyone else but who, for a variety of reasons, were posthumously deified. His theory finds support in other classical authors, such as Aristotle and Pliny, who recognised in men a divine element that would destine some for eternal life. Even the orthodox pagan view acknowledged the existence within the ranks of the gods deified men, like Hercules, Castor and Pollux, and Romulus who, at the end of a great life and despite their mortal origins, passed away to join the gods and became one of their number. The early Church Fathers naturally seized upon these views in their struggle against persistent pagan worship and, with a few strategic alterations, turned them to their own advantage. Accepting the premise that these gods had mortal origins, many clerics went on to suggest that their deification never took place and that they were simply dead men upon whom divine worship had been falsely bestowed. This view eventually comprehended not only those gods believed to be of mortal origin, but all pagan deities. Early Christian writers such as Isidore of Seville (7th c.) and Petrus Comestor (fl. c. 1160), while recognizing the existence of superior, gifted and venerable men among pagans, attempted to explain pagan mythology as an exaggeration of these men’s virtues and wisdom. Both maintain that those whom the human imagination fashioned into gods were men endowed with exceptional gifts which they shared with mankind: Zoroaster discovered the art of magic; Isis gave the Egyptians writing; Prometheus was called the ‘creator of mankind’ because he was the first to make statues, or perhaps he instructed the ignorant, and so on. As discoverers, inventors and instructors they became culture heroes, the ancestors of civilisation.

Kings or founders of cities and tribes were, according to the Church Fathers, also prime candidates for deification. Lactantius (260–330), in his Divinae Institutiones, explains how primitive peoples were wont to exalt the king for his excellence or because of the benefits he bestowed upon them, thus enabling them to attain civilisation. It would be natural, then, after the passing of their king, for his people to construct a likeness of him from which they could derive consolation and inspiration. In time, however, their devotion to his merits would have developed into worship of his memory, whereby the people showed their gratitude and possibly inspired succeeding kings also to rule well. According to Jordanes (c. 550), the Ostrogoths

117 Seznec, op. cit., 13ff.; J. D. Cook, ‘Euhemerism: a medieval interpretation of classical paganism’, Speculum, 2 1927, 397; Routh, op. cit., I, 68ff. (on Greek and Roman heroes who, as the centres of cults, enjoyed divine honours, and were regarded by various tribes as ancestors of reigning families).
118 A Stoic view (Seznec, op. cit., 13–14).
119 Cooke, op. cit., 398ff. (a summary of patristic views on the human origins of the gods). See also Seznec, op. cit., 16ff.
120 Seznec, op. cit., 16–19; Cooke, op. cit., 402. George Cushing notes that the practice of deifying heroes was also common in Ob Ugrian heroic poetry (op. cit., 212).
121 See supra, n.78.
122 Cooke, op. cit., 400–02.
of southeastern Europe, among other peoples, came to regard victorious leaders as divine and themselves as semi-divine.\textsuperscript{123}

The theory supporting the historical basis of pagan myths is perhaps best reflected in the \textit{Gesta Danorum}, completed in the early part of the thirteenth century by the Danish priest and historian, Saxo Grammaticus. Towards the beginning of his work he writes of the 'wizard' Øfinn who, he says, was falsely believed to be a god throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{124} Later in his narrative he settles the question of the gods' origins thus:

\begin{quote}
At one time certain individuals, initiated into the magic arts, namely Thor, Odin and a number of others who were skilled at conjuring up marvellous illusions, clouded the minds of simple men and began to appropriate the exalted rank of godhead. Norway, Sweden and Denmark were ensnared in a groundless conviction, urged to a devoted worship of these frauds and infected by their gross imposture. The results of their deceptions spread, so that all other realms came to revere some kind of divine power in them, believing they were gods. They rendered solemn prayers to these wizards and paid respect to an impious heresy which should have gone to true religion. \\
(Bk VI, 170–1)
\end{quote}

It appears, however, that kings and chieftains were especially susceptible to becoming centres of cults such as this. Saxo relates the tale of the Danish king, Haldan II, who was highly praised for a particularly clever and valorous feat during a battle against the Swedes: seeing his line begin to give way, he climbed onto a cliff and prised up a number of boulders which rolled down into the enemy's lines:

\begin{quote}
For this reason he began to be held in such esteem by the Swedes that he was believed to be the son of Thor, accorded divine honours by the people and judged worthy of public libations. \\
(Bk VII, 203)
\end{quote}

Snorri Sturluson also subscribes to the euhemeristic view of the Scandinavian gods. The \textit{Ynglinga Saga} relates how the chieftain, Øfinn, conquered many kingdoms in Asia (Asaland) before going west and establishing himself in Sweden, to which he brought laws originally in force in Asaland. He was a skin-changer besides, and this as well as his ability to commune with the dead point to his having been a kind of shaman. After him, Njørðr, traditionally the god of wealth and the sea, and a priest under Øfinn, became sovereign of the Swedes, and was succeeded by his son, Freyr, also called Yngve, who founded the race of the Ynglings (the Swedish kings). Freyr's reign was marked by such unparalleled prosperity that that when he died, his men kept his death a secret from his people for three years, continuing to bring the tribute money to his burial mound to ensure that peace and prosperity continued.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Turville-Petre, \textit{Myth and Religion}, 190–1; de Vries, 'Das Königum bei den Germanen', 299.
\item H. E. Davidson, ed., \textit{Saxo Grammaticus: History of the Danes}, I (Text), Cambridge–Totowa, 1979, Bk I, 25–6 [henceforth, Saxo]. Further textual references will be designated by book and/or page no. in the body of this work.
\item The name Woden/Wotan, another form of Odin/Øfinn, derives from the OHG \textit{wuot}, meaning 'possessed, mad' (J. G. C. Anderson, \textit{Cornelii Taciti de origine et situ Germanorum}, Oxford, 1938, 74n. [hereafter \textit{Germania}]). This points to the possibility that, among the continental Gmc peoples Woden was originally conceived as a shaman, or master of magic, before becoming the god of wind and storm. For Gmc shamanic techniques see M. Eliade, \textit{Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy}, Princeton, 1964, 379ff.; H. R. E. Davidson, \textit{Gods and Myths of Northern Europe}, Harmondsworth, 1981, 141ff. [henceforth \textit{Gods and Myths}].
\item Heimskringla, I, chs 3–10 (11–24). It is worth noting that Vladimir's death in 1015 was said to have been kept secret by his followers; although the chronicler does not state for how long, the context suggests a fairly long time (\textit{PVL}, 127). In 1097 the death of Mstislav, son of Sviatopolk, was concealed by his followers, but only for three days.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotes}
The notion that the gods were originally mortal founders of dynasties and, by implication, of whole nations, is expressed by Bede in 731. He writes of the brothers Hengist and Horsa, leaders of the Anglian tribes that invaded Britain:

Erant autem filii Uictgisli, cuius pater Uitta, cuius pater Uecta, cuius pater Uoden, de cuius stirpe multarum provinciarum regium genus originem duxit.

[They were the sons of Wihtgisl, son of Witta, son of Wecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal families of many kingdoms claimed their descent.] (Hist. eccles., I, 15, p. 30)

The Historia Brittonum, a compilation of old and new materials revised several times, but first assembled by Nennius in the first half of the ninth century, contains manuscripts which preserve the genealogies for Bernicia, Kent, East Anglia, Mercia and Deira. These generally begin with Woden, although there is also a genealogy for Hengist and Horsa, going a step further back to Geata.126

Most of the genealogical lists in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle stop at Woden, but in the course of time, genealogies begin to extend beyond him to the gods Geat or Frealaf.127 Woden’s ‘ancestors’ appear to be a later interpolation. Once he had been traditionally established in royal genealogies over a long period, the need would arise to render a pedigree still more impressive by extending it. According to Kenneth Sisam, ‘The motives for such an elaboration were comparatively innocent: flattery of a ruling house, emulation of the long lines that joined the other English kings to Woden, or the desire to find a place for distinguished names that were remembered in no other pedigree or Liber Vitæ. Materials were always at hand, because a true series of royal fathers and sons would contain only some of the great hereditary kings, and would exclude most of the tribal gods and heroes, as well as unattached names from the common stock of legend. Old names are the stuff from which fictitious pedigrees are made, and must not be regarded as evidence of genuineness’.128 Eventually, the composition of genealogies became so artificial as to include biblical names (Seth, Noah, Lamech and Adam) at the head of the Scandinavian gods.129 While such genealogical claims must have been taken more symbolically than literally, it will be seen that the traditional view of kings as descendants of the gods was to lend rulers a sacral quality that endured to varying degrees until comparatively recent times.130


127 ibid., 298 (Frealaf may be a variation of Freyr, the ON god of fertility who was worshipped together with Oinn at Upsalla).

128 ibid., 305-6/308. Sisam suggests that, possibly, the reason why all AS kingdoms for which genealogies have been preserved go back to Woden is because many of the founders of English kingdoms were not kings by heredity, and so the earlier parts of their pedigrees would have been fictions of the 7th and 8th cc., absorbing gods and legendary tribal heroes into the royal line (326). This may have been a leftover practice which Tacitus observed in the tradition of heredity among the Gmc tribes c. 98 A. D.. They believed themselves to be descended from the god Tuisto, from his son Mannus (the first man?), and from the latter’s three sons, who became eponymous ancestors for the three principal Gmc tribes (Germania, 2).

129 Sisam, ‘AS royal genealogies’, 320-1. Chroniclers also go in for this kind of ‘pre-history’: the PVL begins with the sons of Noah after the Flood; the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Parker Chronicle) contains a genealogical preface beginning in the year of Christ’s Nativity, when Cerdic and Cynric, descendents of Woden, first conquer Wessex (G. N. Garmonsway, trans., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, London, 1984, 2).

130 de Vries, ‘Das Königtum bei den Germanen”, 296; Eliade, Myth and Reality, 41n.
Prior to considering how these Northern European views on the divine ancestries of kings may be applied to the *Slovo*, it is necessary, first of all, to observe how and to what extent these ideas manifest themselves in other early heroic works. That the literary sources available should be of English and Scandinavian provenance is not surprising since Christianity was established much later in Scandinavia, while the English, although christianised centuries earlier, continued to rely for some time on Scandinavian legends. Consequently, these sources lack any positive Christian character. The *Chanson de Roland* and the *Nibelungenlied*, being so much later, have more or less lost touch with the pre-Christian heroic world in this respect, although they show an understanding of the secular heroic ethos.

In the *Edda* the gods, but never the heroes, are sometimes the objects of ridicule. Thor in particular seems to be singled out for this kind of treatment, as in the Harbarðsliðr, in which his intellect is represented as being inversely proportional to his physical strength.

It is doubtful whether this disrespectful approach to the gods is the result of interpolations on the part of thirteenth-century Christian scribes, since there is absolutely nothing else in these works that might suggest this kind of tampering. Also, it would not explain why, in the *Lokasenna*, the insolent and mischievous god, Loki, exposes the weaknesses, failings and caprices of all the other gods except Thor (Neckel, 96–110). Furthermore, this attitude does not extend to the Norse heroes who, while almost as incompatible with Christian ideas as the gods, are invariably praised for their courage, strength and fealty. In *Lokasenna*, Loki himself places mortal heroic virtue above the gods:

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'Sniallr ertu í sessi, scalattu svá gora,
Bragi, beccscrautuðr;
vega þú gacc, ef þú vreiðr sér,
hyggs vætr hvatr fyrir.'
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[Loud talk but little meaning,

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131 These views are not, of course, exclusive to Europe, for they were and, among certain peoples still are, widespread (see Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 39ff.).

132 In the *Níbel.* mythological motifs reappear, but have been almost completely stripped of their original significance. According to Prof. Hatto, they are played down in medieval German epic as a point of style (‘Medieval German’, *Traditions*, 192–3). Note, for instance: (a) the magical source of Siegfried’s strength (st. 100); (b) the cloak which renders its wearer invisible (Ch. 7); (c) the prophetic nixes or water-nymphs (st. 1533ff.). The giants and the dragon reputedly vanquished by Siegfried also appear in Gmc mythology as well as in *Beo.*, and continued to inspire folk literature for some time. In the *Níbel.*, unlike in *Beo.*, they are mentioned coincidentally and serve mainly to emphasize Siegfried’s extraordinary strength, but are insignificant in themselves (for the significance of the monsters and the dragon in *Beo.*, see Whitelock, op. cit., 76ff.; R. E. Kaske, ‘The *Eiotenas* in *Beo.*’, in OE Poetry, 285–310; idem, ‘Sapiencia et Fortitudo as the controlling theme of *Beo.*’, in Anthology, 269–310; H. L. Rogers, ‘Beowulf’s three great fights’, in Anthology, 233–56). The kinds of folkloric elements mentioned above may be found in the *byliny*, where heroes of unusual, sometimes supernatural, origin fight monsters and perform impossible feats. Beowulf, on the other hand, is unusually, but not unnaturally, strong.

133 According to Turville-Petre, heroic lays are probably an older class of poems than those about the gods (Origins of Icelandic Literature, Oxford, 1953, 5; 15ff.). There is no evidence to indicate that mythological lays like those of the *Edda* were known among Gmc tribes outside Scandinavia. Those which survive originated in Norway and Iceland (ibid., 15; Davidson, Gods and Myths, 65).

Bragi, jewel of the benches!
Why don’t you fight if you’re so furious?
Heroes don’t hold back.]

(st. 15)

This is not to say that because they told humorous tales about their gods the early Scandinavians had ceased to believe in them—their reluctance in abandoning their old beliefs proves the contrary—but it is patently clear that the poets, at any rate, and probably the ruling warrior class as well, harboured few illusions about them. Disenchantment may have led a growing number of men—Vikings, wanderers and outlaws—to eschew the gods and all their works and to trust solely in their own resources. Certainly, the gods could not be relied upon if, like men, they too were governed by Fate, and could bring about the destruction of the world by their actions.

The gods play no part whatsoever in the heroic Edda, and in later works such as Atlamál and Gudrunarhytt, which date from the twelfth century, even casual references to them are entirely absent. Allusions to the gods as well as to spirits, however, may be found in Atlakviða and Hannoismál, both of which are thought to be two of the oldest surviving Germanic poems.

Four such references are found in Atlakviða. In two instances geographical features are endowed with divine associations. In st. 27/5–8, the Rhine is said to be the 'god-sprung river' which rules the inheritance of the Niflungar. This passage, according to Ursula Dronke, may be alluding to the divine origins of the Niflung family whose treasure, currently sitting at the bottom of the Rhine, would have been inherited from their eponymous ancestor, Niflung. Later, in st. 30/5–8, it is said that the oath taken and subsequently broken by Atli was pledged—

at sól inni suðrhollo
ok at Sigtýs bergi,
hólki hvílbeðiar
ok at hringi Ullar.

[by the sun southward-curving
and by Óðinn's crag,
by the steed of sleep's pillows
and by Ullr's ring.]

Here the names of Óðinn and Ullr are invoked in the context of oath-taking. Like water, hills or mounds were regarded as sacred, and in Norse sources and Old English place-names they were usually associated with Óðinn (Woden). Hills, particularly burial mounds, as customary repositories of the dead, were naturally associated with the 'Other World' and chthonic worship; as god of the dead and the underworld as well as oaths, Óðinn would have been seen as the protector of mounds. As to Ullr, it has been suggested that for a period he

136 They contain numerous references to ‘doom’ or ‘fate’, however, which will receive separate treatment later.
137 All four poems are taken from Dronke, ed. & trans, op. cit. All citations and translations will be taken from these parallel texts.
138 ibid., 61–2n. As noted supra (n.79), in Gmc and Celtic mythology any body of water, be it a river, lake, sea or well, was considered sacred. While Celtic tradition held that the 'Other World' lay beneath the waves, in Norse tradition the lower world was thought to be surrounded by a river spanned by a bridge (Patch, op. cit., 47, 60–1).
139 Dronke, op. cit., 64n.; Patch, op. cit., 47.
was to some people, if not chief god, at least the god of law and stability and, like Oðinn, a sky god. It has been further proposed that Ullr was to Oðinn a kind of 'alter-ego', a deputy who supplanted Oðinn as king when that capricious god was in disguise. In any event, Atli's oath was sworn not only upon the sun, the marriage bed and Oðinn himself, but also upon the sacred ring of Ullr lest Oðinn prove false. Not to honour an oath thus guaranteed would have been an extremely serious offence, and only the worst could follow.

The remaining two allusions to pagan divinities in AtlakviSa, although much less explicit than those mentioned above, provide a somewhat clearer picture of literary heroic attitudes in pre-Christian Scandinavia towards the gods. Stanza 29/6 contains the kenning, sigtýva, a genitive plural meaning more or less, 'heroes of triumph'. This term is always used elsewhere with reference to the gods, especially Oðinn, but in this somewhat corrupt passage Dronke takes it to refer to Guðrun's brothers, Hógni and Gunnarr. The word appears at the very climax of the poem: Hógni has had his heart cut out and dies amid his own heroic laughter, while Gunnarr is about to be hurled into a snake-pit where he too will acquit himself heroically. At the same time, their sister, Guðrun, heaps curses upon Atli for breaking his oath and prepares to exact the most hideous revenge. For all three siblings, then, this section, beginning with Hógni's death and ending with the curses that signal Guðrun's revenge, represents the most crucial, the most tragic, yet the most glorious moment in their heroic lives. Since Norse tradition held that men were god-descended and that great royal houses traced their descent from the sons of Oðinn, it would be natural for the poets to recall, with the simple term, sigtývadar, the 'divine' origins of the Burgundian kings when they are at the climax of their lives and their actions surpass those of ordinary mortals. The situation demands the superiority of courage and will that has been their inheritance; no prayers are rendered up, no assistance invoked. All that they require to meet the occasion they already possess through their distinguished origins. When great men take the stage, the gods retreat into the distance and into the past where they belong.

The final and possibly most ambiguous reference of this kind here is contained in the phrase reifa gíld rygnis ('to render a lord his due'—st. 34/4). This refers to Guðrun's offering Atli a gilded ale-cup before inviting him to dine in his hall where, unknown to him, his sons comprise the main course. Since the word Rýgnir ('Lord') is normally a proper name for Oðinn, and since the oath-breaking Atli cannot be considered heroic, it may be as Dronke suggests, that the term is nothing more than 'the poet's predilection for heightened diction'. But with the added invocation of Ullr to clinch the oath in st. 30/5-8, the earlier implication that Oðinn, renowned for his treachery and lawlessness, cannot be trusted, adds a new dimension to this passage. The poet here may be attempting to establish a parallel between the faithless

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140 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 184.
141 Dronke, op. cit., 65n.; Turville-Petre, 'The cult of Oðinn in Iceland', idem, Nine Norse Studies (Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series, 5), London, 1972, 14ff. See also Saxo, Bk VI, 76.
142 See supra, 77-9.
143 Dronke, op. cit., 63n. Note that in at 30/6 Sigtýs bergs is understood as 'Oðinn's crag'. Something along the same lines occurs in the early Russian chronicles; whereas in Norse literature a hero's divine origins are invoked at the most critical moment of his destiny, in the Russian chronicles a prince's ancestors are invoked (D. S. Likhachev, 'SP i esteticheskie predstavleniia ego vremeni', in idem, 'SP i kul'tura, L., 1978, 55-6).
144 op. cit., 68n.
145 See Turville-Petre, 'The cult of Oðinn... ', loc. cit.. The lawless and, as the etymology of his name suggests, the furious Oðinn was often seen as the antithesis of justice who frequently supported evil and undeserving characters while permitting those who trusted in him to perish. This capricious side of Oðinn is unveiled by Loki in Lokasenna: 'Be quiet, Odin! You never could/decide a fight fairly/I know how often you have allowed/the weaker man to win!' (st. 22). Another story tells of Harald Finehair, ruler of Norway from the mid-9th c., who overthrew traditional law by
Atli and the equally faithless Óðinn, modelling the king closely upon his lawless 'ancestor' god. The entire stanza—Guðrun's proffering the ale-cup to Atli and her invitation to partake of 'young beasts gone to the shades'—all recall pagan oblations and acts of sacrifice, particularly of the human kind, consecrated to the gods in their temples. To model Atli upon Óðinn in this way, therefore, is to reinforce the fact that the latter was not at all times and to all men the most popular of the gods.146

To recapitulate briefly, three out of the four allusions to Norse deities in Atlakvösa suggest that, far from playing active roles in the heroic poems, the gods maintain only an indirect presence as ancestors of kings and heroes like the Niflungar. Even the unscrupulous Atli, by virtue of his kingship, is entitled to a divine pedigree, and to him Óðinn in his most pernicious persona is assigned. In this and in the remaining reference dealing with Atli's four-fold oath, there is also a clear indication that by the time this early poem had been conceived, Óðinn had begun to be viewed with distrust.

On three occasions the Hamðismál also recollects the divine origins of royal persons. The sons of Guðrun, Hamsir and Sprli, are first called göðbornir ('the god-descended') shortly after they have slain their taunting half-brother, Erpr, and are preparing to continue on their heroic quest for vengeance on Írmruneckr (Ermnarc), king of the Goths, for the murder of their sister, Svanhildr (st. 16/3). The epithet here is well-timed. Just as in Atlakvösa the divine heritage of the Burgundians is invoked at the moment when they face the most critical trial of their lives, so the divine descent of the Hamsir and Sprli is recalled at a similar critical point; for, unknown to them, their action marks a turning point in their fortunes, and the injudicious killing of Erpr, whose help they sorely miss at their last battle, seals their doom.

Later, Írmruneckr jeeringly calls them göðborn Giuka ('the divine breed of Giuki [their grandfather]')—st. 21/7), thus mocking the pretensions of their clan, particularly of their grandfather, to divine descent, and indicating perhaps that the Norse of the late ninth century had already begun to take such genealogical claims less seriously.

Írmruneckr himself enjoys the epithet, regenkunngi (st. 25/2), which is usually interpreted as 'of the race of the divine powers'. In this case, however, it may also be taken to mean 'one with a powerful cunning/insight', the association of regin with magic and a certain vatic wisdom being an ancient one.147 As a descendant of a great royal line, he too would trace his ancestry to the gods which, in turn, would be invoked at the moment of 'superhuman control': in this instance, the moment he orders his men to stone the brothers after swords and spears have proved ineffective. At the same time he would be regarded as 'cunning' or 'inspired', in that he hit upon precisely the means by which to destroy his opponents. All this is undertaken while he is dying, having been dismembered by the heroes (st. 24/7-10).

146 As head god of the Norwegian aristocracy and hence of the unpopular Harald Finehair (supra, n.145), to whom many Icelanders had lost their lands, Óðinn was not popular and little worshipped in Iceland (where the Edda happened to be preserved). The Icelanders were more inclined to worship Thor (Turville-Petre, 'The cult of Óðinn... ', 16–17). The god's reputation for setting kinsman against kinsman is reiterated by Daf in Helgakvösa Hundingsbana gernor: 'Odin alone has worked this evil: he carried runes of strife among close kin' (Neckel, 150–61, st. 34). Saxo also relates how Óðinn, 'through his deep arts and skill', created strife between once close kinsmen, Harald Wartooth and his nephew Ring (Hring), which culminated in the battle of Bråvalla (Bk VI, 232).

147 Dronke, op. cit., 236–7n.
According to Germanic belief, a dying man gains a sudden magical force of knowledge, for at the moment of death certain latent magical powers in the human personality are released and activated.\(^{148}\) Although it was generally held that this extraordinary foresight was imparted by Oðinn, the god of the dead,\(^ {149}\) any apparently occult wisdom in this scene clearly comes from Iðrunrekk himself, and only quite indirectly from any external auxiliary.

Hamðismál contains an additional five passages that allude to spirits or to divinities of a lower order. It is generally thought that belief in these lower beings or hidden forces—elves, trolls, guardian spirits, fate, to name but a few—was older and more primitive than belief in the gods, as well as considerably more persistent.\(^ {150}\) It will be found that it is this form of belief, rather than belief in anthropomorphic gods within a formal mythological framework, that, to varying degrees, plays a more integral role in the Slovo and its northern counterparts.

The first such passage in Hamðismál introduces the poem and foretells the tragedy that is to come:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sprutto á táí} \\
\text{tregnar ísír,} \\
\text{groeti álf} \\
\text{in gýlstým}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

[There sprouted on the threshold
sorrowful tasks,
the source of elves' tears
dry of joy.]

(st. 1/1–4)

In Northern tradition elves were tutelary spirits of the home, revered by every family, not unlike the Russian domovoi. Here, presumably, the spirits of Guðrun's house mourn the extinction of her line, Giuki's line, that is to be fulfilled through the deaths of her sons.\(^ {151}\)

A malevolent female spirit, an ogress, appears on the periphery of the action at the murder of Erpr (st. 15/4) at which, knowing its consequences, she is delighted. Later, just prior to their defeat, Hamðir sees his action as evil and regrettable, and blames the disir for spurring him on to kill (st. 28/6).\(^{152}\) It was, however, lack of judgement and an excess of heroic pride that led the heroes to kill their taunting half-brother, and it is unlikely that the poet meant his audience to take Hamðir's excuse at face value.

The last two examples refer to the Norns, or Fates, who determine the course of life and whose judicial aspect distinguishes them from other fatal spirit-women, the disir and the völkyrjur, although they too are said to be controlled by Oðinn.\(^ {153}\) The first reference is to grey nóms ('the curs of the Norns'—st. 29/3): wolves also known as the dogs or hounds of

\(^{148}\) F. Strömn, On the Sacred Origins of the Germanic Death Penalties, Stockholm, 1942, Ch. 6, esp. 244ff. The legend which tells of how Oðinn restored the sight of the blinded Danes in the thick of battle (they were led by their king, Jarmerik, who was also dismembered), is told by Saxo, Bk VIII, 258. It was Oðinn who also taught the Danes how to stone their enemies.
\(^{149}\) Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 41ff.
\(^{150}\) Turville-Petre, 'The cult of Othin... ', 4; Routh, op. cit., II, 25ff.; Rybakov, 'Iazycheskoe mirovozzrenie... ', 8ff.
\(^{151}\) Dronke, op. cit., 225n.; Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 230ff. (According to Turville-Petre, elves, which were associated with both death and fertility, were regarded as having two aspects: the so-called 'light elves' were beautiful and benevolent, the 'dark elves', hideous and wicked).
\(^{152}\) See Dronke, op. cit., 237n.
\(^{153}\) ibid., 238-9nn.
In this passage, Hamðir expresses the hope that he and Þorli will not blame one another for their defeat, tearing at each other like the wolves of the Fates. In the next stanza, having taken stock of the situation, he concludes:

\[\text{Kveld liðir mæð ekki}
\text{eptir kvöl norma.}\]

[No man outlives the evening
after the Norns' decree.]

(st. 30/7–8)

In Hamðismál the supernatural again fails to influence heroic action directly. The Norns, however, while not actually affecting the course of events, since the heroes have brought their own downfall upon themselves, exercise control over the heroes’ lifespan; and because men know that they cannot escape the end which the Norns have decreed for them, this awareness enables them to display their most noble qualities, particularly courage. The function and significance of this complex and elusive force will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter with a view to discovering whether the notion of such a force exists in the Slovo.

One last example bearing out the view that the gods in heroic literature serve a primarily genealogical function is Beowulf. At first sight the gods are conspicuously absent, although monsters and various malignant spirits pervade the work, until it is recalled that the names Sceaf, Scyld and Beowulf appear with some regularity in Anglo-Saxon and Danish genealogies in company with the usual gods and other legendary or semi-legendary figures. The poem is introduced with an elaborate genealogy of Danish kings, headed by the illustrious, though mysterious, Scyld Seafing and ending with Hroðgar (II. 4–63). Scyld (Skjold) was generally regarded in Germanic tradition as the eponymous ancestor of the Danish kings, known also as the Scyldings (Skjoldungar)—in the same way as Freyr (Yngve) was the founder of the Swedish royal line, the Ynglingar—and was praised both for his law-making as well as his martial qualities. The mysterious arrival and glorious passing of Scyld are nowhere to be found outside Beowulf. The poem tells of how he was sent from the unknown and returned there once his mission had been accomplished, thus signifying a potentially divine nature. Similar tales of a mysterious arrival are narrated in English chronicles, where it is undertaken by Sceaf, father of Scyld and the legendary progenitor of the West Saxon kings. According to some scholars, Sceaf was, in ancient tradition, a god-sent mythical king to whom the North German tribes attributed the introduction of agriculture and princely rule.

The Beowulf poem thus links both the English and the Scandinavian traditions, with Scyld taking on the mission originally designated to Sceaf and fulfilling the duties befitting a tribal progenitor. As founder of the Danish (Scylding) dynasty, he introduced the institution of kingship, and his reign was distinguished by remarkable prosperity.

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154 On the beasts of Óðinn, see Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, 57ff.
156 See Saxo, Bk 1, 15.
157 See Patch, *op. cit.*, 47. Scyld’s ship funeral marks his passage to the Other World, the land of the dead, over the sea. Since that is also where he came from, the implication is that his origins must be divine.
158 Klaseber, *op. cit.*, 123; Sissam, ‘AS royal genealogies’, 313 n.4, 314ff. (Sceaf was also the legendary ruler of the Langobards).
159 Klaseber, loc. cit.. To the pagan English, the sheaf was a popular religious symbol whose associations with fertility are self-evident.
160 The peace and plenty enjoyed by the Danes under Scyld is a more general development of Sceaf’s literal introduction of agriculture to the North Germans.
Scyld's son, Beowulf, is likewise an unhistorical figure who is also found among the ancestors of Woden in Anglo-Saxon and Norse genealogies under the name Beow (Beo/Beaw). The agricultural associations of his name\textsuperscript{161} taken together with those of Sceaf reinforce traditional beliefs concerning the introduction of agriculture and, by means of this peaceful and settled occupation, also civilisation, realised here by Scyld (whose very name designates him as protector). It would seem that Beow, a divinity worshipped by the Anglo-Saxons, had somehow become confused with the historical Beowulf, nephew of Hygelac, and transformed into the mortal hero of the present poem, whose reign was also characterised by peace and prosperity.\textsuperscript{162} He is unlike his deified Swedish counterpart, Freyr, however, in that the benefits he had amassed on behalf of his people were not to outlive him.

It is conceivable that the \textit{Beowulf}-poet was unaware of Scyld's and Beow's mythical identities, and that the tradition of this Danish genealogy predates the work in its present form. In any case, he may have viewed these men simply as ancestors of a special kind, who were subject to death like everyone else, but who belonged to a strange and glorious past.\textsuperscript{163}

If Rus' ever possessed any tales of the gods, no traces have survived in written form, and it is uncertain how much, if anything, people in twelfth century Rus' even knew about them. While the nobility may have continued to practise certain pagan rites long after conversion, they were nevertheless Christians to whom the artificial and short-lived pantheon of Vladimir was long dead and probably forgotten. What little they may have known about the gods would have been circulated orally. In the countryside old traditions continued, on the whole, to be practised and passed down as before, virtually, though not altogether, untouched either by the pantheon or by Christianity; in the towns the \textit{volkhvy}, practising under cover, continued to act as custodians of pre-Christian belief and ritual.\textsuperscript{164}

It is difficult to assess how much the author knew or understood about the Russian pagan gods and their functions. He certainly does not accord them the same integral part in the action of the \textit{Slovo} that he gives to nature. Instead, the gods, with the exception of Div, have been distanced, even formalised. As will be seen in due course, however, they, in particular Dazhbog and Veles, were not assigned to their ancestral roles at random. Like the gods in northern heroic lays, they were not important in themselves nor were they invoked as auxiliaries, but they nevertheless continued to represent something that wielded enough influence over the poetic imagination to be remembered, however indirectly or occasionally.

Prior to analysing the author's motives, conscious or otherwise, in treating the gods as he does, an attempt must be made to establish what may have been his general understanding of them. It is quite apparent that he did not subscribe to the primarily ecclesiastical opinion that the gods were devils, but inclined more to the euhemeristic view, espoused in the \textit{Hyppatian Chronicle} entry for the year 1114 (278–9), of the gods as legendary ancestors, great founders or inventors, and therefore prototypes for all subsequent human action.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{161} Klaeber believes Beow or Beaw to be derived from the pre-Gmc root *bhu-, from which stems the OE word \textit{beawan} ('to dwell', 'cultivate land', 'grow'), *x\textit{hwiw}.

\textsuperscript{162} Klaeber, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{163} On specifically genealogical poems tracing the descent of various Scandinavian rulers from the gods, see H. M. Chadwick, \textit{op. cit.}, 15–16.

\textsuperscript{164} Zguta, \textit{Russian Minstrels}, 6ff.; \textit{idem}, 'The pagan priests of early Russia', passim.

\textsuperscript{165} See Eliade, \textit{Myth and Reality}, 34ff. In his discussion of 'primitive' myth, Eliade states that the gods, who created men, were conceived as 'ancestors' upon whom men endeavoured to model themselves. Imitating one's father and grandfather, then, would be the same as imitating the Ancestors and would produce the same results (34). While the author of the \textit{SP} does not present or regard the ancestor-gods as mythological realities, he does, all the same, adhere to the principle of 'origins' throughout his work.
It would not be unreasonable to suppose that by 1114 the Russian Church, like many Western ecclesiastics, had found the euhemeristic approach to be more effective in its struggle against paganism. Close on the heels of a passage which tells how the people of the Ladoga region still relied on volkhvy during crises, the Russian chronicler explains the origins of the sun gods, Dazhbog and Svarog, as well as the introduction of kingship, law, and consequently, civilisation into Egypt, using a genealogical tale that may have been, to a greater or lesser degree, widespread:\footnote{166}

\begin{quote}
пocha цesarствовати первое Местромъ отъ рода Хамова. По немъ Еремия, по немъ Феоста иже и Соварога нарекоша Египтяне. Цesarствующую сему Феосту въ время цesarства его, садоща клыш съ несебть, [и] нача ховати оружье приже бо того царцами и каменемъ блюхуся. Тъ же Феоста законъ остави жена за единъ мужь посагати и ходити говенощи, а иже прелюб дующи казнити повеліваше сего ради прозвыше и богъ Сварог...
\end{quote}  

\begin{flushright}
(col. 278)
\end{flushright}

The chronicler proceeds to demonstrate how this law secured order, for it left men in no doubt as to the paternity of their children. Having explained that transgressions of these monogamy laws were punishable by burning in ovens, he continues:

\begin{quote}
сего ради прозвыша и Сварогомь, и благожна и Египтяне. И по семъ цesarствова сынъ его, именемь Сълнѣмо, егоже нарключь Дажьбогъ... Сьлнѣде цesarъ, сынъ Свароговъ, еже есть Дажьбогъ, бо бо мужь сильнѣ... И не хотя отца своего закона распятъ, Сварожа.
\end{quote}  

\begin{flushright}
(col. 279)
\end{flushright}

Consequently Dazhbog was also highly revered for establishing pure living throughout the land:\footnote{167}

This chronicle entry reveals striking parallels with certain concepts inherent in heroic literature and other writings of the early European Middle Ages, particularly in England and Scandinavia, concerning the origins of the gods and the notion of sacral kingship.

The chronicler begins this tale with a legendary genealogy of Egyptian kings descending from Noah's son Ham, thus lending it historical credence and a certain amount of respectability, in the way Anglo-Saxon genealogists pressed into service figures from \textit{Genesis} to act as ancestors for the 'divine' kings Freyr, Woden, Geat and so on.

The third king, Feost (Svarog), is to the Egyptians what Scyld in \textit{Beowulf} is to the Danes; as civiliser, law-maker and general benefactor to his people, he emerges as a national or dynastic progenitor, the 'father' of the newly civilised nation, and conforms to the type of ruler regarded by writers like Saxo and Snorri as ripe for deification and mythologizing. He led the Egyptians out of the Stone Age with the introduction of the forging of metal weapons and, by implication, tools; that is, both the means to procure a prosperous life in peacetime, and the means to defend it from foes. With the institution of monogamy, Feost also reinforced the social order, punishing by fire those who transgressed. For these reasons, says the chronicler, 'he was called the god, Svarog', and thus Svarog, the fire or sun god, became the idol under which Feost the king was worshipped and 'blessed' by the Egyptians.

\footnote{166}{On how Dazhbog came to be associated with the smith \textit{Hephaestus} (the Greek god of fire, and \textit{Helios}, the Greek sun god, see Brückner, \textit{Mitologia slowianska}, 50ff.; Mansikka, op. cit., 71ff., Robinson, 'Solnechanaia simbolika... ', 21.}
\footnote{167}{A parallel version of this account is found in the later \textit{Khlebnikovskii Chronicle} (See Mansikka, op. cit., 66.)}
After him came his son, Dazhbog, whom the people called the ‘Sun’, and therefore worshipped as the offspring of a deity. Like Beowulf, the son of Scyld, Dazhbog carried on his father’s achievements and was praised in particular for upholding that law which turned Egypt towards a pure way of life. Although the chronicler describes him as a mighty man (muz’ silen’), Dazhbog came to be worshipped as the son of the ‘Sky’, as the god of light, a divine ‘Provider’.

How Egypt came to be the setting is easily explained. After the Flood, in which the old social order together with most of its inhabitants was destroyed, and the division of tongues at Babel, Noah’s three sons are said to have headed for different parts of the world to found nations. According to tradition, Ham’s lot included North Africa. For the chronicler Egypt would have represented not only one of the greatest civilisations to ensue after the Flood, but also the centre of a flourishing sun cult, whose kings were closely associated with the sun, if not actually personifications of it. The first rulers, then, of what was probably regarded as the first kingdom could have been viewed as forefathers, the progenitors of successive princes everywhere.

The flexibility of the gens religion in twelfth-century Rus’ is shown in the Slovo through the author’s handling of the genealogical concept outside the sphere of blood kinship, and assigning the god, Dazhbog, as the ‘forebear’ of a clan and, in a broader sense, a whole nation. That the gods were no longer believed to be divine by the author is irrelevant; what is important is that these hero-kings came to be worshipped as gods, and thus retained the distinction of being held up as archetypes for specific virtues and modes of behaviour.

The first mention of ‘Dazhbog’s grandsons’ (Dazhd’bozha vnuka) in the Slovo appears in an historical digression relating the bitter feuds inspired by Oleg Sviatoslavich and their tragic consequences:

Тогда при Оле́й Горислави́ч ся́йшествя и расти́шень усоби́цы, поги́башь жиз́нь Даждь-Божа внука, въ кня́жихъ крамолахъ вы́дя человекъ скра́ща́шь.

(48, ll. 16–19)

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168 Most scholars interpret the etymology of Dazhbog as being rooted in the words dat (‘to give’) and bog (‘god’). See Brückner, Mitologia słowiańska, 59; Mansikka, op. cit., 283. For a different interpretation, see A. Afanas’ev, Poeticske slovrenia slavian na prirodu, I, M., 1885, 65.

169 See PVL, 1–2. The opening section on the history of the sons of Noah is derived from the Chronicle of the Byzantine historian, Georgius Hamartolus, which dates from the 9th c. (See Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, op. cit., 23–4).

170 See Frankfort, op. cit., 148ff; Dvornik, Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy, I, 10 (in the fourth Egyptian Dynasty, the king came to be thought of as a man chosen by the sun god to reign over his subjects). For more ideas on the close association of princes with the sun, see Gasparov, op. cit., 98ff. The Russian chronicler probably acquired his undoubtedly limited familiarity with Egyptian history from Greek chroniclers, who in turn would have relied on the writings of the Alexandrian Greeks for their information.

171 See Likhachev, ‘SP i osobennosti...’, 312, who interprets Feost as the progenitor of an entire generation of god-princes, for whom Svarog and Dazhbog are idols. Also Robinson, ‘Zakonomernosti razvitiia srednevekovogo geroineskogo eposa i simvolika SP’, 158.

172 Anichkov believes that Dazhbog, Veles and Khors were tribal gods included in the pantheon by Vladimir in his bid to unify all the Russian tribes, Dazhbog being a deified chieftain of Chernigovan Rus’ in which the Ol’govichi ruled. He sees the use of their names in the light of a nomen gentis, and believes that they once belonged to prominent men of different regions (op. cit., ch. 14). Khors and Div are also thought to be pagan Iranian tribal names of the Russian north (Robinson, ‘Zakonomernosti razvitiia...’, 158). Their symbolic value, however, is too complex for them to be dismissed simply as names of clans.
The other reference comes shortly after this passage, when the author returns to the present, to Igor’s retreat, and a general indictment of the princes of Rus’ and their unwillingness to co-operate:

Уже бо, братие, невеселая годину въстала, уже пустыни силу прикрыла. Въстала обида въ силахъ Дажь-Божа внука, вступила двою на землю Троянно, въсплескала лебедиными крылы на синёмъ море у Дону плещучи, убуди жирня времена.

(49, II. 8–12)

Here Dazhbog, the forefather of princes, is more specifically assigned to the clan of the Ol’govichi, and more indirectly to the people of Rus’ as a whole, who rely upon princes (in these instances on the successes of the Ol’govichi) for their fortune, prosperity and their very survival as a nation.173 Like the gods in the Edda, his name is invoked at what the author perceives to be the most critical moments in the careers of both Oleg and Igor.

It may be asked how it is that Dazhbog appears to have supplanted Perun as patron god of the princely warrior class, not only in the Slovo, but in the chronicle as well. Perun, like the Norse god, Oðinn, was the god of the ruling class in Varangian Rus’;174 he was the object of oaths in treaties with the Greeks throughout the tenth century and was later elevated by Vladimir to the head of all the Russian tribal gods in his ‘pantheon’. It is often thought, however, that Perun was not so much an indigenous Russian god as a foreign import of the Varangian, probably Swedish, princes who founded the Kievan dynasty, and that he bears a strong resemblance to Thor,175 although in some respects, as the god of oaths, storm and the

173 See Robinson, ‘Solnechnaiia simbolika. . .’, 13ff.; idem, ‘Zakonomernosti razvitiia. . .’, 153–7 (Robinson suggests that Dazhbog the sun god is assigned to the Ol’govichi because the sun cult was closely linked to the fortunes of the clan. He cites twelve instances in the chronicles between 1076–1176 of solar eclipses which he believes to be interrelated with thirteen deaths in the house of Riurik, including five Kievan princes, all ancestors of Igor Sviatoelavich. Hence Igor and Vsevolod, as well as the author, who was probably close to that family, would have understood the significance of the eclipse in 1185. He adds that by the time the Slovo was written, Dazhbog was no longer the subject of a cult, but not yet a mere artistic device (‘Zakonomernosti razvitiia. . .’, 159)). Since the sun is certainly one of the dominating images of the work, there may be substance in Robinson’s theory; on the other hand, since the chronicles abound in battles and solar eclipses, the likelihood that a prince will die somewhere in the region of an eclipse is great. Furthermore, the princes were all interrelated, and there is almost no-one whose death actually coincides with an eclipse.

174 See Anichkov, op. cit., 315–23.

175 The following is a selection of the arguments surrounding the origins of Perun: The name of Perun, traditionally the god of thunder and lightening, corresponds to the Lith. Perkunas and the Sanskr. Parjanya (Vernadaky, Kievan Russia, 54); Brücker argues for the Slavonic origins of Perun, although he sees him as possibly a defunct Slavonic deity whose cult was reawakened through the influence of Thor for a short period before he was once again forgotten (Mitologia slowianska, 44ff.); Afanas’ev sees Perun as a fertility god and a counterpart of both Thor and Oðinn (op. cit., I, 136–7, 432); Jakobson points out that there is not one Slavonic land where traces of Perun’s cult may not be found, and that his name is found in one form or another among Baltic, Scandinavian, Indian, Greek, Celtic, Gothic, Latin and Albanian languages (‘Voprosy sravnitel’noi indoevropeiskoi mifologii v svete slavianskikh pokazanii’, Akta sjezdu 2. VI Mezinárodní sjezd slovistů v Praze, 1968, 630–1). Perun did not appear as head god among the Russians until as late as the 9th or 10th cc. (Rybakov, ‘Iazycheskoe mirovozrenie. . .’, 17); S. Rodniecki, holds the Normanist view that the cult of Perun was strongly influenced by the cult of Thor that it is difficult to see where Thor ended and Perun began (‘Perun und Thor’, Archiv für slavische Philologie, 23, 1901, 520). Others who perceive a connection between Perun and Thor include: Zayenoko, op. cit., 84–6; N. K. Chadwick, The Beginnings of Russian History, Cambridge, 1966, 84–5; Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 95–6; Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, op. cit., 226 n.55.
aristocracy, he also resembles the sky god, Ośinn. While scholars cannot agree on the extent of his ‘foreignness’, it is clear from the evidence of written sources that once links between Rus’ and Scandinavia became more tenuous, and despite Vladimir’s attempts to establish cults of Perun in Kiev and Novgorod, Perun, who was never really a god of the populace, was the first to surrender his central position among the gods and to take a more subsidiary role. If, indeed, Perun was an ancient Slavonic god revived in Rus’ with the introduction of the Scandinavian Thor, then his later substitution by Dazhbog was probably the consequence of a natural imaginative process.

To trace this process it is necessary to look at the emergence of fertility gods as central figures in Norse mythology. It was in Norway, which directed its adventurism westward, that the cult of Ośinn endured longest. His primacy, even supremacy, among the Scandinavian gods is recorded in Icelandic mythological lays which were probably Norwegian in origin. His cult, however, is virtually unknown in Iceland, to which many Norwegian chieftains fled after their lands had been confiscated by Harald Finehair in around 885. The Icelanders naturally rejected the patron of tyrants and inclined more to Thor, also a sky god, considered to be the noblest and most powerful of them all, and an upholder of order against chaos.

Due to the absence of a unified system of dogma in pre-Christian Scandinavia, the gods tended to be many-sided figures, their functions or spheres of influence not always strictly confined or separate. It is not difficult to see how one role might invoke more than one chain of associations. Ośinn himself is a good example of such a process. As the ‘father’ of gods and men who also played a large part in man’s creation, and as leader of the Wild Hunt, he would have been venerated as the head god, the sky god and the god of storm. The prince of gods, in turn, would have been adopted as the god of princes and as the patron of their principal occupation, war. His role as god of war would then extend to the dead, and thus he also became the god of the ‘Other World’ which the dead inhabit. His position with regard to the ‘Other World’ would have made him the object of oaths, as well as the master of magic and secret knowledge, who communed with the Ancestors. As custodian of vatic wisdom, he takes on the role of supreme shaman who, in a state of ecstasy, can change shape and enter the world of mysteries and occult wisdom. When he stole the runes from the giant, Suttung, he also became master of poetry. To depart on another tack, Ośinn as sky god and therefore ‘husband’ of the Earth (Frigg) may have been regarded at some stage as a fertility god. It will be observed how this tendency of the Norse gods to overlap in their offices and even to supplant one another in them is also reflected in Russian pre-Christian mythology.

To the Icelanders, for whom the most records survive, Thor, the protector of this world (Midgarð) and defender of Asgarð, came to represent stability and law, upholding order in the face of chaos and presenting a clear contrast to the amoral Ośinn, among whose chief

176 See Davidson, The Viking Road to Byzantium, 300–12 (Ch. 3, ‘Othin in the East’).
177 Davidson, Gods and Myths, 73–5, 84ff.; Turville-Petre, ‘The cult of Othing...’, 15–17; idem, The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, 10ff.
180 Ibid., 50ff., 116–19; Davidson, Gods and Myths, 50ff. Saxo confirms the practice of dedicating the souls of dead warriors to Ośinn (Bk VII, 204; Bk VIII, 243).
181 For Ośinn’s role as priest, shaman and god of poetry and the dead, see Davidson, Gods and Myths, 141ff.; as god of poetry and patron of poets, see Turville-Petre, ‘The cult of Othing...’, 9; as god of occult wisdom, ibid., 13; as god of war and the dead, and how he stole the runes, idem, Myth and Religion, 35ff. Eliade points out that the shamanic tradition is centred around the legendary figure of the ‘Terrible Sovereign’ [which Ośinn certainly was] (Shamanism, 37ff.).
182 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 85ff.
preoccupations were the promotion of strife among kinsmen and the betrayal of favourites.\(^{183}\) Thor, called the 'Thunderer', was a sky god and a war god like O\(\hat{\text{s}}\)inn, but he was also the enemy of evil, usually represented in mythological lays as giants.\(^{184}\) It was not long before this protector of men, this ruler of the storms and rains that nourished the soil and its crops, came to be venerated as a fertility god, especially in Sweden which, like Iceland, was an agrarian country.\(^{185}\) As the pagan age drew to a close, Thor rose in eminence not only in Iceland and in Sweden, where he appears to have overshadowed the fertility god Freyr, but also in Denmark and even in Norway.\(^{186}\)

Although much less is known of Perun than of Thor, there is little doubt that he was chief god and patron of the warrior class and that, as sky god who, like O\(\hat{\text{s}}\)inn and Thor 'marries' the Earth and impregnates her, he would also have served as a fertility god at some stage.\(^{187}\) By 1114, however, Perun had been overshadowed by another sky god, Svarog, whose name, like those of Rod and Veles, is absent from the chronicle account of Vladimir's pagan revival, possibly because, like them, he was an older, more indigenously Russian god than Perun. His idol, together with Rod's and Veles's, may already have stood in Kiev, to which Vladimir simply added the others.\(^{188}\) Svarog introduced metal weapons and social order which his son, Dazhbog, perpetuated in a place where the sun cult, next to the ancestor cult, predominated.\(^{189}\) The comparatively recent (or recently revived) cult of Perun, then, must have given way to what was probably the older cult of Dazhbog, which was closely linked to ancestor and earth cults. Dazhbog, the 'Sun', was the source of stability (through law), fertility, prosperity and, therefore, culture. And since Rus', like Sweden, also relied upon agriculture, it would be natural for the fertility god to hold a central position in the devotions of the people. But how Dazhbog came to represent specifically the princely warrior class as their ancestor in the \(\text{Slovo}\) may be explained to some degree if he is compared with his Scandinavian counterparts, Freyr and Baldur, and their broad spectrum of roles.

The Vanir consisted of various fertility gods whose worshippers were close to the earth and the ancestors who rested both there and in the sea; among them were Freyr, his sister

\(^{183}\) See supra, n.145.

\(^{184}\) Turville-Petre, \textit{Myth and Religion}, 75ff., 92. Poems in which Thor does battle with giants are: \textit{Hymiskvi\(x\)a} (Neckel, 88-95) and \textit{Prymiskvi\(x\)a} (Neckel, 111-15). He also quells the insolent Loki and restores tranquility at the end of \textit{Lokasenna}.

\(^{185}\) Turville-Petre, \textit{Myth and Religion}, 93-4.

\(^{186}\) ibid., 92ff. By the time Adam of Bremen came to record Swedish paganism (c. 1070), O\(\hat{\text{s}}\)inn and Freyr had been supplanted by Thor, who had become the god of crops. He was the chief god of the Norse invaders of Ireland, Normandy and England, and, having overshadowed Freyr, was also the principal god of the Swedes, whose movements were directed to lands east of the Baltic, particularly Rus'. See also Davidson, \textit{Gods and Myths}, 84ff.; Turville-Petre, \textit{The Heroic Age of Scandinavia}, 59.

\(^{187}\) Afanas'ev, \textit{op. cit.}, I, 244-63, 126ff., 136-8 (Afanas'ev also discusses the relationships between the other 'sky' gods (Svarog, Sviatovit, Div) and the earth); Rybakov, 'Iazycheskoe mirovozzrenie... ', 11–12 (Rybakov argues for the central place in Russian pre-Christian religion of the fertility god, \textit{Rod} (meaning 'clan', 'genus', 'origin', from the verb \textit{rodit}'—'to give birth'), an agricultural sky god occupying an intermediate position between the early animism of the nomads and the aristocratic cult of Perun, whose own cult was functionally close to that of Rod. He adds that the Russian emphasis on belief in the after-life and in ancestor cults merged with the idea of the fertility of the Earth, where the dead are buried (13)). For a more detailed view of the link between ancestor and earth cults, see the latter article, 17; Komarovitch, \textit{op. cit.}, passim, esp. 97ff.

\(^{188}\) Rybakov, 'Iazycheskoe mirovozzrenie... ', 12, 16. (Rybakov maintains that originally Rod was not merely a household deity, but the god of all nature).

\(^{189}\) ibid., 12.
and female counterpart, Freyja, and their father, Njörðr, the god of wealth who was mainly associated with the sea and ships. The cult of Freyr (Saxo's Frothi III), also called Yngve, was extremely widespread in Sweden prior to his eclipse by Thor. It is generally accepted that he was the god of sunshine and fertility, and thus for the Swedes, who depended heavily on crops, he would have become the most important of all divinities; and because sowing and harvesting depend also upon peace and political stability, he also came to be known as the god of peace. As head god, the responsibility for securing this peace and prosperity rested with him and so, paradoxically, he became a warrior and defender as well, a role substantiated in literary sources, where he is called 'protector of the gods' and 'lord of the Æsir', and is said to rule armies and the hosts of the gods. Thus even more paradoxically does the god of life and plenty become the god of war and death.

Baldr, nicknamed 'the Good', son of Oðinn and fairest of all the gods, who met his death in an accident contrived by Loki, was also venerated as a god of the sun and of fertility, although his cult was somewhat overshadowed by Freyr's, and little is known about it. Because a good ruler must ensure his people's prosperity, Baldr became a fertility god who had, as all good rulers must, warlike qualities as well.

If Dazhbog was a fertility god who was also the father of princes, and thus the head god, he too might be expected to have possessed martial qualities. Even when stripped of his divine status he remained an archetype for princes. Like Thor, Sceaf and Scyld, he secured prosperity for his people through law and good government: what the sun was to crops, he was to his people, with a sacral duty to ensure by every means that they grew and prospered.

Not only is the notion of rulers as sole custodians of their people's welfare universal, but it persisted in Europe well after the Middle Ages. Among early cultures in general and

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190 Davidson, Gods and Myths, 126. The male god Njörðr is thought to have developed out of the earth goddess Nerthus, said by Tacitus to have been worshipped by Gmc tribes on the Continent in the 1st c. A. D. (Germania, 40). Both he and Freyr are found in Scandinavian genealogies.

191 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 174-5. In the late pagan period he became chief god of the Vanir, with the centre of his cult for some time in Uppsala (172).

192 ibid., 175. See Lokasenna, (st. 35). It was in Sweden that paganism endured longest after the general acceptance of Christianity in western Scandinavia (Davidson, The Viking Road to Byzantium, 317).

193 His female counterpart, Freyja, also represents the recurring cycle of fertility, birth and death in her role as fertility goddess and goddess of war and death (Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 177).

194 For the story of Baldr see Snorri's Gylfaginning (F. Jónsson, ed., Edda Snorra Sturlusonar, Reykjavik, 1907, Ch. 49, 88-94); Baldr's draumar (Neckel), 277-9; Saxo, Bk III, 75 (whose account differs greatly from Snorri's). For summaries of the tale see Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 106-8; Davidson, Gods and Myths, 182-9.

195 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 117.

196 loc. cit; de Vries, 'Das Königbium bei den Germanen', 291ff. (On the duties and powers of early Gmc kings). The idea that a king must be not only a good administrator in public affairs but a competent leader in wars on behalf of his people's security is also found in Beo. The 'good' rule of Hroðgar brought prosperity to the Danes (manifested through the splendid Heorot) but, in his old age he lacked the necessary military qualities to rid them of Grendel who threatened that prosperity. It may also be said that Beowulf, unable to survive the fight with the dragon, had also become too old to rule effectively. These two aspects of the kingly office, the peaceful and the martial, are more generally represented by the Vanir (fertility gods) and the Æsir (gods of war) respectively in the Gmc pantheon (de Vries, 'Das Königbium... ', 296).

197 Frankfort, op. cit., 150 (The coronation of a new Pharaoh in Egypt 'can be regarded as the creation of a new epoch after a dangerous interruption of the harmony between society and nature—a situation which partakes of the quality of the creation of the universe'). This is how the new age of Svarog is viewed in the FVL. See also Eliade, Myth and Reality, 39-41.
Germanic peoples in particular, the king was seen not simply as an administrator, but as the very source of well-being: of good harvests from both land and sea, and of success in war. He stands in locum deorum, bridging the worlds of gods and men. There was no title of honour greater for a king than that of arsell (ON, meaning roughly, 'harvest-blessed').

The failure of a harvest or a military defeat may have resulted in hardship for the people, but it frequently meant death to the unlucky king. Many were either killed or deposed for these reasons, or because they were growing old and losing their divine powers. Sometimes the people did not wait for the effects of an ageing king's waning powers to set in, but performed a kind of ritual murder before his beneficial faculties could be exhausted. If a king enjoyed a particularly beneficial reign, its effects continued to manifest themselves after his demise, prompting his people to continue to make sacrifices to him, as in the case of the Swedish king, Freyr. It is this kind of veneration that postulates a religious, but in no way magical, idea that his powers are tied up with the race from which he springs, originating with the Ancestors, believed to be gods, and flowing down through the generations. In agrarian Sweden, where Freyr was the progenitor of the royal line, belief in sacral kingship was far more widespread and deeply rooted than in Norway, thus giving reasonable cause to suppose that at least some of these concepts relating to kingship were conveyed to Rus' in the course of the ninth century, and possibly even earlier. If (and it is possible) such ideas already existed among the Slavonic tribes there, then they would have been reinforced by the Swedish nobility which founded the Kievan dynasty.

That a prince's duties are closely linked with those of a fertility god is made fairly clear by the author of the Slovo—in his use of Dazhbog, in the solar imagery that prevades the work, in his extensive use of natural imagery to underline the tragic consequences of Igor's expedition and, above all, in his general political message. In creating, through feuds inspired by vanity and avarice, the kind of political instability that invites pagan incursions, and in undertaking a hazardous campaign unaided, the past and present princes of the Slovo, particularly the Ol'govichi, have plainly forsaken their sacral obligations. In the passages cited above where Dazhbog has been invoked, emphasis is also placed on death, desolation and especially forfeited 'prosperity'. The first alludes to the feuds 'sown' by Oleg Sviatoslavich:

198 de Vries, 'Das Königttum...', 293; Dvornik, Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy, I, 13 (on Egyptian kings as givers of life, the authors of fertility in fields and cattle, and the source of joy and blessings). For the medieval Russian concept of princes as protectors and benefactors of their people, see Likhachev, Chelovek, 36, 43ff. (this idea continues until quite late (cf. Hyp. 1289), but in time takes on a Christian aspect). The prince's obligation to bestow gifts on his retainers contains echoes of his former sacral role.

199 ibid., 293-4; H. M. Chadwick, op. cit., 367 (for examples of Burgundian kings who were deposed on account of famine. This practice was unknown in England); Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 191-2; Ynglinga Saga in Heimskringla I, Ch. 15, 30-31 (on the Swedish king, Domald, who was killed because of bad harvests).

200 de Vries, 'Das Königttum...', 294. See also Ynglinga Saga, Ch. 25 (22-3), which tells how the Swedish king, On or Ane, concluded a pact with ÓSinn when he turned 60 years old. The terms stated that he would sacrifice one of his sons to ÓSinn every ten years, thereby securing for himself another ten-year term. Here the roles are transposed: instead of the father dying and his son taking over, the father imbues himself with his son's life-force and absorbs his power through ritual sacrifice).

201 de Vries, 'Das Königttum... ', 295.

202 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 192.

203 Usobitsa kniaziem" na pogonysha pogybe, rekosta bo bratu" bratu: 'se moe, a to moe she'. I nachasha kniazi pro maiose 'se veikhoe' mi"viti, a sami na sebe kromolu kovoati, a poganiis a" vsekh" stran" prikhozhdahu s" pohodami na zemlu Ruskuui (49, 12-17).
In juxtaposing the peaceful agrarian image of sowing with the internecine feuds and their consequences, the author achieves a dramatic, almost surrealistic, effect, which he uses to highlight the failure of the princes, 'descendants' of the Sun, the Life-Giver, in their foremost obligation to their people.204

The section bridging this reference to Dazhbog to the second describes the declining welfare of Rus' from the time of Oleg's wars to the present moment of Igor's defeat through the images of agriculture and wealth. Because Oleg's feuds caused such widespread desolation, halting the cultivation of crops, the only ones attending feasts in those days were the scavenging ravens and jackdaws converging on the fields of conflict where crops should have grown:205

So it was in the time of Igor's campaign. Following an impressionistic description of the battle preceding Igor's retreat in which the weapons are endowed with the attributes of storm (wind, thunder and lightning—48, 23-6),206 the author once again invokes an image of fecundity in order to underline the fact that the opposite is the case:

On the third day Igor's banners fall and he is separated from his brother Vsevolod on the banks of the Kaiala (48, ll. 29-30/49, ll. 1-3). Once again a military disaster is marked by a metaphorical feast, to which the Russians have 'invited' the Polovtsy as their guests.207

Another dimension is added to this image by the word svaty (literally, 'matchmakers') used to designate the 'guests'.208 It invests the metaphor with a special poignancy, since marriage

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205 This image has parallels in the Zad. (KB, 550; Syn., 554). For more on the Beasts of Battle, see infra, Ch. 5c.

206 See infra, Ch. 5d. on weapon imagery.

207 For the 'battle-feast' motif in ORL, see infra, Ch. 5e.

and the wedding feast normally denote expectations of joy in prosperity and fertility. The image of the Russians 'lying down' could be taken simply as a metaphor for what banqueters customarily do following an elaborate and plentiful feast; but in the context of a wedding feast, it becomes a macabre caricature of the wedding night after the feast, when the long and many rituals of courtship and marriage culminate in the ultimate fertility ritual. Once the Russians have 'retired' from the 'banquet', all of nature is robbed of its vitality: Nichit' trava zhalkshchami, a drevo s tugou k' zemli preklonilos' (49, ll. 6–8). The images of fertility that encompass the climax of this narrative culminate in the second explicit reference to the dwindling prosperity of Rus' with the simultaneous invocation of Dazhbog in his ancestral office, where Injury (Obida), as a swan-maiden, creates upheaval and disperses the times of plenty (49, ll. 8–12).

A close parallel to the theme of lost prosperity, marked by a macabre feast for carrion birds and beasts, is also found in Beowulf. Here the circumstances leading up to this image are comparable to those of the Slovo. When Beowulf the hero-king, the wilgeofa ('giver of joys'—l. 2900), faces the dragon alone and perishes after slaying him, he forfeits at that moment all that he has secured for the Geats in the course of his long and prosperous reign. His death signals the collapse of order; for, where once no enemy dared approach the Geats, now the Franks, the Frisians and the Swedes, upon learning of Beowulf's death, would recollect old scores and disregard their tenuous treaties with his people (ll. 2910b.ff.):

\[
\text{ForSon sceall gar wesan} \\
\text{monig morgenceald mundum bewunden,} \\
\text{hæfen on handa, nalles hearpan sweg} \\
\text{wigend wececan, ac se wonna hrefn} \\
\text{fus ofer fægum fela reordian,} \\
\text{earne seçgan, hu him æte speow,} \\
\text{þenden he wið wulf weal reafode.}
\]

[Therefore shall many a spear, morning-cold, be grasped in hands, brandished in fists; neither shall the harp sound rouse the warrior; but the black raven, eager above the doomed, shall speak of much, shall say to the eagle, how he fared at the feast, when he contended with the wolf in plundering the slain.]

(ll. 3021b.–27)

Given the widespread nature of these ideas concerning sacral kingship, and that throughout the Slovo, the ceaseless activity of nature is closely enmeshed with the lives and actions of men, it may be suggested that the author also perceives a mystical dimension to the princely office. In the case of the Ol'govichi who are represented by Dazhbog, it is the sun, whose properties are functionally close to the duties of sovereigns, that monitors the princes' actions and fortunes. At the outset of the campaign the sun sends ominous warnings to Igor in the form of an eclipse; later it shines benevolently on his return to Rus' from captivity (56, ll. 18–19).\(^{209}\) When the princes fail in their office, the consequences could not be more bleak than if the sun were to leave the heavens. In both Beowulf and the Slovo the ideal of emulating the Ancestors has broken down.\(^{210}\) In a sense, Beowulf and the Ol'govichi may be seen as antitheses to the

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\(^{209}\) See Afanas'ev, op. cit, I, 68 (According to evidence gleaned from Slavonic folklore, the sun also acted the role of 'punisher', initially of darkness and cold, but later of 'moral wrongs'. It is possible that this latter aspect may have taken root in Rus' by this time, since, in her lament, Iaroslavna reproaches the sun for parching Igor and his men.) This notion could not have been very advanced, however, since in the Slovo, the sun remains in the background, as a kind of chorus, and not as an independent judge.

\(^{210}\) On ancestors as prototypes, see infra, Ch. 3d.
ideals represented by the fertility god-kings, Scyld and Dazhbog. In the Slovo’s case, this
collapse began in the time of Oleg Sviatoslavich, who set his grandson Igor a poor example
when he neglected to model himself on his ancestral prototype, and thus set his own precedent,
which his descendents were doomed to re-enact nearly a century later.

That the Russian nobility continued for some time to take part in fertility rituals demonstra­
tes that the princes still, to some extent, closely associated themselves with their forebears,
and with the prosperity of the land and its people. The choice of Dazhbog and all that he sig­
nifies as their ‘ancestral model’ was not, then, an arbitrary one on the author’s part, although
it is unlikely that he was quite as self-conscious about his imagery as such a detailed analysis
as this might imply.

In some respects Veles (Volos), the ancestor of Boian and the god of cattle (skotii bog
(PVL, 907, 971)), is a more perplexing figure than Dazhbog. Some scholars have attempted
to resolve the apparent anomaly of a cattle god acting as the ancestor of a celebrated poet by
interpreting Veles to be a general fertility god, possibly derived from or influenced by Freyr
or Thor. Nora Chadwick pursues the Scandinavian connection further with the suggestion
that skotii bog is a loan word from Old Norse skattr, meaning tribute money—the sort of free
tribute money taken from the Swedes by Freyr when he was ‘temple priest’—and that skot
may therefore be taken to mean both ‘cattle’ and ‘money’, and later ‘wealth’ in general. Taking
the idea that Veles represented wealth a step further, it is easy to see how this could
have become associated with the nobility, their patronage of the arts, and the notion that at
some stage Veles had been raised from his nomadic status to the level of culture god, or,
more broadly speaking, a type of fertility god. Still others discard the notion that Veles was a
cattle god at all, judging his epithet to be the product of misunderstanding on the part of the
chronicler who confused Veles with Saint Vlas (Blaise), the protector of herds and flocks.

Possibly the most interesting interpretation of Veles is given by Roman Jakobson who,
using etymological evidence, establishes him as a chthonic god. This idea is upheld by
Rybakov in his interpretation of a certain cosmological drawing in which a horned figure, whom
he takes to be Veles, is depicted supporting the earth from below, suggesting that he is a god
of the underworld. Jakobson believes the name Veles to be derived from the Indo-European

211 Nora Chadwick believes Volos to be derived from the Norse fetish, Völs, which was represented by the genitalia
of a horse, and that he is therefore a fertility god corresponding to Freyr, whose cult had associations with the horse
cult, although oxen were also sacrificed to him (The Beginnings of Russian History, Cambridge, 1966, 86ff.). The
majority of scholars do not subscribe to this idea, taking the conventional view that Volos was the Russian god of cattle
and wealth. This view is restated and developed by Roman Jakobson in ‘The Slavic god Veles” and his Indo-European
cognates’, Selected Writings, VII: Contributions to Comparative Mythology, Studies in Linguistics and Philology,

212 A logical conclusion, since up until the 19th century Russian (and no doubt other) peasants measured their
wealth in cattle. For a similar view of Veles see Anichkov, op. cit., 337. He also construes his original role as the god
of the Russian nation, and so when Oleg (907) and Sviatoslav (971) swear by him, they swear on behalf of the entire
nation as well as by their princely houses (311–13).

213 See N. K. Chadwick, op. cit., 87–9 (Chadwick takes the Ynglinga Saga as her Scandinavian source—ch. 12).

214 Mansikka, op. cit., 34, 40; A. Brückner, ‘Mythologische Thesen’, Archiv für slavische Philologie, 40, 1925, 6;
{idem}, Mitologia słowianska, 74–7; Afanas’ev, op. cit., 1, 94ff.


216 ‘Iazyckeske mirovovzenie. . .’, 16–17; Jazychestvo drevnykh slavian, M., 1981, 427 (Rybakov sees him as a
fertility god with a cult much older than Perun’s, linked to the fertility of the earth, cattle and cornfields, as well
as ancestor worship. His idol is believed to be located on the site of the temples of the Novgorod merchants. See
also Jazychestvo drevnykh slavian, 462ff., for a study of his place in the tri-partite universe). See also Brückner,
Mitologia słowianska, 83–7 (Using evidence based on Lithuanian sources, Brückner concludes that Veles is the god of
the underworld or Other World across the water where the souls of ancestors go).
root * wel, signifying 'sight' and 'vision' in the sense of 'prophecy', 'poetry' and 'magic'. He claims, furthermore, that this root, with its attendant body of meanings, is also found among Baltic deities, as well as in old Celtic terminology pertaining to the interconnected concepts of music, poetry, prophecy and magic, and also to the prophets and wizards who possessed these gifts and powers.\(^{217}\) If this be the case, then Veles may be interpreted as the god of poets, notably of the earliest, shamanic sort.

Before continuing it would be worthwhile to reiterate briefly the functions of shamans in early cultures.\(^{218}\) Shamanism has been defined as 'the most representative mystical experience of archaic societies',\(^{219}\) practised using much the same techniques all over Asia, the Americas, Oceania and among Indo-European peoples. The shaman is at once a combination of magician, healer, medicine man, visionary, priest, psychopomp, mystic and poet, who attempts to restore communication between Earth and the Other World (both Heaven and Hell) by passing out of his body while in a state of ecstasy and undertaking journeys through the cosmic regions. The first step he takes to achieve this state is to appeal to auxiliary spirits, usually those of animals, with whom he communicates in a secret language, often copying their cries, especially those of birds. Sometimes he wears a costume in the likeness of a particular animal, often feathers or a mask, and imitates their behaviour. Shamans were often thought to change their shapes into those of the animals they invoked, and to 'travel' through the cosmos thus, in a manner similar to OSinn.\(^{220}\) The second step preparatory to the mystical journey involves drum-beating and dancing, until the shaman has worked himself into a trance, real or simulated, during which his soul leaves his body and flies through the air, or descends into the underworld. Celestial ascent was contrived by means of a tree or post, symbolising to a great many cultures the Cosmic Tree or Pillar, which stands at the centre of the World where it connects Heaven and Earth and represents the constant regeneration of the universe. By the magic of his drum, his spirit flies around this Tree.\(^{221}\) In undertaking such journeys, the shaman is able to see into the future, and to interpret past and present events; he discovers the roots of illnesses and also answers to spiritual questions through his communion with the cosmos and with the dead. It is the poetic aspect of the shaman that pertains most to this study. As the specialist in incantation, the shaman selects the appropriate words and their combinations set to the right kinds of rhythms by which to invoke a particular spirit and to perform miracles. It is not just the spiritual intent behind the incantation that achieves the effect, but the inherent magic in the words themselves and their groupings; for it was widely believed that words had the

\(^{217}\) 'Voprosy sravnitel'noi indoevropeiskoi mifologii... ', 631-3; idem, 'The Slavic god Veles' and his Indo-European cognates', 41.


\(^{220}\) See Snorri's *Ynglingsa Saga*, chs 7, 16, for an account of OŚinn's ability to change shape at will (*Heimskringla*, 1). Among the Celts, the *fīl* ('poet') ate raw bull's flesh, drank the blood, and slept wrapped in the hide; during sleep invisible 'friends' gave him answers to questions which were troubling him (Eliade, *Shamanism*, 382). Shamans were also believed to fight one another in the shapes of bulls or eagles (*ibid.*, 381; Davidson, *The Viking Road to Byzantium*, 294).

\(^{221}\) See *Hávamál* (Neckel, 17-44), st. 138ff., where, to acquire knowledge of runes, OŚinn spends nine days and nights hanging from a tree, probably Yggdrasil, the Scandinavian 'Cosmic Tree'.
power to kill or to protect from death.\footnote{222} Ośinn’s runes were used not for literary composition, records or laws, but exclusively by priests for the working of spells, and continued to be closely associated with occult beliefs of the Norsemen from the second century until their conversion to Christianity.\footnote{223}

Thus poetry, the mastery of words, is closely related to the world of spirits and ancestors, to nature and the world of birds and beasts, and ultimately also to fertility,\footnote{224} for the shaman, through his incantations and interpretations, works towards the enlightenment and well-being of the people, and has intimate links with the Cosmic Tree which symbolises regeneration. As a god of the underworld, Veles emerges as a many-sided figure, but primarily as a shamanic one, represented perhaps in the form of his auxiliary spirit, the bull, and the prototype or Ancestor of poets who, through their poetic vision, not only entertain and inform, but also interpret, prophesy and enlighten. Here is what the author of the \textit{Slovo} writes of Veles’ protegé Boian:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Боян бо вищии, аще кому хотище пěснь творити, то растякашется мыслию по древу, сърымъ вълкомъ по земли, шизымъ орломъ подъ облакы...}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
О Бояне, соловью стараго времени! А бы ты сина плѣкы ущекоталь, скача, славно, по мыслию древу, летая умомъ подъ облакы, сивая славы оба полы сего времени, рища въ тропу Трояню чрьсть поля на горы.
\end{center}

(43, ll. 5–7; 44, ll. 22–5)

A number of things in these passages point to Boian’s shamanic nature. First, he is said to be \textit{veshchii} (vatic, prophetic), and apparently seeks out wisdom and inspiration for his songs through various shamanic devices. It is not he but his \textit{mysl’} or \textit{um’} (mind, spirit) that soars over the Tree (Cosmic Tree, perhaps?)\footnote{225} and across the sky in the shapes of nightingales and eagles, or traverses the land far and wide in the shape of a wolf. Through the use of verbs such as \textit{ushchekotal} (chirped, trilled) and \textit{skacha} (leaped) the author establishes a metaphorical connection between him and those creatures. Boian can also travel into the past where he gathers knowledge which he then ties in with the present, thus uniting in a sense all human events in \textit{illo tempore}, viewing and presenting them as a consolidated whole outside the constraints of human history and memory. In bringing together the past and the present in this way, he endows them with a greater clarity and significance.\footnote{226}

\begin{itemize}
\item[222] See Afanas’ev, \textit{op. cit.}, I, 404–12, on the magical properties of language, and how words denoting speaking, telling and knowing in many languages, incl. Russian, possess, influence or derive from auxiliary meanings related to magic. On poetry as a gift bestowed by the gods, see \textit{ibid.}, 401ff.; Turville-Petre, ‘Dreams in Icelandic Literature’, \textit{Nine Norse Studies}, London, 1972, 41 (Turville-Petre also notes that it was thought to be a gift from the dead, thus reinforcing the poetic art’s chthonic associations). The concept of poetry as a divine gift makes its way into Christian legend through the story of Caedmon. While still following a secular occupation, Caedmon would attend feasts which were followed by people taking turns singing. Unable to sing himself, he would always leave at this juncture. One night a man in a dream orders him to sing; when he does so, he sings his famous Hymn of Creation. From then on, he becomes famous for his versification of Scripture. (Bede, \textit{Hist. eccles.}, IV, 2).
\item[223] Turville-Petre, \textit{Origins of Icelandic Literature}, 17; \textit{ibid.}, \textit{The Heroic Age of Scandinavia}, 20–3 (The earliest Russian poets were probably also former cult leaders. See Zguta, \textit{Russian Minstrels}, xiii).
\item[224] The chain of associations between fertility, the earth and the sun, on the one hand, and death, ancestors and the Other World on the other, has been noted supra, 90.
\item[225] On the symbolism of the Tree and its possible analogues in the ON mythological Cosmic Tree, Yggdrasil, see Sharypkin, ‘Boian v \textit{SP} i poezia skal’dov’, 18–19.
\end{itemize}
The author no doubt also considers himself to some degree the inheritor of Boian's art, the legacy of Veles. He invests the expedition of Igor, its dramatic consequences and the apathy of the princes with a profounder degree of foreboding when he places them in sharp relief against parallel or contrasting events in the past, in the time of Igor's ancestor, Oleg. He evidently senses an obligation to analyse and expound upon events to illustrate the gravity of the present situation through historical precedents. There exists, therefore, this connection between himself and Boian, although the author relegates the latter to a distant, more magical (perhaps happier) time.227

The other personnage in the Slovo with shamanistic associations is Vseslav of Polotsk (d. 1101):

Under the year 1044, the PVL alludes to Vseslav's enchanted birth, and tells how he was born with a caul which magicians instructed his mother to bind upon him. He later became the subject of two byliny where his ability to change shape brought him victory over his enemies. As Volkh Vseslav'evich (most likely a contraction of volkh) he, like the Vseslav of the chronicle, had a miraculous birth and later, through the transformation of himself and his army into ants, conquered the Indian kingdom.228 The other bylina relates his encounter as Vol'ga with the peasant hero Mikula Selianovich, and contains echoes of the passage in the Slovo describing Boian's method of composition:229

Poхотелось Вольги да много мудрости:
Шукой-рибою ходить Вольги во синих морях,
Птицей-соколом летать Вольги под оболоки,
Волком и рыскать во чистых полях.

Vseslav's animal persona in the Slovo is the wolf (or 'fierce beast') and the verb repeatedly assigned to his movements is 'leap'.230 Like Boian, he is also said to have a vatic spirit. Describing Vseslav's supernatural nocturnal activities, the author writes that, travelling at an extraordinary speed between Polotsk and Kiev, he (or more precisely his spirit in a wolf's shape) crossed the path of great Khors', one of the gods of Vladimir's pantheon, generally held
to be another very ancient Slavonic solar deity, whose name is probably derived from the Persian word for 'sun'. He is not the same kind of sun god as Dazhbog for he appears to traverse his course at night. A. L. Nikitin and G. Iu. Filippovskii suggest that, rather than being the giver of heat and light, Khors' represents the sun in its nocturnal course, and is associated with the older and still strongly chthonic beliefs that continued to flourish in the north, in both Chernigov and Polotsk, together with wizardry and other pagan cults. Kur' Tmutorokania, therefore, might apply to some kind of underworld in the ocean, to which the 'dying' sun was believed to retire when it set in the evening, and from which it always 'resurrected'. If Vseslav's movements may be interpreted as shamanic, then this passage illustrates his spirit's flight through the Other World in company with the sun. Robinson takes Khors' to be the 'ancestor' of the Vseslavichi in the way Dazhbog is to the Ol'govichi; thus the author would have established a genealogical link between the two clans (whose heads had been allies) through the Sun, the 'god' of all princely houses. However, despite Vseslav's supernatural associations, he is subject in the end to the same laws that govern the other heroes of the Slovo. Although gifted with a vatic soul and a vigorous body, he falls victim to the consequences of his errors (54, ll. 10–11). His occult powers, unlike those of his bylina counterparts, did not extend to the realm of heroic military feats, for in that context he would have been judged on personal merit. Nor, according to Boian, did they avail him at the time of death (54, ll. 12–14). In this way, while not registering disapproval of Vseslav's occult activities, the author plays down their importance. Like Boian and Veles, Vseslav and Khors belong to a strange, more pagan past, although Vseslav's deeds as a prince and warrior remain closely linked with the present campaign.

231 Mansikka, op. cit., 285; Vernadsky, Kievna Russia, 51–6; Rybakov, Iazychestvo drevnykh slavian, 432ff. Anichkov (op. cit., 341) rejects the general (and more probable) view, stating that, as the action takes place at night, Vseslav could hardly be crossing the sun's path. He takes Khors' to be a nomen gentis and nomen loci of Turkic origin, and believes that Vseslav is simply traversing the area in which the nomads worshipped Khors.


233 'Khtonicheskie motivy v legende o Vseslave Polotskom', in Derzhavina, 'SP': pamiatniki, 144–7 (see also Patch, op. cit., 47, on the underworld within bodies of water). This idea is reinforced by the metaphor in the Boyars' Reply which compares the princes with suns and moons which sink into the sea (50, ll. 28–9/51, l. 1). The image of heavenly bodies setting is also a feature of folk lament, which has also found its way into literature (see the laments of Evdokia, wife of Dmitrii Donskoi, and the people of Russia in Slovo o zhbite velikogo kniaza Dmitriia Ivanovitcha, tsaria russkogo in L. A. Dmitriev & D. S. Likhachev, eds, Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi: XIV—seredina XV veka, M., 1981, 218–20, 222).

234 'Zakonomernosti razvitiia... ', 158. In 'Solnechnaiia simbolika... ' (35–6), Robinson notes that among many nations the sun cult was closely linked to the wolf cult, particularly among the Scandinavians, the Germans and the Slavs.

235 In 1067 (PVL, 162–3) Vseslav was betrayed by the oath-breaker, Iziaslav of Kiev and imprisoned. He succeeded to the Kievian throne in 1068 only to be overthrown by Iziaslav and forced to flee (PVL, 167–9). He had taken Novgorod, the ancient city of Iaroslav, in 1067, and a struggle ensued with Iaroslav's sons, which led to the battle on the Nemiga in which Vseslav was defeated. As possibly the bard of the house of Chernigov, which was allied to the house of Polotak, the author may have seen Vseslav as both a great and greatly wronged prince (On the author's sympathy for Vseslav, see Sapunov, 'Vseslav Polotaskii v SP', 77ff.).

236 What is meant by 'clever bird' here has never been satisfactorily explained. In this context, however, it is possible that the 'bird' may be meant to represent one of the more common shamanic auxiliary spirits, in which case these lines could read as follows: 'Neither a crafty man, nor a clever man, nor even a clever wizard can bypass God's judgement'.

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Much less can be said on the functions of Troian, Div and Stribog in the Slovo. Troian gets four mentions: two in relation to his 'age' or 'era' (48, l. 5; 53, l.25), one with respect to his 'road' (44, l. 25), and one with reference to his 'land'. Although his name is also mentioned in chronicles and in ecclesiastical works, he remains an enigma. A number of commentators favour the theory that he is in fact the Roman Emperor Trajan (527–117), whose history may have reached Rus' through Greek sources; others believe he may be some unknown legendary progenitor of the Russian princely dynasty; still others think Troian may have been an alias for the first Sviatoslav, who sired three sons. Most, however, concur that he was a god. Vernadsky takes him for Svarog, suggesting that the name derives from the Ukrainian word, troian (‘father of three sons or triplets’), and citing examples of similar triads in Indo-European mythology. Another theory holds that he was a god of the ancient Slavs, possibly derived from a mythical hero in Serbian oral tradition who was born of a dragon, and who is referred to as a god in other sources. What emerges in any case from the Slovo is that he is a passive figure like the other gods and, by viewing his era as the forerunner of the ages of Iaroslav and Oleg (48, ll. 5–6), the author presents him also in the light of an ancestral model or progenitor. In this respect his association with 'land' may also be significant; his and the land's antiquity (Vseslav's story begins in the 'seventh age of Troian') lend the narrative a broader historical base from which to observe men's actions, thus removing the events somewhat from strictly temporal restraints.

Div appears twice in the Slovo: first, just before Igor sets out to do battle (zbisia Div", klichet” vr"khu dreva—46, l. 14), then in the boyars' account of the misfortunes befalling Rus following Igor's defeat and Sviatoslav's dream (uzech vr"zhesa Div' na zemliu—52, l. 6). He is widely believed to be some kind of supernatural bird, or a spirit in the form of a bird, of Persian origin. It is not altogether clear whether he acts as a messenger to the Polovtsey, warning them of Igor's approach, whether he is a neutral bird or spirit of portent, or whether he is sympathetic to the Russians, hurling himself to the ground in grief at their defeat. This last view is supported by S. V. Shervinskii, who believes Div to be a hoopoe, a natural rather than demonic or mythical being, a messenger bird in Middle and Near Eastern tradition. Robinson, however, believes Div's function in the Slovo to go further than the symbolic, taking the traditional view that Div was a deity, and that he was the protector of Polovtsian lands and waters, entering Russian epic and the dveoverie of the Slavs in general as a result of social, economical and political interchange, as well as intermarriage. The Slovo also witnesses through its imagery that other totems of the Polovtsey, Pechenegs and other Turkic tribes had penetrated into Rus' and her culture. For example, the wolf was the centre of a flourishing cult among the Polovtsey, a kind of forefather who warned his descendants of success or failure in battle. So too were the aurochs, to whom Vsevolod is likened, and the swan, the personification of 'Injury' (Obida), subjects of cults.

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238 Kievian Russia, 53.

239 Osetrov, op. cit., 211.

240 Menges, op. cit., 192–3 (Menges states that Div is commonly regarded as a malevolent spirit related to the Bulgarian word for 'giant').

241 'Div v SP', in Dershavina, 'SP': pamiatniki, 134–40.

242 'O zakonomernostkah...'; 215 (he probably entered the ranks of the common East Slavonic deities at a fairly late date, possibly even the 12th c.).

243 The wolf cult, however, appears to have been fairly widespread in many pre-Christian societies (see Sapunov, 'Vsevslav Polotakii v SP', 79; Jakobson & Szeftel, 'The Vsevslav epos', 68).

244 The swan was an eponymous ancestor of the Turkic 'Swan Tribe' of the North-West (Menges, op. cit., 61, n.2).
It is possible that Div may have had shamanic origins as well. Just as Óginn’s ravens, Huginn (Thought) and Munnin (Memory), may have represented in highly mythicized form two helping spirits of the shaman in the form of birds,245 so too might Div also have possessed chthonic qualities, acting as an ancestral protector of the Polovtsy or possibly even the Russians. Although he is the only divinity in the Slovo not assigned to the past, he nevertheless makes no impact on the action itself, but moves along its periphery.

About Stribog still less is known for certain, except that he too is probably of Persian origin like Khors and Dazhbog.246 He appears in the PVL for the year 980 as well as in a few later references247 but while he is generally thought to be the god of the sky, wind and possibly storms, there is no mention anywhere of his association with the wind apart from the Slovo:248 Se vetri, Stribozhi vnutsi, veiut” s” moria strelami na khrabryia pl”ky Igorevy (47, ll. 19–20). As the ‘ancestor’, not of any of the characters, but of a natural phenomenon, Stribog in any case serves to reinforce the importance of genealogy in the work. The role of the wind in the Slovo becomes clearer, however, in Iaroslava’s lament.

The portrayal of Igor’s consort Iaroslava is more or less formalised in accordance with certain conventions. She is assigned the traditional feminine duty of lamentation249 at the traditional time (morning)250 and, following a preface in which she expresses her sorrow and desires, she addresses, also in a traditional manner, the three ‘lords’ (gospodiny) of nature—the ‘great Wind’, the ‘glorious Dnepr’ and the ‘thrice-bright Sun’:251

На Дунайя Ярославнынъ гласъ слышить, зегизцено незнаемъ рано къычет:  
«Полечно, рече, зегизцено по Дунави, омочо бебрянъ рукавъ въ Каяль рѣдѣ,  
утру князю кровавля его раны на жестоцый его тѣлъ.»  
Ярославна рано плачетъ въ Путтивлѣ на забралѣ, а ручки: «О вѣтрь, вѣтрило!  
Чему, господине, насильно вѣшиш? Чему мычешнъ Хиновскыя стрѣлки на

245 Eliade, Sham anism , 381. The heroic poetry of the Astrakhan Turks abounds in bird imagery, and the communal soul of the tribe, represented by the shaman, is symbolised through the form of a bird (Chadwick and Zhirmunsky, op. cit., 236–7). Birds gifted with speech and credited with wisdom also take part in human affairs (ibid., 236–7).

246 Menges, op. cit., 193–4; Rybakov, Iazychestvo drevnykh slavian, 432ff. Jakobson believes the gods Dazhbog and Stribog to be interconnected, or twinned ('Linguistic evidence in comparative mythology', in Selected Writings, VII, 30–1).

247 See for example, Slovo o tom’ kako pervoe poganii verovali v" idoly i treky im" klai i imena im" narekali... in which Stribog is mentioned together with Dazhbog and Pereplut (Tikhonravov, 107–10.)

248 For his role as sky god see Rybakov, Iazychestvo drevnykh slavian; Afanas’ev, op. cit., 1, 320–1. See also Brückner, Mito logia słowiańska, 98–100; Anichkov, op. cit., 339–40 (Anichkov believes that Stribog, like Khors, is also a nomen gentis. and that Stribozhi vnutsi does not define the winds, but is itself a vocative form).

249 See Lauri Honko, ‘Balto-Finnic lament poetry’, Studia Fennica, 17 (Finnish Folkloristics, 1), Helsinki, 1974, 10–11.

250 F. Ia. Priima, ‘Vnimaiia plachu Iaroslavny...’, Russkaia literatura, 1985, no. 4, 5. See also Hamšismdî (st. 1/5–8):

Ár um morgin
manna þyva
súþir hveriar
sorg um kveykva.

[At early dawn every pain can be felt,  
for human ills kindle grief.]

See also Beo., II. 1076–80, 2450–62; Dronke, op. cit., 225n.

251 Addressing natural phenomena in folk songs, verse and laments is a common practice among Slavonic peoples which has persisted into this century (see Afanas’ev, op. cit., I, passim (esp. 65ff. [the sun]; 142ff. [the earth])).
Iaroslavna’s invocation of natural phenomena and the reproachful, sorrowful character of her questions have many analogues in Russian and other lament traditions. She does not address the highly anthropomorphic representatives of natural forces which constituted Vladimir’s pantheon, but what may be termed the ‘folk’ gods: those abstract, informal, flexible and ever-changing entities or powers to whom people continued to pray for many centuries after conversion. In early medieval Rus’, all three aspects of nature to which Iaroslavna addresses herself were centres of fairly widespread cults, particularly the sun, the source of life and well-being, and rivers (represented here by the Dnepr) which were relied upon by the warrior and merchant classes. At the same time as she rebukes them, Iaroslavna also acknowledges the greatness of these forces, reminding each of his gentler aspect.

It has been suggested that the author uses Iaroslavna as a kind of echo for his own feelings as well as those of all Rus’; that the feelings of the Russian captives are ascribed to and embodied by her. This is no doubt also the case, but a closer examination of her role and the lament ascribed to her reveals that she too is closely tied into the ‘mythological’ fabric of the Slavo. Jakobson believes that the tri-partite structure of Iaroslavna’s lament on all levels, with its structural parallels and the particular natural forces petitioned, reflects the tri-partite universe inherent in the cosmological traditions of Indo-European nations. This consists of three regions: the ‘upper sphere’ of the Sky or Heaven, the ‘lower sphere’ which embodies the Earth, the Waters, and the regions below the Earth, and the ‘middle sphere’ which joins the two, to which the wind and the trees belong. In her lament Iaroslavna addresses each cosmic region through its corresponding representative: the wind of the middle plane, the Dnepr at the lower plane, and the sun in the upper stratum. Jakobson proceeds to draw parallels between this lament and the two ‘spiritual journeys’ of Boian. He notes that in all three instances the order of regions corresponds in beginning with the middle plane (Boian’s mind is said to soar up the Tree), and that the lament and the first reference to Boian’s communion with the cosmos (43, ll. 5–7) continue to run parallel through the lower and upper spheres, while in the second passage relating to Boian the order of the last two planes is reversed (44, ll. 22–5). He concludes that Iaroslavna may be a kind of vatic figure not unlike Boian. Such a proposition becomes more conceivable when Iaroslavna’s role is examined in the light of Scandinavian pre-Christian beliefs and practices.

252 E. V. Barsov, Prichitaniia severnego kraia, I, M., 1872, xii ff.; G. S. Vinogradov, ed., Russkie plachi (prichitaniia), L., 1937, ix–x; Honko, op. cit., 11–13 (the lament is a world-wide phenomenon, although it died out some time ago in most European countries, persisting longer in Balto-Finnic, East Slavonic and SE European countries (14–17)). See infra, Ch. 5b. (Laments).


255 ‘Komposisitsia i koznomologii plachi Iaroslavny’, TODRL, 24, 1969, 32–4 (here Jakobson also gives a fairly detailed analysis to support his theory, and adds that such a tri-partite form adheres closely to the rules of folklore).

256 Jakobson’s theory gains force when we consider the author’s choice of ancestral gods in relation to these regions: Dazhbog (Khors)—sky (upper region); Veles—underworld (lower region); Stribog—wind (middle region).
In both Slavonic and Scandinavian cultures, the fertility of the earth was essentially related to women. In the first century of our era, Tacitus writes that Nerthus (id est Terra Mater) was venerated with great devotion by the Germanic tribes of the Continent (Germania, 40). It was thought that Njörðr, the Norse god of the sea, ships and fertility, was actually a development from this early Germanic goddess, thus making Freyr and other male gods a comparatively recent phenomenon in Germanic mythology.257 Most peoples, including the Slavs, conceived the Earth as the maternal force and the Sky as the paternal force which, through rain and lightning bolts, impregnates the Earth.258 Tacitus demonstrates in the fourth book of his Histories that the connection between women and divinations, including the gift of prophecy, had been established quite early among the Germanic peoples.259 In early Rus’ women too played a central part in pagan rituals, particularly during the fertility festival of Rusalii, and were regularly reviled by churchmen as ‘lovers of Satan’ and ‘consorts of demons’.260 The practice of lamentation, which was almost exclusively reserved for women, originated, furthermore, in the rites pertaining to the worship of the dead in ancestor cults.261

This fusion between fertility cults and cults of the dead is most discernible in the person of Freyja, sister to Freyr, and principal goddess of fertility, birth, war, death and the eternal cycle:

Njord’s daughter Freya was a priestess of the sacrifices and first taught the Assland people [the Æsir, to whom Óðinn, Thor and Loki belonged] the magic art, as it was in use and fashion among the Vanaland people [the Vanir].

(Ynglinga Saga, ch. 4, 13)

Freyja is associated with a type of magic called seðr, by which she could foresee the future and bring about death, illness and misfortune. This magic she taught to Óðinn who also practised it:262

But after such witchcraft followed such weakness and anxiety, that it was not thought respectable for men to practise it; and therefore the priestesses were brought up in this art.

(Ynglinga Saga, ch. 7, 19)263

The seðkona (or upla, spákona), dressed in elaborate ritual costume, sits upon a high platform or seat where she sings spells while conveying herself into a state of ecstasy. During the trance her soul is thought to leave her body and adopt the shape of an animal or bird.

257 Davidson, Gods and Myths, 106. The Ynglinga Saga (Heimskringla I, Ch. 9, 22) names Njörðr, former temple priest, as the first king of the Swedes after Óðinn.

258 Afanas’ev, op. cit., I, 135–49; Komarovich, op. cit., 98; Rybakov, ‘Iaroslavskoe mirovozrenie...’, 9; Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, ch. 7 (‘Mother Earth and the Cosmic Hierogamies’), 155ff.


260 Rybakov, ‘Rusalii i bog Simargl’-Pereplut’, 95–6. Paganism is also believed to have survived much longer among women (Sapunov, ‘Iaroslavnaya drevnerusskoe iarochenstvo’, 329, n.20).

261 Honko, op. cit., 36ff.

262 In Lokasenna, Óðinn is reproached for practising seðr, which Loki considers to be unmanly (st. 24).

263 Translations from S. Laing, trans., Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla, II: Sagas of the Norse Kings (revised with intro. and notes by P. Foote), NY, 1978, 9, 12.
With information she has received during the séance, she answers questions usually concerning the coming season (whether there will be plenty) and the destinies of the young people present. On the whole, sevir appears to have been a divination rite, and the vglva, a close cousin to shamans and shamankas. Freyja was known to take the form of a bird and to travel great distances in this shape; and since she was the goddess of human love and prosperity, she was mainly consulted on these matters.

Freyja as well as Frigg (the wife of Oðinn and a fertility goddess especially associated with childbirth) are also depicted as 'weeping goddesses', although why it is that Freyja weeps her 'golden tears' is not quite clear. Frigg, however, mother of the gods' darling Baldr, sheds tears for her dead son. It is possible that she and Freyja were aspects of the same divinity.

Without suggesting that Iaroslavna was actually in any way associated with disreputable pagan practices, a parallel may nevertheless be drawn between her role in the Slovo and the chthonic fertility goddess Freyja and, to some extent, also Frigg. First, she is portrayed as a weeping wife standing, in the manner of Scandinavian vglvas, in a high place, on the city walls of Putivl', her son's capital. From there she makes her lament in a style considered typical of pagan incantations. The passage especially suggestive of this is her preface which under closer scrutiny reveals more than mere poetic reverie:

Полечю... зезиццю по Дунави, омочю бебрягъ рукавъ въ Каяла рацгъ...

(54, 2. 21-2)

Once again, through the instrumental form (zegzitseiu), a character in the Slovo 'assumes' the form of another creature; if not in actual fact, then at least in a sense too poignant to be strictly metaphorical. The sleeve, her 'bird's wing', which she proposes to dip in the waters of the Kaiala, brings to mind the long wing-like sleeves flapped by female dancers in the course of fertility rites, representing the 'bird-maiden', nymph or vila (a minor divinity or spirit of the fields and waters). Iaroslavna's first words express her desire to become a cuckoo, a bird traditionally associated with mourning, to fly over a great distance, and to be near her husband both in spirit and in 'fact' (since she cannot 'fly' to him, she can at least be with him though her spirit embodied in the form of a bird). Thus, simple words expressing a desire become invested with much greater significance when spoken by someone with occult or mystical associations; such words may have resembled or been part of a preliminary formula used to bring about animal transformation. Iaroslavna's preface, that is, the shamanic summoning of the 'auxiliary spirit', may also be seen as a preparation for her 'spiritual journey' to the three cosmic regions,

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264 Eliade, Shamanism, 385-7; Davidson, Gods and Myths, 17-19.
265 Davidson, Gods and Myths, 117, 119.
266 ibid., 123. The ambivalent nature of the fertility goddess in Scandinavia may be seen in the two distinct aspects of her cult as revealed in later sources. One aspect, represented by Frigg, was connected with marriage, family and childbirth, and was quite respectable. The other entailed certain practices, possibly connected with Freyja, which were recorded with abhorrence, and singled out from other pagan rites. Garbled accounts hint that even some pagans were horrified by these practices.
267 See Rybakov, 'Iazycheskoe mirovoozrenie... ', 28 (One of the ancient functions of Russian princesses, which persisted into later times, was the opening of the fertility festival of Rusali with a dance, in which they unfastened their sleeves so that they hung down to their feet, a practice much frowned-upon by the clergy).
268 Sapunov, 'Iaroslavna i drevnerusskoe iszychevstvo', 321.
269 On the significance of the long sleeves worn by women dancers during Rusali, see Rybakov, 'Rusali i bog Simargl'-Pereplut', 95.
the sort of journey the shaman undertakes when seeking answers to dilemmas, favours for supplicants and cures for the sick. In her case, she seeks the deliverance of her husband and his men, and applies directly to the forces of nature. By transcending the human condition, she endeavours to restore in some measure through her journey the lost communion here between the Cosmos (the Other World) and the temporal world which humans inhabit; this is always the shaman’s chief objective. This parallel is further sustained by the fact that one of the principal themes of the Slovo centres around the disruption of universal order and natural harmony occasioned by this and past campaigns. The ‘why’s’ of Iaroslavna’s petition are in fact rhetorical, since the elements in their harsher aspects merely reflect the chaos incited by the Russians when they transgressed ‘natural’ law and neglected their obligations. Following Iaroslavna’s lament, a modicum of order does indeed seem to be restored: Igor escapes by way of the river Donets, from whom he receives encouragement and even approbation (55, ll. 24–5), the sun shines benevolently upon Igor’s arrival in Rus’, and so man’s ties with nature are once again restored, at least for the time being.

270 Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 61–6. See also Chadwick & Zhirmunsky, op. cit., 234ff., on the link between shamanism and poetry among Turkic peoples.

271 Note the similarity between Igor’s movements before and during his flight and those of Boian and Vseslav: Igor’ sprit”, Igor’ bdat”, Igor’ mysliu polia merit” et” velikago Donu do malago Dontsa... A Igor’ knias’ poskochi gornastam” k” trostiu, i belym” gogoelim” na vodu, v”or”shiesia na b”s” komoni i kochi s” nego bosomes” ul”kom”, i potche k” lugu Dontsa, i polite, sokolom” pod” myglami... Koli Igor’ sokolom” polite, togaia Vlur” ul”kom” potche, trusia soboiu studeniuia rosu... (55, ll. 11–12, 16–19, 20–22). See also Robinson, ‘Solnechnaia simbolika...’, 37–8 for the view that what Vseslav did ‘literally’ (i. e. ‘run as a grey wolf’), the other characters of the Slovo do ‘symbolically’.

272 Among those who maintain that the gods were alien to the author are: Mansikka, op. cit., 26ff.; Rahiga, ‘SP i drevenerskoe iazycheestvo’, 23ff.

273 See Rybakov, ‘Iazycheskoe mirovoozrenie...’, 29; Routh, op. cit., II, 26ff.; Turville-Petre, ‘The cult of Othin...’, 4; Afana’ev, op. cit., I, passim (Afana’ev demonstrates throughout how the names and functions of divinities come, go and alter, but fundamental beliefs endure).
gods, it holds back on the periphery; rather, it heightens the events and their significance, and elucidates them, investing them with greater dramatic and lyrical dimensions. At times nature reflects the action so closely that it seems almost to replace it: for instance, instead of giving his audience explicit notice of the arrival of the Polovtsy, the author allows his listeners to draw their own conclusions by describing first the earth’s tremors, the muddied rivers, then as they get nearer, the clouds of dust, all caused by the thundering hooves (47, ll. 20–1). Besides disclosing the arrival of the Polovtsy here, the author also reveals the alarming speed, force, numbers and determination with which the Polovtsy come to join battle. Nature in the Slovo comprehends the entire cosmos, not just flora and fauna, but the sun, sky, rivers, seas, storms, night and men, both living and otherwise. Thus the repeated references to Russkaia zemlia are neither simply expressions of patriotic sentiment nor geographical detail, for they also invoke ancestry and genealogy, prosperity and misfortune, fertility and barrenness, the past and the present.

It has been observed that the most frequently recurring natural image in the Slovo is the sun. When a solar eclipse first warns Igor against undertaking his imprudent campaign, it appears that nature is against him (44, ll. 13ff.; 46, ll. 12ff.), since eclipses are universally recognised as ominous signs. When Igor chooses to disregard the omen, however, the sun acquiesces in his decision, ceases to interpose and, together with the rest of nature, merely reflects the events that ensue. The storm and chaos arising in the natural world act as a chorus on the fringe and echo the defeat to come. Prior to the first battle which the Russians unexpectedly win, the omens are nevertheless bad:

(46, ll. 12–15, 20–3)

Before the second battle, which the Polovtsy win, the signs are still more ominous:

(47, ll. 11–15)

In this last section the author moves from a ‘realistic’ description of nature (that is, the storms, the cries of birds and beasts, and the red dawn) to a metaphorical description in natural terms of the battle to ensue (the dust kicked up by hooves, the ‘lightning’ flashing from swords, the ‘thundering’ of the hooves and the blows, the ‘raining’ arrows).

The eclipse recurs as an image later in the boyars’ response to Sviatoslav’s dream:

(50, ll. 28–9/51, ll. 1–2)

274 Prior to the defeat of the English by the Normans in 1066, a celestial omen in the form of a comet appears and is interpreted as a portent (G. N. Garmonsway, ed. & trans., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, London–Melbourne, 1984, 194–5).
Besides reinforcing what the audience already knows to be the outcome of the confrontation, nature, together with the Russian women, the cities and the entire Russian land, also mourns the Russian defeat (49, ll. 18–27). When, on the third day, Igor’s banners fall: *Nicht’ trava zhaloshchami, a drevo s tugoiu k’ zemli prekilonilos’* (49, ll. 5–6). While nature is powerless to avert Igor’s defeat, it is nevertheless made to ‘aid’ Igor’s escape, in that it works with him in the form of dark night and especially in the persona of the river Donets. That Igor is conscious of nature’s close links to the lives of men is seen in his words to the Donets:

«О, Донче! Не мала ты величия, ледьявшую князя на взлыханьх, стлавшую ему зелень траву на своихъ сребреныхъ брезяхъ, одягавшую его теплыми мглами подъ сныно зелену древу. Стрежаше е гоголемъ на водѣ, чаницами на струяхъ, чрыньяды на ветрѣхъ.»

(55, ll. 26–30)

Immediately following this passage, however, the author recollects nature’s dark side. The Stugna, he says, presented a cruel contrast to the Donets when, during Monomakh’s war against the Polovtsi in 1093, his brother Rostislav was drowned as the Russians were retreating across it. Then, too, the flowers withered and the trees bowed earthward in their grief (55, ll. 34–5).

It is not only the author who sees men’s lives working in concert with nature; his characters are also aware of its omnipresence. When Igor defies the sun’s warning he understands fully the significance of his action, so that in the eyes of the author and his audience, his decision would make a dramatic impact. Consciousness of the world about them is also reflected in the natural imagery contained in the characters’ speeches. In his ‘Golden Word’ (*Zlato slovo*), for instance, Sviatoslav of Kiev uses a genuine natural phenomenon—the molting falcon’s protective nature towards his nest—with which to reproach Igor’s ‘unnatural’ act in leaving his own ‘nest’ unprotected (51, ll. 25–6). Later, in their pursuit of the fleeing Igor, khans Gzak and Konchak converse in natural metaphors when deliberating on what action to take should the ‘falcon’ (Igor) fly to his ‘nest’ (Rus’ or Novgorod-Seversk): whether to shoot the ‘falconet’ (Igor’s son, Vladimir), still their captive, or to ‘enmesh’ him in marriage with Konchak’s daughter (58, ll. 6–13).

In underlining the unity of purpose and action within nature and its close links with men, the author reinforces his own thesis: the need for unity among the princes and the unnatural character of their discord and apathy. All the characters in the *Slovo*, not only Boian and Vseslav, have close ties with the natural world: Igor and the Russian princes are associated with falcons (44, l. 27; 49, l. 18; 50, l. 24; 52, l. 20; 53, l. 2 (shestokriltsi—‘six-winged’)); the Polovtsi are likened to ravens, jackdaws or magpies (44, l. 27; 47, l. 8; 50, ll. 20–1; 56, l. 1); Ovlur, like Vseslav and Boian, runs as a wolf (55, l. 21); Boian is compared to a nightingale (44, l. 22); Vsevolod’s epithet is ‘fierce aurochs’ and his warriors are ‘grey wolves’ (46, l. 9; 47, ll. 26, 28); Iaroslavna laments like a sorrowful cuckoo (54, ll. 20, 21); while Igor and Vsevolod, and the younger princes, are likened to suns and moons respectively (50, ll. 28–9; 51, l. 1–2). Thus men, like the cosmos which they inhabit, must act in harmony, unite with one another as they are united with nature. The natural consequences arising out of man’s failure to co-operate in this way is illustrated by the days during and following Oleg’s fratricidal wars: *po Ruskoi zemli retko rataeve kikakhut’*... (48, ll. 19–20).

Through his use of agriculture as an image for war and the desolation it brings, the author transcends familiar associations, revealing similarities in otherwise dissimilar things. He shows how agriculture, war, life and death are much less diametrically opposed than they might appear to be, and that among these things exists an unexpected unity. One of the most poignant of such passages is the one relating the conflict in 1067 between Vseslav and the sons of Iaroslav on the Nemiga:

108
The impression of a vast, ever-present cosmos is further intensified by the author's panoramic overview, not only of time and events, but of the entire natural world, as if from a great height. For instance, rivers that are geographically far apart are mentioned in one passage as though in one breath (55, ll. 24–38—the Donets and the Stugna). When the author digresses in time, he just as easily changes location without forfeiting artistic unity. Like Vseslav himself, he 'leaps' from place to place in his narrative: from Kiev to Belgorod, to Novgorod, then on to the Nemiga near Minsk (53, ll. 25–32). Elsewhere:

The section following this passage heralds the Russian defeat in the second battle. Here the battle is made to envelop the whole earth, the sky, the rivers and the sea: the winds blow the Polovtsy and their arrows in from the sea; the earth groans; clouds of dust billow over the wide prairie; rivers run turbulent and muddy (47, ll. 19–23).

In Scandinavian heroic literature natural imagery, particularly 'pathetic fallacy' is rarely found although the wolf and the raven, the beasts of Óðinn, appear regularly as harbingers of war and death. The poetic view of nature in the Slovo, however, has more parallels in Beowulf than in any other heroic works. Near the beginning, following the account of the building of Heorot, the poet introduces his story with a description of the Danes revelling in their bright hall while the scop entertains them with a song of Creation, through which he delineates the vast and powerful cosmos in which men move:

275 On this device see Likhachev, 'SP i esteticheskie predstavleniia ego vremenii', 40–74. This subject is dealt with at length infra, Ch. 3.

276 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 120. The prerequisite for Baldr's release from Hel was that all creation weep for him. Because a single giantess refused, however, his death could not be reversed. The parallels between Baldr and Christ are quite evident (see Snorri, Gylfaginning, 88–94). In the Dream of the Rood, the entire cosmos laments at the Crucifixion, at the death of God:

(54, ll. 1–4)

[Darkness had enveloped with clouds,
the Lord's corpse, the shining splendour.
Shadow came forth, dark beneath the clouds.
All creation wept, lamented the King's death.
Christ was on the cross.]

(G. P. Krapp, ed., ASPR, II, 61–5, ll. 52b–6.)

277 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 57ff.; Davidson, Gods and Myths, 48, 65, 146–7. See also Schlauch, op. cit., 114–17, who notes that Norse heroes are identified only as the feeders of eagles, wolves and ravens, but are never identified with them; animal similes applied to heroes in Norse literature are extremely rare.
He who knew how to tell of the creation of men from long times past, sang of how the Almighty made the earth, a beautiful place, encompassed by water; the Glorious One set the sun and the moon as luminaries, as a light to land-dwellers, and adorned the regions of the earth with branch and leaf, and moreover, shaped the life of each kind of creature that moved about.

(II. 90b.—98)

This was the entire universe as men conceived it, and also the only reference in Beowulf to its fundamental beauty, order and goodness. It acts, then, as a backdrop against which the chaos and darkness, represented by the monsters and the places they frequent and inhabit, stand out in sharp relief. Almost immediately following the singer’s recitation of the ontological myth, harmony is disrupted by the appearance of Grendel, descendant of Cain and the progenitor of giants, elves and other corruptions. Because he is an outcast from the world of which the scop sings, his antagonism is aroused by the exuberance, the light and celebration of life taking place in Heorot. If not actually the personification of nature’s dark and chaotic side, he is at any rate one of its creations, a grim stalker of the wastelands, the master of moors and fen-fastnesses. The joyless (wynleas—l. 821) abode of Grendel and his dam is a fearful place:

Hie dygel lond
warigeaS wulfheofu, windige nessas,
frecne fengelad, 3ær fyrgenstream
under nessu genipu ni5ewiteS,
flod under foldan...

... 3ær mæg nihta gehwæm ni5wundor seon,
fy r on flode.

[They guard the secret land, wolf-retreats, windy bluffs, terrible fen-tract, where the mountain stream goes down beneath the darkness of the headlands, the water under the earth...]

... There each night a fearful wonder may be seen, a blaze upon the water.]

(II. 1357b.—66a.)

Even the hunted stag would sooner gladly lose its life where it stood than seek refuge in that horrible place (II. 1369–72). More terrors unfold when Beowulf and the Danes journey to Grendel’s mere. The barrenness and corruption which characterise the place contrast markedly with the kind of prosperity enjoyed by the warriors in Hro3gar’s hall. Heorot marked the pinnacle of Hro3gar’s achievements, and the benefits enjoyed there, like those bestowed by Beowulf upon the Geats, were the fruits of good government and successful military enterprise, but these were not safeguarded for all time. As kings, both Hro3gar and Beowulf, through some fault, weakness or error, invoked the menaces against which they were to prove powerless.

To the sea-faring Scandinavians the sea could be both beneficial and perilous: it carried the hero, Beowulf, to and from Denmark and it also acted as the final resting-place of Scyld,
but it could be cruel in winter (ll. 1130–3) and also the habitation of terrible monsters (ll. 545–8). Usually when some kind of natural harmony is disrupted, as in Beowulf’s foolish swimming contest with Breca, the sea ceases to act in unison with the hero.

In both the Slovo and in Beowulf there is a prevailing sense that, while the earth may be fruitful and good on the one hand, the hero moves constantly within a hostile world. Just as the sun, the source of life and well-being, and the wind, which rocks boats safely from place to place, turn against Igor and his host, so the earth and waters in Beowulf also reveal their dark side. The dramatic change in nature from peaceful fecundity to danger and barrenness, reflects the sudden vicissitudes in men’s fortunes, and confirms that nothing is inviolate. It will be seen, however, that the changes in nature’s moods are in no way whimsical for, as the Anglo-Saxon doctrine of wyrd demonstrates, the cosmos follows its own laws.

In Beowulf, the world is also viewed as though from a great height, emerging as a vast and inseparable component of the universe, not only in the eyes of the poet, but in the imaginations of his characters as well. Beowulf, for instance, tells the beleaguered Hroðgar that he knows how Heorot stands, unused, under heofones hador (‘beneath heaven’s brightness’—ll. 414). Hroðgar later describes how Grendel makes his attacks, when gloomy night glides over mankind and the whole earth beneath the clouds (ll. 646b–51). The comprehension of the earth in all its parts and its unity with the heavens is further reinforced in the Danes’ praise of Beowulf after his victory over Grendel:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{paetxe su} & \text{ ne nor} \text{e} \\
\text{ofer eormengrud} & \text{ofer næning} \\
\text{under swegles begong} & \text{sela nære} \\
\text{rondhæbbendra} & \text{rices wyrðra}.
\end{align*}
\]

[Many said repeatedly that over the earth there was no one better among shieldbearers under heaven’s expanse (arch), neither from the south nor from the north, nor between the two seas, who was more worthy of a kingdom.]

(ll. 857b–61)

In Hroðgar’s parting sermon to Beowulf he describes the fifty years of his reign, in which he ruled the Danes ‘under the sky’ (implying perhaps that his rule was marked by fertility, and thus prosperity); he had protected them from hostile tribes from ‘over the earth’ until he began to believe that he had no more adversaries left ‘beneath heaven’s expanse’ (ll. 1769–73). Such proved not to be the case.

In the world of Beowulf the ‘heroes under heaven’, the ‘mighty men on earth’, are inextricably linked to the cosmic order, which is at once both benevolent and antagonistic. It is precisely this vastness and the power of heaven and earth that highlight the heroes’ struggles, acting as something against which great men might pit their strength and monitor their courage. The daunting magnitude and force of the cosmos as it is presented in Beowulf and in the Slovo accentuates simultaneously the eventual hopelessness of heroic endeavour and the greatness of those who continue to strive against the odds.278

It is not, therefore, just the natural world, but the cosmos which comprehends it, within which heroes act and to which they appear to be more closely related than to any anthropomorphic deities, or even the Christian God; and while they are free to act on their own initiative, it is this cosmos that, in a sense, ‘judges’ their actions.279 Something has already

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278 See Tolkien, op. cit., 67.
279 Not the pagan gods of the Slovo, as Rybakov claims (‘Iazycheskoe mirovozzrenie...’, 25).
been said regarding the two references to 'judgement' (sud) in the Slovo. The first appears in the account of the death of Boris Viacheslavich (48, ll. 11-12); the second reference, this time to 'God's judgement', comes after the description of Vseslav's cunning, successes and misfortunes, in words attributed to Boian (54, ll. 12-14). Although these references could easily pass muster with Christians, it is conceivable that neither the author nor his audience would have been especially conscious of their full Christian significance, particularly since God is, on the whole, unobtrusive in the Slovo. 'God's judgement', a fairly stock phrase in Scripture, chronicles, military tales and ecclesiastical writing, may, in this case, have been inadvertently applied to an older concept among pre-Christian Slavs, later adapted to the Christian concept of destiny and judgement.

Practically nothing is known of any pre-Christian Slavic doctrine of 'fate', although many scholars have interpreted Rod and the Rozhanitsy, who were apparently closely linked to the ancestral cult and to fertility, as deities who marked out man's fate at birth.281 They were singled out as targets for condemnation by ecclesiastics, and their influence seemed to be feared the longest.282 It has been noted that the cosmos in the Slovo, represented by the sun and other natural phenomena, 'judges' the heroes, particularly the Ol'govichi, but the nature and source of this judgement remain something of a mystery.

The Old English concept of wyrd, mentioned eleven times in Beowulf, may help to shed some light on the meaning of sud in the Slovo. This force appears to be an unpersonified determinant of man's destiny, although it is also far from any kind of predestination. According to Anne Payne, it is a force that 'eventually destroys the lives of the violators of unknowable universal order in the world of Beowulf'.285 It is the blessing of freedom which causes men to fall; it is the 'balance that keeps the free choices of men from sending the universe astray'.286 She notes further that wyrd seems to come into play whenever a social code has been violated: when, for example, Hroðgar's courage and military prowess fail him through old age and complacency, Grendel begins his attacks on Heorot. Beowulf also establishes the ideal kingdom over which he presides complacently in his declining years, thus invoking wyrd, whose instrument is the dragon.287 He also invites wyrd by failing to recognise the interdependence, the duty of reciprocity, between king and retainers, and fighting the dragon single-handedly. Like Roland, he is guilty of a certain desmesure, but unlike that hero, who is a Christian, Beowulf fails to understand the nature of the fault or error that brings the dragon and death upon him.288

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280 See supra, 62.

281 See Rybakov, Iazyche to drevnykh slavian, 448-9 (Rybakov believes Rod preceded Perun, that he was an 'elder god' like Uranus or Chronos, the god of gods—443, 461); Komarovich, op. cit., passim (Komarovich links him more closely to ancestor cults).

282 Hence their names deriving from roots connected with birth and fertility (Rybakov, Iazyche to drevnykh slavian, 451ff., also 438-41); Bruckner, Mitologia slowianska, 117 (Bruckner states that belief in such beings was prevalent among Balkan and Slavic peoples, but it was a later concept, unknown in the time of Procopius).

283 Rybakov, Iazyche to drevnykh slavian, 441ff.

284 See supra, 86ff. Also Robinson, 'Solnechnaia simbolika...'; 13ff.


286 ibid., 17-18 (Payne sees wyrd as the Christian God's other face, and as separate from the order of nature). B. J. Timmer believes that the pagan concept of wyrd was gradually adapted into the Christian notion of Providence, so that in Beowulf, as in other AS poems, wyrd and God are used in parallel functions, although he admits that it is sometimes hard to tell how much of its fatalistic connotations the word had retained at that time (Wyrd in AS prose and poetry, Neophilologus, 26, 1940-1, 213-28). Certainly, the poet has left it a little vague.

287 ibid., 29-31.

288 ibid., 30-3.
In the *Slovo*, nature in the sense of the entire cosmos constantly reflects man-induced chaos, and often bears down harshly on those who upset universal harmony. When *sud* took Boris Viacheslavich, he and Oleg, with their pagan allies, were engaged in mortal conflict with their kinsmen, to whom above all others they owed fealty. They compounded the enormity of their crime further by leading the Polovtsy against their own people, the same hosts responsible for ravaging Rus’ on a regular basis, thus making her even weaker and more vulnerable to external threat. The kind of glory (*slava*) sought after in this way by Boris was unlawful, and therefore became his undoing. Sviatoslav of Kiev, the author’s mouthpiece, makes a clear distinction between the right and wrong kinds of glory when he rebukes Igor and Vsevolod:

«Рано еста начала Половецкую землемечи прельяти, а себя славы искати. Нь нечестно одолыте, нечестно бо кровь погану пролиисте».

(51, ll. 12-14)

The *Beowulf*-poet makes a similar distinction when he relates how *wyrd* took Hygelac, king of the Geats, who had embarked on a foolhardy expedition against the Frisians and lost his life:

```plaintext
...hyne wyrd fornam,
    syðan he for wlenco    wean ahsode,
    fahne to Frysum.

[...wyrd (fate) took him, when,
for glory’s (vainglory’s) sake, he courted trouble,
ennity with the Frisians.]
```

(ll. 1205b.–7a.)

By betraying his duty to ensure peace and prosperity for his people, and by disregarding his obligation also to his brethren princes, to his ancestors’ memories, to his descendants and to all of Rus’, Igor transgresses a fundamental law which states that glory without honour cannot be won; his quest for the ‘wrong’ kind of glory upsetting a greater, more intangible cosmic order. Although Igor survives the campaign, his army is virtually destroyed and the Polovtsian threat looms larger than before: events past and present, together with Boian’s alleged conclusion on the inevitability of ‘judgment’ (54, ll. 12–14) and the urgency of the author’s tone, all stand out as warnings to Rus’ and her princes that ‘judgement’ or ‘fate’ is at hand.

Inevitability is what *sud* in the *Slovo*, *wyrd* in *Beowulf* and fate in the Heroic *Edda* have in common. *Beowulf* itself proclaims: ‘*Ga政务 a wyrd swa hio scell*’ (lit. ‘Fate always goes as it will’—l. 455b.). *Atlamál*, which was composed some time in the late twelfth century, contains five references to ‘fate’ or ‘doom’; which, declares, Guðrun, none can defeat (st. 46/3). In *Hamðismál*, when the brothers make their last stand against the Goths, knowing and accepting in advance that they are about to die, Sǫrli says to Hamðir:

‘Kveld lifir maðr ekki
    eptir kviss norma.’

[No man outlives the evening
after the Norns’ decree.]

(st. 30/7–8)

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289 See st. 21/5; 25/7–8; 26/3–4 (in which Gunnarr responds to his wife’s dream thus: ‘I cannot evade my doom./since we have purposed to go.’); 34/3–4; 46/3. Fate crops up primarily in the sections dealing with the wives’ fears for their husbands, who, in turn, know that death is at hand, but carry on with their decision. According to Ursula Dronke, *Atlamáld* is stylistically post-heroic, since the earlier *Edda* give little evidence for pagan beliefs or any concept of the afterlife (*op. cit.*, 106).
In the *Edda*, however, there is no sense that fate is unleashed due to any upheaval of cosmic laws.

In *Beowulf* and the *Slovo* there are times when heroic law conflicts with cosmic law, and therein lies the tragedy. Beowulf the hero, for example, could not, after a long and illustrious career, import outside aid against the dragon in the manner of Hroðgar, and because he did not, he occupies an unparalleled position among heroes for all posterity. His duty to his ideal, however, clashed in some measure with his duty to the Geats, his people. With his power waning through old age, he could not continue to ensure the security and prosperity of his tribe single-handedly. When making his decision, Beowulf is aware that fate is at hand:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Him was geomer sefa,} \\
\text{wæfre ond wælfus,} & \quad \text{wyrd ungemete neah,} \\
\text{se ðone gomelan} & \quad \text{gretan sceolde,} \\
\text{secean sawle hord,} & \quad \text{sunder gedælan} \\
\text{lif wiflice...}
\end{align*}
\]

[He was sad in spirit, restless and ready for death, his fate was exceedingly near, which was to meet the aged man, seek the soul's treasure-hoard [body], sever life from body...]

(II. 2419b–23a.)

He also acknowledges *wyrd*'s mastery over men's lives:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{...ac unc [furður] sceal} \\
\text{weorðan æt wealle,} & \quad \text{swa unc wyrd geteoð,} \\
\text{Metod manna gehwæs.} \\
\text{...} \\
\text{þær he by fyrlste} & \quad \text{forman dogore} \\
\text{wealdan moeste,} & \quad \text{swa him wyrd ne gescraf} \\
\text{hreð æt hilde.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

[...it must be for us both at that rock (wall) as ordained for us by fate, Master of all men.]

(II. 2525b–27a.; 2573–75a.)

Igor also makes his own choice despite almost certain knowledge, thanks to the omen, of impending catastrophe. His freedom to disregard the portent results in his failure. Immediately following the eclipse, Igor reacts defiantly, proclaiming a preference for death to capture when he exhorts his troops (44, II. 15–17; 19–21). His sentiments are echoed by Beowulf just prior to his battle with the dragon:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{'Ic mid elne sceall} \\
gold gegangen, & \quad \text{oðfe guð nimeð,} \\
feorhbealu frecne & \quad \text{frean eowerne!'}
\end{align*}
\]

['I shall win gold with valour, or else war will take your king, terrible, deadly evil. ']

(II. 2535b–7)

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For the early English and Scandinavians, an awareness of Fate enabled men’s nobler qualities to emerge. Life’s circumstances led them to view the gods with a certain objectivity, and to a keen realisation of the power of Fate. In the poetry dealing with the gods, if a lack of fear or respect is shown at times, it is because men knew that the gods could neither hinder nor protect them; their proof lies in the story of Baldr’s death, which the gods could neither prevent nor reverse. To Fate, with whom there can be no bargaining, the heroes are resigned, and therefore take the liberty of acting on their own, often tragic, choices.

This idea was carried still further in Norway of the ninth and tenth centuries, especially during and after the period of social upheaval brought about by Harald Finehair. At that time, many men were driven from society through persecution or through some crime of their own doing. In time they would have lost touch with society and religion, and would have come to despise religious practices and belief in the afterlife. Not only outlaws were goSlauss, however; the Danish king Hrolf Kraki maintained that it was not the malicious, fickle and amoral Oðinn who ruled men’s lives, but fate, and so neither he nor his companions sacrificed to gods, believing instead in their own strength and courage. Poetry and sagas tell of other heroes from Norway and Iceland, outlaws or travellers, who had broken with native tradition, who did not sacrifice to gods, and who were none the worse for it. Even for those who believed in an afterlife, death was the greatest misfortune; and while its impact could be cushioned by the promise of a glorious reputation, nobody actually looked forward to the afterlife. Nevertheless, a man could not avoid battle for fear of his life, since it was also understood that death is life’s inevitable conclusion, and a glorious death in battle more decorous than death from old age.

* * *

Having examined the role of religion in heroic literature and its relationship to the heroic world view, it becomes clear that, while the Slovo shares many concepts and approaches in common with its Western European counterparts, it is, like them, also unique. On a more superficial plane, it would appear to reflect the ‘crusading spirit’ of the Chanson de Roland, with its recurrent references to ‘pagans’, but closer analysis reveals that such apparent religious partisanship does not constitute even a subsidiary theme in the Slovo. What is common to all these works, even the Chanson de Roland, is a fairly tolerant view on the part of authors towards pagans, whether they are the heroes or the enemy. Other Christian influences in the Slovo emerge through some of the language and style, and a small number of incidental references. Even where God is invoked, however, he is an ambiguous figure and cannot be said to have any direct control over the action.

The Slovo is especially unusual in its explicit references to pagan deities. Apart from a few oblique allusions to Scandinavian gods in the Edda and in Beowulf, the gods are entirely absent from the works under investigation here. Like that of the Christian deity, however, their role in the Slovo is entirely peripheral and, unlike the former, mainly passive. Their ‘role’, as such, is

291 See Davidson, Gods and Myths, 218. As told in the VegUspa (Neckel, 1–16), both gods and men are subject to Fate and to the end of the world (Ragnarok (‘fate of the gods’) or aldar ræg (‘fate of mankind’)). See also Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 260.


293 Turville-Petre, Myth and Religion, 264.
confined to the status of ancestors and, therefore, prototypes: Dazhbog, for example, recollects the idea of sacral kingship and thus the sacred duties of princes, while Veles, with his chthonic associations, recalls the duty of poets to exercise foresight and hindsight in their treatment of present events. The gods' ancient roots also give the narrative a broader temporal context. The handling of the gods in this way discloses, less a knowledge of the workings of the pagan pantheon than a close familiarity with the more chthonic aspects of pagan belief, particularly shamanism and ancestor worship. These far more enduring forms of paganism are reflected also to varying degrees in Northern literature, in the Edda and in Beowulf.

Closely tied in with chthonic beliefs is the more intangible pagan heroic concept of the cosmos and man's place in it. The cosmos embraces the forces of nature as well as the unpersonified power of fate, whose control over men's destinies remains somewhat ambiguous.

While Christian writers of early heroic literature grapple with the problem of accommodating their themes to their own world view in different ways, the common result is that, however 'Christian' or 'pagan' their works may be, the course of events is ultimately determined by the heroes themselves.
Time, Space and Historical Perspective in the *Slovo* and Other Heroic Traditions

The concept of temporal continuity from ‘ancestors’ (or prototypes) to ‘present’ heroes, and the way in which it overlaps with ideas relating to the earth has already been examined to some extent in the previous chapter. The author’s view of contemporary events relating to the past in the *Slovo* reflects old Russian concepts of history and origins, which do not distinguish events in Time.

While it is the author who determines the chronology, tempo and the historical events incorporated into his work, the overall treatment of temporal perspective depends on those concepts of time which are natural and customary in a given epoch. Dmitrii Likhachev points out that in the literature of pre-Mongol Rus’ (tenth to thirteenth centuries) there is as yet no fixed concept of the present with a boundary between it and the past, so that all ‘present’ action is understood in terms of past and future actions.\(^1\) He points out that this also holds true for ancient and other medieval literatures. Referring specifically to early Russian literature he says: ‘...in contradistinction to our own concept of time, which situates the future ahead of us and the past behind us, the medieval Russian concept of time called past events *perednie* (as situated in front) and arranged time not in an egocentric manner (relative to ourselves) but in a single series each time, from the beginning until the present or the *poslednie* (as situated behind) time’.\(^2\) He observes, furthermore, that in medieval literature the ‘nontemporal’ (‘supratemporal’ or ‘eternal’) can be as much an element of narrative art as time is, and is dialectically opposed to the ‘naturalistic’ representation of time found in the chronicles and in certain other historical writings.\(^3\)

Likhachev goes on to point out that folkloristic genres, on the other hand, lack a threedimensional concept of time and a sense of temporal continuity outside the strict confines of the narrative at hand. For example, the *liricheskie pesni* are always orientated towards the present, while the *byliny* are strictly localised in a conventional epoch of Russia’s past, a ‘golden epic age’. Events in the latter take place in ‘closed time’, that is, beginning at the start of the work and ending with it. *Byлина* time is developed in only one direction (as is ‘literary epic’ to a large degree), but there are no returns, except in direct speech, in which such returns are possible.\(^4\) The action is thus confined within strict temporal parentheses.

a. The heroic view of time: historical digressions in the *Slovo*

As a rule, heroic narrative is essentially linear in structure in the sense that there are no subplots or parallel action. This may be observed particularly in oral epic where the constraints on the poet’s technique of composition are obvious. In literary epic, however, there is greater scope for developing the narrative primarily through the use of digressions, which must, nevertheless, have a direct bearing on the central action. To do this, the author does not stop the action

\(^{1}\) ‘*Predstavleniia o vremeni v Slove*’, in ‘*SP*’ i kul’ tura, 202–4.
\(^{4}\) ibid., 89–94.
while indulging in reflection with his audience; rather, he transports the reader or listener to another plane from which heights he may observe past and present events as an interdependent unit, a constant reiteration and continuation.⁵

The amount of space dedicated to the events of the campaign itself in the *Slovo* is small. The main action is enriched by a variety of motifs, many of which reflect other literary genres, but which also constitute part of the main narrative, placing the events of 1185 in a broader context that embraces all of Rus' and her fortunes, thus creating a more broadly-based present: Sviatoslav's dream and his *Zlato slovo*, Iaroslava's lament, the author's eulogy and his appeal to the Russian princes. Although these passages may contain references to the past, they cannot, strictly speaking, be regarded as digressions, since they form a part of the 'present' action, and the author is simply presenting in sequence things that are happening at the same time. He also uses them in some measure to unfold additional details of the battle and its implications. To facilitate in distinguishing between passages such as these and 'real' digressions, Adrien Bonjour, in his important study on the digressions in *Beowulf*, has identified two types of 'digressional units': 'episodes' and 'historical digressions'. The above-mentioned passages would fall into the category of 'episodes', in that they are moments which form a real whole, yet are merged with the main narrative, whereas digressions are more of an adjunction and generally entail a sudden break in the narrative; such distinctions need not be absolute, however.⁶ These episodes, then, are quite distinct from the historical digressions in the *Slovo*.

The following, in chronological order, may be characterised as genuine digressions: 1. The 'Golden Age' of Boian, Iaroslav and Mstislav, with special emphasis on Boian's poetic method. This digression falls into two parts, with the solar eclipse and Igor's exhortation to his troops sandwiched in between (43, l. 5-44, l. 7; 44, ll. 22-31). 2. The less happy and more recent age of Oleg Sviatoslavich and the first internecine feuds which resulted in the deaths of Boris Viacheslavich and Sviatopolk's father (48, ll. 5-22). 3. The author's eulogy to the still more recent Sviatoslav of Kiev. Although on the one hand this passage gives the impression of being more of an 'episode', since the author uses it to contrast directly the careers of Sviatoslav and Igor, it also treats events distinctly outside the present action and fits in with the reminiscent spirit of the other digressions (49, l. 31-50, l. 13). 4. The bi-partite Vseslav section which incorporates the tragic fate of Vseslav's grandson Iziaslav Vasil'kovich (53, l. 25-54, l. 14). 5. The brief, and final, invocation of Boian (and the proverb attributed to him concerning the inevitability of God's judgement) towards the end of the work (56, ll. 14-17).

These digressions, far from being reminiscences tenuously connected with the plot of the *Slovo*, demonstrate the highly sophisticated artistic unity of the work. They represent, more or less, three strata of time: the recent past of Sviatoslav's victories; the more distant past occupied by Oleg and Vseslav, when the collapse of Rus' is observed to begin; and the almost legendary age of Boian, Troian and Iaroslav. Like the 'episodes' referred to earlier, they enlarge the present action, removing it from its temporal constraints. The author leaps to and fro in historical time, making all events, as it were, simultaneous; thus, through the past, he elucidates the present and anticipates the future.

The author's excursions into the past are not as arbitrary as they may appear, for there emerges a kind of pattern in the digressions, which may be represented in the form of a pyramid. The work begins and ends with allusions to Boian. These are followed and preceded respectively by the histories, further up the temporal scale, of Oleg and Vseslav, which in turn converge in the recollection of Sviatoslav's exploits:

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⁵ *ibid.*, 76.

⁶ *Digressions*, xi.
Another pattern is disclosed in the author's choice of the historical limits which he imposes on his work: "Pochnem' she, brat'ie, povest' siiu ot' starago Vladimera do nyneshn'ago Igoria..." (44, ll. 8-9). Still earlier in the narrative, in his rhetorical 'dilemma' as to which style he should employ, the author reaches back and recalls 'vatic Boian' and his songs celebrating Iaroslav the Wise, his valiant brother Mstislav (d. 1036) and his grandson Roman (the brother of Oleg and the great-uncle of Igor and Vsevolod). The unit of time with which he proposes to work is significant: on the one hand, the first Vladimir may be regarded as the 'founder' of Rus' in that he made her strong and unified (at least this is the historical myth to which the author apparently subscribes), while on the other hand, Igor, with the rest of his princey contemporaries, is seen as the destroyer of Rus' through his preoccupation with local interests and personal pride. In this respect, then, while Igor may have been unimportant in himself, he also emerges as a kind of 'archetype'.

The author's historical references appear at first to be vague and disordered because it was not his intention to reconstruct a chronicled history, but to present a self-contained and interdependent history of Rus' from her inception to her destruction (as he sees it); in other words, a complete cosmogony and eschatology. This almost mythological conception of the

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7 For an interesting analysis of the relationship between the past and the present, see T. M. Nikolaeva, 'Lingvotekstologicheskijes sredstva v 'SP': Pole proshlogo-nastoiashchego i gubinnye smyslovye oppositii', Scando-Slavica, 29, 1983, 25-37.

8 The generally accepted view that in this passage the author is defining the chronological limits with which he is to deal in the tale, is opposed by Robert Mann both on syntactical grounds, and on the basis that Vladimir features nowhere else in the work. Using linguistic evidence from other OR texts, he concludes that there is a number missing, and that the passage should be taken to mean, simply, that 70 years have passed since Vladimir's rule to Igor's campaign ('A note on the text of the Igor Tale', Slavic Review, 39, 1980, no. 2, 281-5). However, seen in the context of the whole work and its comprehension of time and ancestors, the notion of 'beginning' the tale with Vladimir makes sense, for not only was his reign conceived as a 'golden age' in the history of Rus', but the civil wars which provide the focus of the Slovo began with his direct descendants, including Iaroslav and Mstislav. Matters only became further exacerbated by Oleg and Vsevolod. Others have suggested that the Vladimir referred to in the SP is Monomakh, but as will be observed in the course of this chapter, he does not fit into the chronological flow of the work, nor with the author's artistic intention. That the character in question is indeed the first Vladimir is supported by the fact that the celebration by poets of a past 'heroic age' as one with special qualities which have been lost is a common feature among the heroic traditions of the ancient Greeks, the Icelanders, the French, the Kalmucks, the Kara-Kirghiz and many others (see Bowers, op. cit., 366-7; C. R. Bawden, 'Mongol: the contemporary tradition' & Hatto, 'Kirghiz: mid-nineteenth century', in Traditions, 273, 310). In early AS England the most popular subjects of song were always the old heroes of the Continent (cf. Beowulf, Widsith, Waldere).

9 See Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 36 ('The poetic creation, like linguistic creation, implies abolition of time. ... It is said, moreover, in our own days, that for a great poet the past does not exist: the poet discovers the world as though he were present at the cosmogonic moment, contemporaneous with the first day of Creation. From a certain point of view, we may say that every great poet is remaking the world, for he is trying to see it as if there were no Time, no History. In this his attitude is strangely like that of the "primitive", of man in traditional society').
The events recounted in early Russian military tales, on the other hand, are not normally placed in such a universal context, and digressions are rare if they exist at all. Such is the case with the Zadonshchina, which otherwise shares many features in common with the Slovo. Only the conventional opening of the tale gives the present action a broader historical dimension. Each major redaction recollects Japheth, the legendary ‘founder’ of Rus’, then the hardly less legendary Boian and his panegyrics to the earliest princes of Rus’, from the quasi-legendary Riurik (or, in some cases, Igor) to Iaroslav the Wise. The concept of a nation’s past as an extension of early world history is especially characteristic of Byzantine and Russian chronicle writing (and also of hagiography, although in a different form). In the Povest’ vremennykh let, the introduction of which is taken from the Chronicle of Hamartolus, the history of Rus’ is seen to begin after the Flood, when the earth’s inhabitants have formed into separate nations and the sons of Noah have divided up the earth amongst themselves, with Rus’ falling to Japheth’s lot (1–3). There is a kind of half-heartedness, however, in the Zadonshchina’s invocation of the foundation and early greatness of Rus’ and, while it does not purport to be a chronicle, these sections are too perfunctory, inconsistent and, in some cases, historically faulty to be viewed as anything more than a general adjunct to the author’s glorification of the living grandsons of the early princes—Dmitrii Ivanovich and his brother Vladimir Andreevich—who, like their forebears, exercised their courage and efforts on behalf of the Russian land. There appears to be otherwise no artistic justification for the historical allusions to Boian and the early Russian princes, since they lend no visible continuity or balance to the tale, while the selection of princes invoked in the different redactions seems purely arbitrary.

As in many other respects, the Slovo is unique among early Russian works in its treatment of time. Among non-Russian heroic epics, however, a similar approach to time may be observed in Beowulf; while it may differ from the Slovo in certain respects, the artistic intention is much the same. The Beowulf-poet takes the histories of two nations, the Danes and the Geats, in whose fortunes the hero, Beowulf, plays a pivotal role. These he places within a larger universal context, where a more remote past is invoked, the ‘beginnings’, as it were, of Danish history, and the ‘end’ of an era, as well as of the Geats, is foreshadowed. Beowulf and his career may be said to enter somewhere in medias res, a history within a larger history, for the poem is not exclusively concerned with telling his story. As the poem opens the poet recalls Scyld, the eponymous ancestor hero of the Danes (Scyldings), who came to them in their lordless time of calamity and unified and strengthened them both himself and through his dynasty. In a sense, he could be regarded as their ‘creator’ and a prefiguration of Beowulf who later ‘redeems’ them. The poem bearing Beowulf’s name quite naturally ends with his death, but the impending fall of the Geatish nation is strongly foreshadowed. At the same time, the dark hints and allusions throughout the poem to the eventual fall of the Danes through a struggle for succession following Hroðgar’s death culminate in more direct prophecies of doom. The poem, then, not unlike the Slovo, opens with a ‘creation’ of a nation and ends in expectations of destruction. Although the establishment of the Danish nation and the death of Beowulf with its inevitable consequences for the Geats have no historical relationship, they provide the

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10 Und., 536; Hist 1, 541; KB, 548; Syn., 551.

11 Oleg has been entirely omitted from the genealogies; Und. omits Riurik; Syn. omits Igor; Vladimir is absent from KB and Syn.; only Iaroslav features in all the redactions. While Sviatooslav Igorevich receives mention in all but Und. as the father of Vladimir, only KB (believed to be the oldest redaction) lists him as one of the princes praised by Boian. Perhaps the later copyists deemed him, an obdurate pagan, an unsuitable example for the tale’s champions of the Christian faith. KB is also the only redaction to contain the name Boian, which has been emended variously elsewhere to: boiarin (Und., 536); boian (Hist. 1, 541); veshchi buinyi (Syn., 551).

12 See Klaeber, op. cit., livii ff.
poet with a ‘beginning’ and an ‘end’ to the world he has ‘remade’.\textsuperscript{13} The numerous historical digressions are skilfully woven into the narrative without disrupting it, while the cross-relations in time convey a sense, as they do in the \textit{Slovo}, of events taking place, not in chronological order, but as though they have been superimposed on one another. The vast expanse of time with which the author of the \textit{Slovo} is dealing is encapsulated in only two lines, transporting the audience through three epochs:

\begin{quote}
Были в'єчи Троїни, минула л'єта Ярославля, были пл'єци Олговы, Ольга Святъславовича...
\end{quote}

(48, ll. 5–6)

Just as the figure of Scyld anticipates Beowulf, so does the figure of Oleg prefigure Igor. In his allusion to the ambiguous Troian here and elsewhere, the author invokes the ‘old epoch’ of legend, a purely pagan time populated by pagan deities such as Dazhbog, Veles and Stribog—the \textit{pradedy}—to which Vladimir also belonged in the earlier part of his reign. The main action of the \textit{Slovo}, however, is more closely confined to the two epochs (loosely termed \textit{dedy} and \textit{vnuky}) of Oleg and his grandson Igor.

How events in this earlier era prefigure those in the present era has been demonstrated in some detail by Boris Gasparov.\textsuperscript{14} As already observed, the epoch of Oleg and Vseslav represents the age of the ‘first feuds’ which are echoed in the present age of Igor. Boian also belongs to this age of \textit{dedy} because he recollects these early feuds, while the author of the \textit{Slovo}, because he is witnessing the strife of the present age, belongs to the era of the \textit{vnuky}. The age of Vladimir and Iaroslav (referred to as \textit{staryi} (44, ll. 2, 8, 22; 54, l. 16; 56, l. 15) and \textit{davnyi} (48, l. 9)) may also be seen to prefigure later events, extending into the era of Oleg and Vseslav and beyond. For instance, Mstislav’s fight without weapons could be seen to anticipate the warriors of Iaroslav of Chernigov, who fought with knives but without shields, ‘ringing out their ancestor’s glory’. Thus the distant epoch of Troian and the pagan gods (as well as Vladimir and Iaroslav, although, strictly speaking, their eras were not wholly pagan) continues into the epoch of the late eleventh century, the time of the \textit{dedy}, Oleg and Vseslav, which is characterised by tokens of Christian culture, such as churches and God’s judgement, but which, judging by the Vseslav digression, also had close pagan associations.\textsuperscript{15} This era in its turn merges with the era of the \textit{vnuky}, a primarily Christian age in which pagan ideas are represented in the form of allegorical fabulous beings (Div, Karna, Zhia, Obida). Gasparov proceeds to note constant parallels between the main action and the historical digressions. There are close similarities, for instance, in the fortunes of Igor and Vseslav: both are described as fleeing after battles and, more significantly, as possessing the attributes of skin-changers. Likewise there are many parallels between Igor’s campaign and the battle of Nezhatina Niva: when Igor ‘steps into his golden stirrup’ (46, l. 11), his action is reminiscent of Oleg also ‘stepping into his golden stirrup’ before embarking on an equally disastrous campaign (48, l. 8); just as at Nezhatina Niva ‘feuds were sown and sprouted forth’ (48, ll. 16–17), so in Igor’s campaign ‘the black earth was sown with bones and watered with blood’, and a ‘harvest of sorrow’ came up over Rus’ (48, ll. 26–8); carrion beasts also feature in both battles as well as images of macabre feasts (46, ll. 20–3; 48, ll. 19–22).\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} See supra, n.9.

\textsuperscript{14} op. cit., 160ff.

\textsuperscript{15} See supra, Ch. 2, \textit{passim} on the tenaciousness of pagan beliefs and traditions in Rus’.

\textsuperscript{16} Gasparov, \textit{op. cit.}, 160–71. See also Likhachev, ‘Istoricheskie i politicheskie predstavleniiia autora \textit{SP}’, 113–15, on the notion that present-day Rus’ is not distinct from the past, that the author does not seek reasons in the past for the present conflict and feuds, but sees them as a direct continuation of the feuds of Vseslav and Oleg.
In contrast to the *byliny*, which do not comprehend time outside the events in hand, the *Slovo* does not begin and end with the events of 1185. The past is as much a component of the present insofar as it anticipates it, not only through historical repetition, but also through its imagery; and, while there is little overt speculation on the future in the work, there exists an overriding sense that, like the past, present events serve to foreshadow the course of things to come. The most explicit anticipation of impending trouble is expressed through direct speech between Gzak and Konchak who, while on Igor's tail, plot the ensmarement of his son Vladimir through marriage to Konchak's daughter; their prediction of future hostilities between the Russians and the Polovtsy weakens the impact of the optimism at the close of the work, to some extent giving the lie to the assertion that all is now well in the land of Rus' on Igor's return:

Млъвят Гзакъ Кончакови: «Аже соколъ къ гнѣду летить,—соколича ро- стрѣлявъ своими злѣчными стрѣлами». Речь Кончакъ ко Гзѣ: «Аже соколъ къ гнѣду летить, а въ сокола опутавъ красною дѣвицею». И рече Гзакъ къ Кончакови: «Аще его опутавъ красною дѣвицею, ни нама будетъ сокола, ни нама красны дѣвице, то поучнъ нѣмъ птици бити въ полѣ Половецкомъ».

(56, ll. 6–13)\(^1\)

With the future left open-ended in this way, and the past reaching far back into myth and legend, the events of 1185 comprise merely an episode, albeit an important one, within a larger history. It is, therefore, the task of great poets such as Boian and the author of the *Slovo* to—in the latter's own words—*svivaia slavy oba poly sego vremeni* (44, ll. 24–5); that is, they must draw together conceptually past events and the chain of events they engender to reveal history as a continuum outside the constraints of chronological time.

Apart from *Beowulf*, to which reference has already been made here, no other European heroic tradition appears to share the *Slovo's* penchant for historical digressions and for what Likhachev calls its temporal 'monumentalism', with its concept of history as beginning at some mythological or biblical juncture, if not at Creation itself, and having no end.\(^2\) This is not to say, however, that certain common features in the expression of heroic time are not discernable. All of the examples of European literary epic surveyed here (barring *Maldon*) are set in a 'glorious' heroic past, although the authors' attitudes reflect more or less contemporary ideals: only in the case of *Beowulf* is there an additional layer of retrospection, which is best exemplified by the Scyld episode and the minstrel's song of Sigemund's exploits.\(^3\) Despite the fact that the remainder contain no historical digressions as such, their treatment of temporal perspective reveals much about contemporary views on the relativity of time, and suggests that temporal distinctions were not always clear-cut.

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\(^{1}\) Gzak's misgivings about such alliances ensuring peace and security are echoed in *Beo.*, where a marriage is arranged between Hroðgar's daughter, Freawaru, and Ingeld, son of the Heathobard king. In his account to Hygelac, *Beowulf* voices doubts concerning the wisdom of this arrangement, saying that, far from ending their long-standing blood-feuds, it was likely to reopen old wounds and foster resentment and hostility between the retinues (ll. 2024–69). An earlier passage illustrates the grief that may befall a woman in such circumstances: Hildeburh, Danish wife of Finn, king of the Frisians, loses her husband, son and brother in a clash between her kin and the Frisians (ll. 1067–1159).

\(^{2}\) Although the 'history' of *Beo.* apparently begins with the Danish culture hero Scyld, the work also contains allusions to the origins of the world (e.g. the Danish *scop*'s 'Creation' song (ll. 86–99); Grendel's descent from Cain (ll. 102–8)).

\(^{3}\) It is uncertain whether *Maldon*, which is not set in a distant heroic age, would have contained historical allusions, since it is a fragment lacking a beginning and an end. Given the poem's heroic character, however, and the fact that pedigree is emphasised there, it is hard to imagine the poet omitting altogether any references to historical figures, particularly since the characters were relatively minor figures in OE history and song.
In a manner uncommon to heroic narrative technique, the scenes in the *Chanson de Roland* alternate between the Saracens and the Franks, thus investing the work with a more naturalistic sense of time and chronology. The poet, however, is otherwise very free in his treatment of time, slowing it down or speeding it up as his subject matter demands for dramatic effect. As with the 'episodic' passages in the *Slovo*, chronology is sacrificed through the depiction in sequence of events which must have occurred simultaneously, in particular, the endless series of single combats. Battles naturally being the focal points of such works, the action is slowed down while the poet appends a few biographical notes and personal commentaries to each combatant, and recounts every grisly detail of the contest. In other parts of the fight between the French and the Saracens the action moves at a breathless pace, much like the actual battle scenes in the *Slovo*. The poet also takes license with time when he claims on more than one occasion that Charlemagne is two hundred years old (II. 523-4, 537-9, 552), and that his fiercest adversary, Baligant, has outlived Homer and Vergil (II. 2615-16). Where the *Roland*-poet fits in with Likhachev's view of 'epic monumentalism', is in his depiction of these two larger-than-life characters, whose encounter shakes the very cosmos. Events in the second part of the poem have thus been generalised, whereas in the first section they are localised. The poem begins *in medias res* and ends with a weary Charlemagne being summoned to yet another battle. This may be explained by the fact that, while the episode is complete as far as Roland is concerned, the poem is actually part of the Charlemagne cycle of *chansons de geste*, and the Roland song, a separate composition in itself, is simply couched within a song about Charlemagne, acting as a pivot for another one of the king's great victories over the enemies of France.

The heroic *Edda* also comprise cycles which treat the adventures of early Germanic heroes and their interrelations, the individual episodes often developing out of events treated in other poems, to which references may be made in the course of the narrative. In numerous cases, the seemingly ageless figure of Guðrún acts as the common link between events that are separated by considerable gaps in time. The early part of *Hamðismál* consists of a long lament, in which Guðrún relates the long history of calamity which has beset her (much of which is treated in separate poems), thus providing not only the background necessary for understanding the present tale, but also the sense that these disasters somehow prefigure and culminate in the tragedy of the present tale. Guðrún, apparently, is fated to lose everyone whom she loves—Sigurðr, her brothers and most of her children. In sending her remaining children, Hamðir and Sríli, out to avenge their sister's death, she ensures that the tragedy of the past is relived and fulfilled. Otherwise this tale and the *Atlakvöld*, being earlier, possess a precision of plot that leaves no scope for historical digressions. While the later *Atlamál* contains many embellishments, there is nothing which may be construed as a genuine digression.

The *Nibelungenlied*, unique in its structure and in its weaving together of genres and ideals, is also unusual in its treatment of time. Here, rolled into one, are the Norse tales of Sigurðr, Brynhildr, Guðrún (Kriemhild) and the terrible catastrophe at Atli's (Etzel's) court. The action is punctuated by intervals of great length during which a long time is supposed to have elapsed without, however, wreaking any change on the characters (Giselher is still 'young' despite being at least fifty years old by the end, and Kriemhild, who must have been a very old woman by then, continues to be beautiful and alarmingly energetic). Apart from its short formulaic opening hearkening back to ancient tales of unnamed heroes, the work lacks any digressions into history. Rather, the work is of a forward-looking nature and may thus be said to be historically self-contained. Every action takes place under the shadow of future events. Through numerous dark hints, dreams and fairy prophecy, the audience's attention is directed at the impending calamity. A comparable phenomenon may be observed in the *Slovo*, where the audience's interest is never quite absorbed in present events, for these are constantly in the shadow of past events which, through the present action, foretell events to come.

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Thus, as already noted, it is *Beowulf* that comes closest to the *Slovo* both in the quantity and in the artistic function of its digressions (although in *Beowulf* they are more numerous and elaborate). In both works the past, present and future are indivisibly linked through parallels in content and imagery, thus enabling poets to make the transition between diverse times natural and artistically logical. History is used to characterise the importance and grandeur of the poets’ themes from the very outset through the invocation of an ‘other-worldly’ past—the days of vatic poets and quasi-divine kings—which also recalls the extraordinary valour of superior men, and so lays out the temporal tapestry on which new events are to be superimposed. The memory of ancient lays in the *Slovo* and of the deeds of the Danish princes in days gone by in *Beowulf*, prepares the foundation for the overall supratemporal quality of the tales.21

While on the one hand past and present time in the *Slovo* and *Beowulf* form a continuum, the fact that both of these works begin with the ‘creation’ of nations through Scyld and Vladimir as ‘culture heroes’ and end in their destruction (Igor’s happy return to Rus’ does little to allay this sense) also suggests a cyclical pattern. This additional layer of temporal perspective could be seen as an echo or even an extension of the cyclical imagery contained in these works.22

Historical digressions give a universal significance to the fortunes of the heroes as well as an impression of depth. As borne out by the *Slovo* and *Beowulf*, their extensive use need not threaten organic unity. Rather, they endow the main theme ‘with a symbolic value and an interest transcending even the most absorbing ‘historical’ matters which have now been subordinated to it and put on the ‘outer edges’, or in the background to give a sense of perspective’.23

b. The narrative function of the digressions

Most of the principal digressions in the *Slovo* occur at the most critical moments of the heroes’ lives, as portrayed relative to the battle or, in other words, while they execute the deeds by which they will be immortalised.24

Igor’s most critical heroic moment comes when he sees the omen, discounts its warning, launches into a traditional exhortation to bravery before his troops and mentally prepares for the battle (44, 11.13-21). At this most dramatic moment, the author invokes ‘Boian of olden times’, and his deeper vision. This second invocation of Boian, coming as it does so soon after the first, conveys the impression of an author who (a little affectedly perhaps), finding the situation with all its implications beyond his mortal powers of expression, addresses himself to the master. Boian, on the other hand, would have understood the dramatic possibilities and conferred upon the situation panoramic significance:

«Комони ржуть ва Сулло,—звенит слава въ Клевъ. Трубы трубят въ Новъ градъ, стоят стяны въ Путwelъ.»

(44, ll. 29-31)

21 While these two works stand apart in this respect from their European counterparts, they share, in spirit at least, a closer affinity with the heroic poetry of the Kirghiz. According to the ‘epic time’ of this poetry, the heroes of the mythical, historical and even the most recent pasts are merged into one continuum, thereby negating the idea of a Golden Age that is over and done with, and expressing through the heroes a belief in the past as something that may be repeated in the future. Apart from this weakness in periodization, where characters from different times may be contemporaries, the time sequences within a given action are precise (Hatto, ‘Kirghiz: 19th century’, in *Traditions*, 310-13)). For mythical or ‘traditional’ views of time and timelessness, see Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, passim (esp. 75-113); *idem*, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, 34-38; *idem*, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, Kansas City, 1961, 57ff. Many of Eliade’s observations tally with the concept of time in the *SP*.

22 See supra, Ch. 2b., passim.

23 Bonjour, *Digressions*, 45.

24 This, it has been observed, is when the heroes’ ancestors are invoked. See supra, Ch. 2b., 82-4, 89.
This panoramic vista reflects Boian's earlier 'cosmic wanderings' in search of poetic inspiration, and tallies with the author's own interpretation of events in terms of temporal panorama.

The next major digression comes after the heroic description of Vsevolod fighting with the combined fury of the entire Russian force. As far as the tale is concerned, this is the greatest and most heroic moment of his life, when he abandons all thought for his life and possessions. The scene is abruptly, but with a certain continuity, propelled into the shadowy age of Troian, then focuses forward a little to the more recent past, the feuds of Vsevolod's grandfather Oleg, from which present events have grown and developed:

(48, 5-22)

This digression is accompanied by a sharp contrast in mood. The narrative moves from the vigour and clamour of battle to emptiness and death. Not only have the armies been decimated, but all civilian life has also been obliterated, leaving only carrion birds to encroach on the oppressive silence. Subsequent to this comes the digression recounting the more recent exploits and successes of Sviatoslav of Kiev, which follows directly on the most critical moment of what may be regarded as the work's third 'hero', Rus'. Igor's banners have fallen and nature, anticipating the greater catastrophe that is to follow, mourns together with the women of Rus' (49, 31-3/50, 1-13). This digression, with its rousing tone and fast-moving pace underscores sharply the barrenness and anguish of the preceding passage, and serves as a dramatic transition from an awe-inspiring vigorous Sviatoslav of widespread fame, to an impotent 'old' man haunted by morbid prophetic dreams. As prince of Kiev, he becomes the personification of Rus', his moral and physical state acting as a kind of barometer of her fortunes. Of all the digressions, this one, situated where it is, is perhaps the most explicitly prophetic (and realistic).

The last digression within this group differs slightly from the rest in that it does not attend a hero's critical moment, but follows the author's panegyric and appeal to the princes of Rus', and is split up into two distinctive parts by his final appeal to the descendants of Iaroslav the Wise and Vseslav of Polotok to put aside their feuds for the sake of Rus' (53, 7-32/54, 1-14). Rather than make his final appeal, and then, having introduced his theme, launch into the history of Vseslav and the destabilising feuds he and the Iaroslavichi engendered, the author prepares for his final attack more subtly. First he shows the tragic consequences to brave and blameless men of the long-term weakness with which Vseslav's actions burdened Polotok: that is, yet another defeat for the Russians, this time at the hands of the Lithuanians, and the tragic death of his valiant grandson Iziaslav. This note of pathos colours all that follows, bestowing a

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25 Indeed, posterity has pronounced him the ideal warrior and prince. See the chronicle entry which tells of his death (Hyp., col. 696—cited supra, Ch. 1, n.34).

26 On Rus' as hero, see supra, Ch. 1, 35—6.

27 For this interpretation of the line: Iaroslave i ovi smutse Vseslavli, see Dmitriev & Likhachev, SP, 514n.
Digressions may serve a number of purposes, but in heroic narrative their principal function is to intensify the drama and heighten the tragedy, primarily through contrast and comparison. The author's two-part digression invoking Boian at the very outset of the *Slovo,* coming as it does both before and after Igor's bold defiance of what the audience recognises to be the first hint of impending doom, establishes the dramatic climate: this is no ordinary skirmish, but a momentous event whose widespread repercussions will be felt throughout Rus' and even the cosmos. But the confidence and show of strength expressed in the words the author ascribes to Boian (44, ll. 29–31) are belied by the foreknowledge, confirmed earlier by the omen, of what is to come.

The use of contrast in the next three digressions brings the forebodings of the fall of Rus' even more sharply into relief. The *Slovo* abounds in contrasts between former prosperity and present calamity: Igor exchanges his 'golden saddle', the symbol of his status and power, for the 'saddle of a slave' (50, ll. 11–12); Obida drives away the times of abundance (49, ll. 9–12); the women of Rus' lament the change in their fortunes (49, ll. 21–5); 'darkness' veils 'light' (51, ll. 2–3); the wealth and power of Iaroslav of Chernigov have been shrouded (51, ll. 17–20); 'shame descends on glory' and 'violence strikes down freedom' (51, l. 5). Such contrasts become still more poignant in the author's appeal, where his allusions to the princes' past victories and glories conflict sharply with present defeats and afflictions, and also in Iaroslavna's lament, in which she reminds the now hostile forces of nature of their erstwhile more benevolent aspects. The historical digressions, however, endow these contrasts with greater dramatic impact. The juxtaposition of the section relating to Oleg's feuds and their devastating consequences with the preceding heroic portrait of Vsevolod not only ensures that any moments of optimism are short-lived, but, by placing disaster cheek by jowl with glory in this way, the innate tragedy of heroism is unveiled in the harshest light. The use of agriculture, something that normally denotes prosperity and the peaceful life, as a metaphor for Oleg's battles and the ensuing desolation also gives an added twist.

The eulogy to Sviatoslav's victory over the Polovtsy and how it underlines the tragedy of the fall of Rus' has already been discussed. Although its aim is identical to that of the previous digression, it approaches it in reverse: instead of administering a strong dose of *memento mori* at the height of a potentially glorious moment, it is a bitter reminder of what Rus' once was and could have been in the midst of her destruction and grief.

The Iziaslav/Vseslav digression follows abruptly on a lengthy passage cataloguing the military and princely virtues of the Russian princes, as a reminder that, despite their qualities, because they did not harness them in the interests of Rus', the ancient rot of dissension has resulted in calamity: a fitting end to the story of the campaign itself and a fitting introduction to Iaroslavna's lament.

Once again parallels may be drawn with *Beowulf,* whose poet has also perfected the art of contrast for dramatic effect. 'The contrast inherent in the sudden rapprochement between a brilliant thing or a harmonious situation vividly set forth and a brief intimation of disaster

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28 Bonjour, *Digressions,* 44ff.
29 For a study of the 'internal system of opposites' in the *SP,* see Nikolaeva, *op. cit., passim.*
In Beowulf there is a long series of anticipations which hint at future disaster in contrast with present glory and magnificence, emphasizing as the Slovo does the transitory nature of worldly glory and wealth.

As with the 'grievous tale' of Igor's campaign, intimations of catastrophe come early on in Beowulf; the introductory glorification of the Scylding line serves as a dramatic prelude that heightens the effects of Grendel's attacks on the latest of that line; in the course of the poet's description of Hroðgar's magnificent hall, there is an incidental allusion, almost like a fleeting vision, to its burning (ll. 82-5), which is closely linked to the forebodings of family strife among the Danes at the precise moment when harmony at the Danish court is emphasised (ll. 1008b.-19); the first intimation of Hygelac's fall is invoked by the description of the treasure given to Beowulf after his two-fold victory—the jewels are compared with the wonderful Brising necklace Hygelac dies wearing when 'for glory's sake' he embarked on an ill-advised expedition against the Franks (ll. 1197-1214); when Beowulf resolves to fight the dragon, the poet recalls his earlier feats (as he also does when Beowulf decides to fight Grendel), but he also foretells the hero's death, thus casting a grim shadow on what should have been a happy recollection of Beowulf's greatness (ll. 2354-96); the account of the first Swedish-Geatish Wars (which the Geats won) provides the first glimpse of what the future has in store for the Geats after Beowulf's death (ll. 2910-3007), but these forebodings are dramatically intensified by the reference just before to a glorious phase in early Geatish history.

The Slovo and Beowulf not only express their shared view of the tragedy inherent in heroism by means of similar literary techniques, but they also share the same spirit of oppressive melancholy. In the Slovo this mood is best expressed in the aftermath of Oleg's civil wars:

Тогда по Рускі землі рѣтко ратьевъ кикахуть, нч часто врани граяхутъ,

Трѣпля себѣ дѣльче, а галици свою рѣчь говряхуть: хотять поплетти на уеди.

(48, ll. 19-22)

The theme of ubi sunt?, with its melancholy reflections on the death and decay of bright things, the silencing of men's voices and music, with only the carrion beasts to break the stillness, is common to many Anglo-Saxon elegies, most notably The Wanderer and The Seafarer. In Beowulf there are at least three noteworthy examples, all coming towards the end of the poem as doom begins to loom larger. The 'Elegy of the Last Survivor' (ll. 2247-66) tells of the origin of the dragon-hoard, buried by the lone survivor of a noble race who had inherited it from his father. After consigning the treasure to the earth whence it came, he continues:

"guðdeaf fornam,
feorhbealo frecne fyra gehwylcne leoda minra þara be hif [lit] ofgeaf,
gesawon seledream. Nah, hwa sweord wege dug(u3) ellor s[cle]oc.
dryncfaet deore; dug(u3) ellor s[cle]oc. Naes hearpan wyn,
gomen gleobeames, Ne god hafoc
gond seel swingeð, Ne se swifta mearh
burhstede beatæð. Bealocwealm hafæð
fela feorcynna forð onsended!"

['Battle-death, fearful, deadly evil,
has taken every man of my people,
those who have left this life,
who beheld the joy of the hall.'
I have no one to bear my sword
or to burnish the beaten-gold goblet,
the precious gold drinking cup;
the retinue has departed elsewhere.

There is no harp-joy, no mirth of the harp,
no good hawk to swoop through the hall,
no swift horse to tramp in the castle courtyard.
Baleful death has sent forth [from life]
many of the race of men!"

(ll. 2249b.-54; ll. 2262b.-66)

Before the last battle Beowulf recalls ‘The Father’s Lament’ for a son who has been hanged
for the ‘raven’s joy’ (ll. 2444-62):

Gesyh₃ sorhcearig on his suna bure
winsele westne, windge reste
reote berofone,— ridend swefa₃,
he₂le₃ in ho₃man; nis ᵇær hearpan sweg,
gomen in geardum, swylec ₃ær iu waeron.
Gewite₃ bonne on sealman, sorhle₃ gele₃
an æter anum; þuhte him call to rum,
wongas ond wiestede.

[Sadly he looks upon his son’s dwelling,
the desolate wine-hall, the windy resting-place
bereft of joy,—the riders sleep,
the warriors in the grave; there is no harp music,
nor mirth in the dwelling, as there once were.
He goes then to his couch, sings a sorrowful song,
the one for the other [i. e. the father for the son];
it seemed to him all too large, the country and the castle.]

(ll. 2455-62)

It is the third example which comes closest to the passage in the Slovo cited above, not
only in mood, but in its almost identical mode of expression and its imagery—the silencing of
all human sound, the chattering of the carrion birds and the battle-feast. Here the messenger,
having brought news of Beowulf’s death, makes this grim prophecy:

‘For₃on sceall gar wesan
monig morgenceald mundum bewunden,
hœfend on handa, nalles hearpan sweg
wigend wececan, as se wonna hœfn
fus ofer fægum fælæ reordian,
earnæ secgan, bu him sæte speow,
þenden he wi₃ wulf weæl reafode.’

[‘Therefore shall many a spear be grasped with hands,
cold in the morning, brandished in fists,
but the swarthy raven, ready above the doomed,
shall speak of much, shall say to the eagle,
how he fared at the feast, when he,
contending with the wolf, plundered the slain.’]

(ll. 3021b.-27)³¹

The digressions, with their reminders of doom, provide the tales with an element of sus­
pense. This suspense is not, of course, achieved through surprise, since the subjects of heroic
narrative are drawn from history and legend, and thus probably well-known to their audiences,

³¹ See infra, Ch. 5c., 184-7, on the imagery of the beasts of battle.
but through skilfully contrived tension and anticipation. When the audience possesses a fore­
knowledge denied to the characters in the tale, which it must carry through each struggle and
victory, that constant sense of encroaching doom must render the final struggle more tragic.
'There is, above all, one main theme which is capable of bearing more emphasis, of being more
elaborately worked out if the scheme of anticipation is adopted instead of the technique of
surprise. It is the role of destiny. It has already been observed that fate has an important
and pervasive role in the Slovo; towards it point the historical digressions. The 'present' here
is entirely dominated by the past and the future, becoming simply the medium through which
history fulfills destiny. And herein may lie the answer to those who continue to wonder why,
if the Slovo is genuinely what it purports to be, a writer of such apparent ability should have
taken the trouble to confer upon an event so commonplace, even mediocre, such poetic signifi­
cance. The campaign of 1185 was but a single milestone on the road to the destiny of Rus',
its significance more metaphorical than practical or even historical, for there must have been
many equally suitable subjects and campaigns at the time Rus' was in decline from which the
poet might have chosen.

c. Concepts of space: geographical 'panorama' and the hero's journey

The author's treatment of time in the Slovo is also reflected in his handling of space, both
physical and metaphysical. The notion that Igor and this particular campaign act as a kind of
microcosm of events which transcend time is further developed through a sense of geographical
expansion, as well as the cosmic infinity that is comprehended by the mind of Boian (43, ll. 5–7;
44, ll. 22–5), and which, together with the past and the future, hangs poised over the activities
of men circumscribed by their mortality.

Following Boian's would-be panoramic view of events (44, 29–31), Igor and Vsevolod set
out to meet the enemy, who is also hastening along 'untrodden roads' to the Don; to underline
the significance of this action, Div 'starts up and cries out to...the Volga, the seacoast, the
Sula country, Surozh, Chersonesus, and...Tmutorokan' to hearken (46, ll. 14–17). Following
the Russian defeat, the Russian forces are swallowed up by the steppe. Obida steps onto the
land of Trojan flapping her wings on the sea by the Don, while Kiev, Chernigov and all the
land of Rus' mourns (49, ll. 8–27). When Sviatoslav invaded the land of the Polovtsy he
'trampled the hills and ravines, muddied the rivers and lakes, dried up the torrents and the
swamps...he tore...Kobiak from the arm of the sea...and Kobiak fell in the city of Kiev'.
His glory is sung by the Germans, Venetians, Greeks and Moravians, and so on (50, ll. 2–11).
Iaroslav of Galich bore up the Hungarian mountains with his hosts, 'closing the gates of
the Danube, hurling weights...through the clouds, executing justice as far as the
Danube', his thunder hurling 'over the lands'; he has 'open[ed] the gates of Kiev' and from
his father's throne 'shoot[ed] at sultans beyond...[his] lands' (52, ll. 9–15). Likewise Roman
and Mataislav have 'made the earth rumble', striking fear into the hearts of many nations—the
Huns, Lithuanians, Iatvigians, Dremela and the Polovtsy (52, ll. 22–4). The speed with which
Vseslav traversed the land between Kiev and Tmutorokan' symbolises his dominion over time
and space (54, ll. 6–10). Iaroslavna's impassioned appeal to the wind, the Dnepr and the sun

32 A. Bonjour, 'The use of anticipation in Beowulf', in idem, Twelve Beowulf Papers (1940–1960, With Addi­
tional Comments), Neuchatel–Geneva, 1962, 14 [hereafter 12 'Beo.' Papers].
33 Mazon, op. cit., 42; Abaev, op. cit., 103.
34 That the subjects of outstanding heroic poetry are not always the most outstanding in themselves is borne out
by The Battle of Maldon, which celebrates a battle not particularly important in itself, although it must have been
typical of the time.
35 Since much of this ground has already been covered supra, Ch. 2c., a brief run-down of the examples should
suffice at this juncture.
add a further cosmic dimension to the proceedings, while Igor’s swift escape over vast tracts of land epitomises the way in which places that are geographically far apart are drawn together in the *Slovo*. When Igor returns to Rus’, the voices of rejoicing maidens from as far as the Danube may be heard in Kiev (56, ll. 19–20). The bringing together of faraway places is also achieved through the historical digressions, where Chernigov, Tmutarakan’ and the Kaiala, the sea, the Lithuanian frontier, Polotsk, the Sula and the Dvina, all get drawn into the present setting. This grouping of events occurring in different places, the constant reminders of the vastness of Rus’ and the distances between her frontiers, reinforces the sense of historical depth and panorama.

This sense of panorama may also be observed in other early Russian works of literature. It is common practice for the chronicles to jump from one geographical location to another. The chronicler’s awareness, not only of the place of Rus’ within the framework of world history, but also the vastness of the world which he and Rus’ occupy, is demonstrated in the first pages of the *Povest’ vremennykh let*. In the autobiographical section of Monomakh’s *Pouchenie*, there is also a sense of geographical expanse in his account of his campaigns, which extended to the Czech forest in the west, to the Volga in the east, to the Polovtsian steppe in the south, beyond the Sula and the Khoral, to the Don (140–48). The extant fragment of the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli* is almost entirely dedicated to testifying to the widespread fame of Rus’, and the awe she once inspired among the Polovtsy, the Lithuanians, the Hungarians, the Germans, and even the Byzantine Greeks. The same device is also widespread in Russian folk literature, particularly in the *byliny*. In one variant of the tale of *Il’ia i Solovei*, *Il’ia* leaves his village, Karacharovo, to attend matins in Murom, with the intention of attending mass in Kiev, which is six hundred miles away, to which he sets off by way of Chernigov (Gil’ferding II, 157). One version of the *byлина* of Solovei Budimirovich opens with an account of the various geographical locations through which the Volga flows:

Мхи были, болота в Поморской стране,
А голье щелья в Белое озере,
А так эта зябель в подсеверной стране,
А <<...>> саранцы по Мошке-реке,
А толсты становицы в Каргоцеме,
А темные леса те Смоленские,
Широки ворота Чигайские,
Из-под дуба, дуба, дуба сырыго,
Из-под того камешка из-под яхонта
Выходила-выбегала мать Волга-река;
Она устьем бежит во сине море,
Во то сине море во Турецкое.

On the Volga, the poem continues, are thirty ships, one of which is superior to the rest, because in it sits young Solovei Budimirovich. This example is interesting not only because

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38 He begins by cataloguing the regions of the known world as they were allotted to the sons of Noah. Focusing on Japheth’s lot, he lists all the known races of his line until, contracting the focus still further, he concentrates most of his attention on the Slavs. From there he eventually finds the thread with which to begin his account of the history of Rus’ in the year 852, when, he alleges, the name was first assigned to that region (17, ll. 1–2).


40 In V. F. Miller, ed., *Byliny novoi i nedavnoi zapisi iz raznykh mestnostei Rossi*, M., 1908, 85, ll. 1–12.

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of the panorama it conveys, but because it also employs a device commonly found in Russian lyrical songs: what is termed the gradual contraction of images, a process of progressive descent from a broad image (as it were, from above and far away) to a concentrated one, with the final focus on what is to be the main subject of the poem or song.41 This movement from the general to the particular and back again is, as has been noted, also a characteristic of the Slovo, albeit in a more sophisticated form.42

A sense of the panoramic may likewise be discerned in some examples of early Western European heroic literature. It has already been noted how in Beowulf, as in the Slovo, the world of the heroes is perceived as a microcosm into which the entire cosmos is brought into play.43 But even in the world of men there is a keen awareness of a world beyond the confines of Denmark and Geatland. Both Scyld and Beowulf cross the sea to come to the aid of the Danes, while the digressions convey the audience to many far-off places inhabited by diverse peoples: the Swedes, the Franks, the Frisians, the Brosings, the Brondings, the Gifthas, the Half-Danes, the Jutes, the Heathobards, the Wendels, and the Wylfings, of which most have had, at one time or another, direct dealings with either the Danes or the Geats. Widsi3 (literally, 'the wide-traveller') consists of a catalogue of some seventy tribes and sixty-nine heroes, most of whom certainly existed between the third and fifth centuries, and the latest of whom belong to the sixth. The geography is legendary and the chronology elastic, but the poem is valuable as an indication of how the Anglo-Saxon mind could comprehend not only the world's expanse, but also its long history. The Chanson de Roland dedicates considerable space to the far-flung conquests of Charlemagne as well as to many distant lands from which the Saracens originate. The care taken by the poet in recording the enemies' exotic homelands was no doubt intended to render them even more strange and terrible.44

The depiction of geographical, as well as cosmic, expanses not only contributes to the dramatic effect of the whole, but it must also be closely linked with the notion of the hero's aim, which is to have his glory disseminated far and wide.

* * *

One of the features common to much of heroic literature is the actual physical movement of the heroes from their own territory (or other familiar place) to the place where the main adventure is to take place. Depictions of these journeys contain certain fixed characteristics. Broadly speaking, they fall into two parts: the physical preparation, in which detail may be devoted

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42 For a study of this device in OE epic see J. C. Payen, 'Encore le problème de la géographie épique', Studia Romanica, 14, 1969, 261–6 (esp. 264–5).

43 See supra, Ch. 2c.

44 The Nibelungenlied also comprehends a broad spatial perspective in which many lands feature, including the Low Countries, Hungary, Iceland, France and Germany.
to the arming of the hero,\textsuperscript{45} the saddling of his horse,\textsuperscript{46} heroic oaths,\textsuperscript{47} or exhortations;\textsuperscript{48} and the actual journey into battle, which may be viewed as a kind of 'spiritual' preparation.

In the \textit{Slovo} the first sign of preparation for battle comes in Igor's conventional exhortation to his troops (44, 13–21). Although an explicit arming and saddling scene is lacking, the description of Vsevolod's men of Kursk provides one by implication:

\begin{verbatim}
cajia, 6paTe, cboh 6p'3BiH komohh, a moh t h  to to b h , ocbajibhh y  Kypctica  
HanepeAH. A moh t h  KypflHH cbbaomh k'bmcth: noat» TpyfiaMH iio b h th , noA t  
menoMH Bi>3JiejreBHW, KOHen,b koiihh BT>CKp'BMJieHH...Jiyn,H y h h x t, HanpuxceHH,  
TyjIH OTBOpeHH, CafijIH H3r bOCTpeHH... 
\end{verbatim}

(46, ll. 3–8)

Since the outcome of most heroic literature is tragic, the heroes' outward journey to meet his destiny is usually described as hostile, often fraught with bad omens.\textsuperscript{49} Beowulf's journeys to Grendel's mere and the dragon's cave take him through dark and inhospitable territory (ll. 1408–17; 2410–16). Likewise Roland and the French rearguard must ride through hostile terrain which inspires them with fear and sorrow.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{verbatim}
Halt sunt li pui e li val tenebrus,  
Les roches bises, les destreiz merveillus.  
Le jur passerent Francies a grant dulur... 

[The mountains are high and the valleys are shadowy, 
The rocks are dark, the defiles frightening, 
That day, the French passed through enduring great pain.] 
\end{verbatim}

(ll. 814–16)

In the course of the Burgundians' long journey to Etzel's court they are warned by nixes of the calamity that awaits them (st. 1539ff.). When the heroes of \textit{Hamðismál}, apparently under the spell of an evil spirit (the ogress), kill their half-brother on the road, the certain doom which this action brings down on them is darkly hinted at by the grim landscape on which a gallows stands, through which they must continue their journey (st. 17).

Stepping into his golden stirrup marks the end of Igor's preparations and signals the start of his journey through a natural environment that is hostile and ominous:

\begin{verbatim}
CaiIcIe emu t'mooyu puyt zastupaJ, nooJt stonuJh emu gryzoJy ptyyyk ubuJi,  
swistje zv'rynJ v'ysts, zbiJsa Driv' klijest v'r'yxu drevya...A PovOJic hnegovay-
mi dorogomy pobJagom k Demu Velikomu. Krychat' t'ylgy pol'nuJocy, rcsi,  
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{45} Beo., ll. 1441b.–71; Walth., ll. 333–40;  
\textsuperscript{46} SP, 46, ll. 3–4; Dobrynia i zmei (Gill'ferding II, 157), ll. 8–24;  
\textsuperscript{47} Beo., ll. 278b.–85, 2490–2515; CdR, ll. 760–70; Walth., ll. 561–3.  
\textsuperscript{48} SP, 44, ll. 15–21; PVL, 69, ll. 1–5; CdR, ll. 1113–23.  
\textsuperscript{49} See Fisher, 'The trials of the epic hero in Beo.', 173–5, on the hero's journey; P. Piehlcr, The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory, London, 1971, 72ff. For the theme of the 'sorrowful journey' in Beo., see P. B. Taylor, 'Themes of death in Beowulf ', in Creed, \textit{OE Poetry}, 261–4. Note that the heroes of the \textit{Zad.} are not obliged to make such a journey, but fight on their own territory, as do the heroes of \textit{PRRB}.  
\textsuperscript{50} This typical medieval view of natural places as alien and hostile is also expressed in the Cid: 'Passaremos la 
sierra que fiere es e grand, la tierra del rey Alfonso esta noch la podemos quitar.' ['We shall cross this wild and 
lofty mountain range, and leave the land of King Alfonso tonight'] (ll. 422–3). The sense of leaving the familiar and 
passing through hostile territory into the 'unknown' is not perhaps as acute as in the CdR, but is nonetheless implicit.
They have left the familiar comfort of Rus’ to meet their destiny in a hostile ‘unknown’ land.\(^{51}\) The last line of the above passage, the looking back on the familiarity of the Russian land, is reminiscent of the section in the *Chanson de Roland* referred to above, in which the landscape prompts the warriors to sorrowful thoughts of home and loved ones.\(^{52}\)

The hero’s journey to the place where he is to confront his destiny is an important episode in heroic narrative. It is the point at which the danger he faces is realised through his environment. The removal of the hero from familiar surroundings to the hostile, foreign territory on which the confrontation takes place heightens the impact of the narrative’s climax. The concept that a hero be challenged where he is most vulnerable is not confined to heroic literature; it is also central to romance, where it develops into a rather more complex ‘quest’, and to the folktale and the *byliny*. In the latter two it is usually on the road itself that the hero is beset by trials.\(^{53}\)

Gasparov interprets Igor’s journey to the steppe, his imprisonment and his return to Rus’ as an allegory of his ‘death’, his sojourn in the Other World, and his ‘resurrection’. In this he also perceives a parallel with the sun’s eclipse (‘death’) at the beginning of the *Slovo* when Igor is about to set off, and its shining in the heavens (‘resurrection’) on his return.\(^{54}\) While taking care not to impose a mythological interpretation on everything that happens in the *Slovo*, it should be recalled that the theme of death and resurrection underlies much of the imagery of both the *Slovo* and folk literature. Echoes of death and the Other World are also present in later medieval romance, in which the forest (the dark Other World in which the hero usually becomes lost) represents spiritual darkness and, should the hero fail to attain enlightenment (‘resurrection’) by overcoming the trials with which he is ultimately confronted, the threat of spiritual death. Thus, the hero’s journey and his confrontation in a hostile place elevate the significance of his actions and reinforce the tragedy of his fall.

d. Ancestors as historical exempla

When the author of the *Slovo* encompasses time, space and the cosmos in this way, so that the heroes are scarcely distinguishable from their environment and the flow of time, it may be said that events no longer take place in historical time, but rather ‘when events first took place’, in ‘primordial time’. This primordial time is inhabited by the Ancestors, usually legendary founders of tribes and nations, or progenitors of clans, who are frequently endowed with divine attributes. Their descendants are expected to emulate them, so that when a man imitates his father and grandfather, he is actually emulating his ancestors as his forebears have (or should have) done.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{51}\) In the *SP* the author calls the Polovtsian steppe the ‘unknown land’ (46, l. 15) in order to increase the mood of tension and foreboding. Halperin sees this as disingenuous on his part, since he must have known the steppe fairly well (op. cit., 16). Thus the phrase should be taken as symbolically underlining the hostility which is already manifested in nature on Igor’s road to the Don.

\(^{52}\) Note that the conditions under which Igor returns to Rus’ are quite the opposite: the natural environment is benevolent and cooperative, and the sun shines brightly.

\(^{53}\) See Filippovskii, ‘Motiv dvizheniia v *SP*. . .’, 60.

\(^{54}\) op. cit., 20–1.

Time and space in the Slovo are dominated by ancestors and their descendants. First there is Vladimir, the progenitor of all the Russian princes commemorated in the Slovo, who serves as a model for clan founders and ancestral archetypes, for, having unified Rus’, he has drawn together all the princes and historical events that come after him. He also officially introduced Christianity to Rus’, and may therefore be regarded also as the creator of a new age, a kind of culture hero. Vladimir is universally held up as an ideal, by Ilarion and the chroniclers, and therefore provides a suitable ideological basis for the work.56

The author of the Slovo is content with making only passing references to Vladimir, since merely invoking his name would have sufficed to convey his purpose. The same also goes for Iaroslav, whom Boian is said to have praised, and his brother Mstislav, who is traditionally characterised by his victory over Rededia. The references to Iaroslav take on a greater significance when it is recalled that he was also prince of Novgorod before eventually succeeding to the Kievan throne. If, as Likhachev suggests, the author also associated Iaroslav with the beginnings of Novgorod’s glory and independence, then he too may be viewed as a kind of founder or culture hero ushering in a ‘new age’.57 In any case, his title alone (Madryi—‘the Wise’) suggests that Iaroslav is in some way the founder of Christian culture and thus a model Christian prince.

A pervading motif in both the Slovo and the chronicles, to be taken up later by the military tales, is that of ‘glory and shame’ (khvala i khula). It has already been noted how in the chronicles the earlier princes of Rus’ are eulogized and held up as exempla for the heroic ideal, while later princes are not accorded such treatment.58 The latter would be more likely to need reminding of their pedigree and obligation to defend the honour of their forebears, whose own deeds would have been widely known through song. Such an instance may be found in the Laurentian Chronicle, which relates how, in 1097, the Kievan appealed to Monomakh not to weaken and thereby forfeit Rus’ through military folly by invoking his ancestors (cols 176–7).

This theme is, of course, also widespread in Western heroic tradition. There is pressure on the hero not to disgrace his clan, but to uphold the glory of his illustrious forefathers while also striving to do something unique by which he will not only match the glory of his ancestors, but surpass it, and thus also earn immortality for himself.

No doubt, then, that Igor and Vsevolod have a great deal to live up to, but in their case their heroism is misplaced, and they bring shame upon their line. In that sense they emulate their more recent forebears, Oleg and Vseslav, who, through their self-interests and the civil wars they provoked, could be said to have ushered in another ‘new age’ in the history of Rus’. Oleg and Vseslav (as well as the Monomakhichi and the Iaroslavichi to whom the author appeals later in the work) have thus turned on its head the ideal of emulating their forefather Vladimir, and of acting as exemplary models for their own descendants, who, in emulating them also suffer defeat and imperil Rus’. Having overturned the conventional ideal, Oleg and Vseslav became progenitors of feuds and of feuding lines, and therefore ‘clan founders’ in their own right. The author identifies their descendants with them, calling upon the vnute Vseslavi to lower their banners, and referring to Igor and Vsevolod, not as sons of their father Sviatoslav, but as Ol’govichi and Ol’gove gnezdo. When the author writes, ‘there were the ages of Troian, the years of Iaroslav have passed, there were the campaigns of Oleg...’, he conveys the impression that for him the latter, like the others, also in some way constitutes an ‘age’, an age that has put an end to peace and prosperity.

56 See Slovo o zakone i Magodati, 163ff; PVL, 128–9 (where he is called the new Constantine.)

57 ‘Istoricheskie i politicheskie predstavleniia avtora SP’, 84–5 (this notion is absent from the PVL, but it existed in traditional thinking, particularly in Novgorod). Note the passage in the SP relating to Vseslav: otvori vrata Novu-Gradu, razshibe slavu Iaroslavu... (53, II. 30–1).

58 See supra, Ch. 1, 25–8.
The historical digressions in *Beowulf* likewise serve as vehicles for exempla, although they are not of the ancestral sort. Beowulf's career may be said to comprise in itself a complete temporal cycle, beginning with his rescue of the Danes and ending with his death, which marks the end of an age (especially for the Geats). On the one hand his career may be said to parallel Scyld's, for, like him, Beowulf comes to the Danes in their time of need, and later personifies the ideal ruler. On the other hand, while Scyld's death left the Danes thriving, Beowulf's death leaves the Geats without a protector and very much in the same predicament as the Danes before Scyld. The emulation of the prototype, Scyld, is thus incomplete.

Other exempla in *Beowulf* are invoked at high points in the hero's career: following the defeat of Grendel, the *scop* sings of Sigemund and Heremod, contrasting the former, who used his gifts well and slew a dragon single-handedly, with the latter, who grew niggardly and cruel, ending his life fighting monsters (ll. 871–915); at the banquet celebrating Beowulf's victory, there is a sudden unexpected allusion to Hygelac's impending death (he is to die on a foolhardy campaign) (ll. 1202ff.); following his defeat of Grendel's dam, the tragedy of Heremod is recollected, in which the dangers of arrogance and greed in kings is illustrated (ll. 1709–22). For the most part these are 'negative' exempla, warning Beowulf how *not* to behave. He must avoid the moral dangers inherent in Hygelac's vainglory and Heremod's misuse of power at the moment when he was exalted above all other men. The audience would have perceived parallels between Beowulf and both Sigemund, who was renowned as a giant-slayer and was especially remembered for single-handedly vanquishing a dragon, and Heremod, who, like Beowulf, died fighting monsters. The presence of these legendary figures anticipates the future in *Beowulf*. Although Beowulf was a great king, and did not disappoint expectation by becoming mean and tyrannical like Heremod, he succumbs to a weakness or 'flaw', be it vainglory or simply overconfidence; like Sigemund, he defeats the dragon, but like Heremod, he perishes, leaving his people leaderless.

Although the exempla in *Beowulf* are not of the ancestral kind, they are nevertheless manipulated in much the same way as they are in the *Slovo*, and their didactic purpose is the same. In both works they are invoked at high points in the narrative; in Beowulf's case, after his two victories over monsters, in Igor's case, at the critical moments of his campaign. In both cases the heroes succumb to some sort of weakness or error, and are thus condemned to repeat the errors of their predecessors.

* * *

In its treatment of temporal, spatial and historical perspective, the *Slovo* once again finds its closest analogue in *Beowulf*, although the works may differ in some matters of detail. By placing events within a vast temporal and geographical panorama, the authors lend their heroes and their actions monumental significance. Past and present events do not take place merely at a given time, but for all time. Such a concept exists not only in 'earlier' civilisations, but is perpetuated in the Christian liturgy, in which certain events central to the faith are reenacted each time—*in illo tempore*.

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59 As noted *supra* in Ch. 2b., the ancestors are invoked at the most critical moments of the heroes' lives (82–4, 89).
Chapter Four

Characters as Heroic Conventions

a. The junior partner: Vsevolod

It soon becomes apparent that great literary heroes, despite their self-sufficiency, need partners with whom to share danger and glory, and towards whom they may be seen to show loyalty and affection. Heroic poetry abounds in such pairs of friends as, for instance, Achilles and Patroclus; Gilgamesh and Enkidu; Roland and Oliver. Such friends and partners may also be brothers, as in the case of Gunnarr and Hǫgni (Atlakviða; Atlamál); Hamðir and Sǫrli (Hamðismál); and, of course, Igor and Vsevolod.

Since the course of the action is shaped by the senior partner, that is, the central hero, the critical decision to attack the Polovtsey falls to Igor. The junior partner may boast exceptional heroic qualities and command a formidable force of his own, but he is obliged to leave heroic initiative to the main hero. Hamðir and Sǫrli would be virtually indistinguishable but for the fact that Hamðir takes the fatal decision not to kill Iðrumunrekkr, but to maim and taunt him instead (Hamðismál, st. 24). The action which brings about their destruction is significant enough for the work to bear Hamðir's name. By the same token, although Igor is not portrayed at length in actual battle, his inflexible determination upon a certain course makes the work his, and his action its focus.

Although the hero's friend exercises no influence in the actual decision-making, he is not unquestioningly subservient, and may even challenge a decision or rebuke the hero. Oliver hotly challenges Roland's decision not to sound the olifant; Sǫrli, before his death, reproaches Hamðir for merely maiming Iðrumunrekkr, then provoking him into issuing the fatal command (st. 26–27). Since such a relationship is founded upon loyalty, however, and not upon slavish obedience, both Oliver and Sǫrli accept the hero's decision and its consequences. When Hamðir attempts to excuse his action in killing Erpr, Sǫrli quite reasonably says that now is not the time for recriminations:

"Ekki hygg ek okr vera
úlfa dœmi,
at við mynm síálfir um
sakaz,

Vel hǫfom vit vegit,
stendorn á val Gotna,
ofan, eggmōðom,
sem ernir á kvisti,
Göðs hǫfom tírar fengit,
þótt skylum nú eða l
ger deyia.'

['I trust we shall not emulate
the example of wolves —
tear at each other

... We have fought well,
we stand on slaughtered Goths,
surmounting sword-weary dead
like eagles on a bough.
We have got good fame
Whether we die now or
another day.']

(st. 29–30)

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1 Bowra, op. cit., 64-6.
The fundamental distinction between the hero and his partner is succinctly expressed in the *Chanson de Roland*:

*Rollant is worthy [a hero] and Oliver is wise:
Both have amazing courage,
When they are on horseback and armed,
They shall not avoid battle even if it means death.
Both counts are worthy and their words noble.*

In courage and nobility they are equals, but Roland possesses that essential quality of courage which separates the hero from other men, and which nearly always hastens his doom. This quality is usually incomprehensible to ordinary prudent men and Christians, but it is such that, for good or ill, it inspires superior men to sublime feats of heroism. Oliver's courage, on the other hand, is tempered with common human prudence, which in its turn may also lead to victory, but of a more mundane kind. 3

The above examples from the Scandinavian and French heroic traditions provide good analogues for defining the literary role of Vsevolod in the *Slovo*. In almost every respect he, like Sprli and Oliver, is the hero's equal: a prince in his own right, renowned for his personal courage and manliness, riding at the head of an exceptionally valiant army. Although Vsevolod nowhere challenges Igor's decision, his eagerness to follow him into battle indicates that, like Oliver, he places loyalty above caution, whether or not he questions the wisdom of such an undertaking. This selfless dedication to an apparently hopeless cause demands loyalty in return, and Igor's sense of obligation to his brother and ally is borne out during battle when he goes to Vsevolod's aid:

*Игорь пьлкы заворочает: жаль бо ему мила брата Всеволода.*

(48, l. 30/49, l. 1)

The author of the *Slovo* plays down the role of Vsevolod and his men in the defeat against the Polovtsy perhaps because his (Vsevolod's) uncomplicated qualities of valour, loyalty and

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2 Alternative translation from P. Terry, *The Song of Roland*, Indianapolis-NY, 1965. The meaning of *proz* has been the subject of much debate: one school of thought (to which Brault belongs) argues that the word means simply *worthy*, thus confirming Roland and Oliver as equals; more traditionally, it is thought to imply worthiness in the sense of heroic courage and prowess.

3 See Crist, 'A propos de la desmesure...'; 18. Oliver himself recognises the differences in their temperaments. When Roland volunteers to go on a diplomatic mission to the Saracen king Marsile, Oliver says:

'Nu ferez certes!...
Vostre curages est mult pesmes e fiers:
Jo me crendreie que vos vos meslisez.
Si le reis voelt jo i puis aler ben.'

['No you won't!... You have a very bad temper:
I'd be afraid that you would pick a quarrel.
If the king's willing, I can do the job properly. ']

(II. 255-8)

Note also that in the Gunnarr/Högni partnership, it is traditionally the 'junior partner', Högni, who sees the danger in Atli's invitation (*Akv.*, st. 8; *Atm.*, st. 7). See Dronke, *op. cit.*, 104.
brotherly love lend themselves more easily to unqualified admiration. Since, besides personal honour, loyalty and affection are also held up as Vsevolod's motives in assisting Igor, the author can, to a large extent, exonerate him for his complicity. On the other hand, Igor's motive of personal heroism and his defiance of caution, while admirable in the abstract, are seen by the author as a serious threat to the ideal of political unity and stability which the latter espouses.

The love and comradeship existing between the hero and his friend predates the kind of literature in which the focus of the hero's loyalty and affection is a woman (or, more generally, womankind) whom he strives to protect, avenge and exalt. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England, France and Germany witness the gradual disappearance of the beloved companion at arms and his replacement by a feminine love interest. It will be noted presently, however, that in literature which is termed 'heroic', women as yet exercise a very different function, and any displays of tenderness on the hero's part are restricted to friends and retainers.

Bowra points out that the hero's love for his friend is very different from his love for wife or family, since it is a love between equals which is founded upon identity of ideals and interests. To a great extent this also holds true for the relationship between Igor and Vsevolod which, in this literary context at least, transcends family ties. Both are princes of almost equal status, and apparently share the same goals. Furthermore, in the light of Russia's fratricidal history, comradely dealings between brothers cannot be taken for granted as the natural consequence of something as fortuitous as blood kinship.

As far as early Russian literature is concerned, such a partnership, whether between brothers or friends of equal social status, is unique to the Slovo and does not occur in the military tales or, to any significant degree, in the byliny.

b. The royal patriarch: Sviatoslav of Kiev and the Grand Princes

At the other end of the spectrum from the youthful figure of the hero's friend stands the venerable king who, like the junior partner, serves to set off the heroic proportions of the central hero and to delineate the boundaries of heroism. Like the hero's friend, this equally conventional character of early heroic literature does not figure in old Russian military tales or in the byliny. In the Slovo, however, he is conceived in the person of Sviatoslav of Kiev, and bears a certain affinity to such princes of heroic literature as Agamemnon, Charlemagne and Hroðgar of the Danes.

It has been observed in Chapters One and Two that the royal patriarchal figure encountered in earlier heroic literatures may possess heroic virtues such as courage and martial skill, but that the demands of his office restrict his freedom to take risks. Having established peace and prosperity for his people, a king is obliged to secure their welfare, not to engender political instability or physical vulnerability for the sake of personal glory.

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4 See in particular the Arthurian romances of Chrétiens de Troyes (second half of the 12th c.) whose influence both in France and abroad was considerable.
5 op. cit., 65.
6 The exception is Dmitrii Donskoi and his brother, Vladimir in the Zad. However, since this relationship, like so many other aspects of the work, is obviously modelled on that of Igor and Vsevolod in the Slovo, it cannot realistically be regarded as an independent example.
7 The figure of prince Vladimir in the byliny lacks dimension and has all but lost its literary function in relation to the main hero. The downgrading of Vladimir, thought to be a late skomorokh influence, is discussed further on in this section (see infra, 147).
8 supra, 44-5, 92-3. A case in point is Beowulf, who, as an aged king, finds himself in the difficult position of having to defend his people from the dragon on the one hand, and of having to uphold the heroic status he has earned at Hroðgar's court on the other. In deciding to meet the dragon unassisted, knowing he will perish and against the promptings of his retinue, he ensures for himself an heroic end. For the Geats, however, his death marks the beginning of hostile incursions from all sides.
In the poetry of older, nomadic cultures like those of central Asia, kings are often the greatest warriors of all. In the case of their later European counterparts, however, the latter are often prevented either by age or by administrative duties from dedicating themselves entirely to martial exploits, which are usually delegated to their subordinates. As a reminder that kings nevertheless wielded considerable authority, they are nearly always at some stage portrayed riding at the head of their armies: respective audiences are presented with portraits of Sviatoslav of Kiev leading successful coalitions of princes against the Polovtsy (1183 and 1184); Charlemagne at the head of his Franks; Beowulf the king leading the Geats against their foes; even Gunther, both in the Nibelungenlied and in the Waltharius, is conceded his traditional place at the head of his army, although his character may no longer be regarded as noble or heroic in the full sense.

Provided that he is amply endowed with the other essential royal virtues, a prince may even be exempted from personal participation in battle. This is a later development in western European literature, seen best, perhaps, in the Arthurian cycles, where increasingly more adventures are allocated to the knights of Arthur's Round Table, than to Arthur himself. Such is also the fate of Vladimir in the byling, who presides at banquets while the young heroes ride off on quests for adventure. Once authority became more or less centralised, and the king was no longer a tribal chieftain leading a comparatively small band of warriors, it was by no means uncommon for kings to send out armies on campaigns at which they were not present. In his panegyrics to Sviatoslav and his princely contemporaries in the Slovo, the author creates an impression through metaphor that they exert a more direct, personal influence on their military successes than might be expected. His description of Sviatoslav plucking Kobiak from the shore of the sea and conveying him to his court in Kiev invokes the image of a majestic arm stretching its power and influence far beyond physical boundaries:

Игорь и Всеволод уже ляж убудиста, которую то бяще успил отец их Святъславъ грозный великий Киевский грозою, бишьть притрепалъ своиими сильными плыкъ и харалужыми мечи; наступи на землю Половецкую, притопа хлымы и яруты, взмути рки и озера, иссуши потоки и болота. А поганаго Кобяка изъ луку моря, отъ желѣзных великихъ плыкъ Половецкихъ, яко вихрь, выторжь, и надеся Кобякъ въ градѣ Киевь, въ градици Святъслави.

(49, l. 31-33/50, ll. 1-7)

Similar god-like attributes are assigned to two other powerful princes: Iaroslav Osmomysl' of Galich and Grand Prince Vsevolod of Vladimir-Suzdal. From his lofty seat, Iaroslav hurls thunder and confusion at his foes:

Высоко сдѣли на своемъ златокованіемъ столѣ, подперъ горы Угорскихъ своими желѣзными плыкі, засттипъ королеви путь, затворивъ Дунаю ворота, мечя времени чрезъ облаки, суды рядя до Дуная. Грозы твоя по землямъ текутъ, отворяешь Киеву врата, стрѣляешь съ отня златаго стола салтани за землями.

(52, ll. 9-15)

The fury and might of Vsevolod of Vladimir also reach colossal proportions:

10 The assertion that Charlemagne is at least two hundred years old when he defeats Baligant reinforces his quasi-allegorical stature (ll. 523-4; 537-9; 552). See supra, Ch. 2a., 264.
11 As was also the case of Iaroslav of Galich (Hyp., cols. 654 & 656). Earlier in the PVL, Vladimir sends his son Boris against the Pechenegs when he is too ill to go himself (127, II. 19-21).
On the one hand the author’s lavish use of hyperbole may be viewed as a device common to panegyric, which serves both his literary and didactic ends; on the other hand, however, his metaphorical descriptions of battles almost directly manipulated by sedentary god-like rulers reveal something about ideas current in periods when single rulers were centralising power in themselves and consolidating their empires. Their physical presence on the battlefield became no longer essential: like Sviatoslav’s arm and Iaroslav’s arrows, their power and influence radiated outwards from their thrones. In a sense they became the embodiments of military power, personifications of their armies and custodians of their cultures.

As princes become more formal, remote and patriarchal, it rests with their subordinates to exert the true heroic nature. The ‘younger’ hero has ostensibly few personal or administrative obligations and so may concern himself more freely with matters of personal glory. Normally, however, he devotes himself to a concrete cause in the service of a great prince, not so much because he fervently believes in its principles perhaps, as because it provides him with the opportunity to display his personal worth, and because it lends greater dimension to his actions. Heroism for its own sake is rare and is normally, or at least ideally, motivated by loyalty.

Because the author of the *Slovo* considers Sviatoslav the lawful head of Rus’, he regards Igor’s and Vsevolod’s disobedience towards him as a serious breach of fealty. In his view, their duty entails the glorification of their suzerain, and the preservation of the security established by the ‘father’ of all Russian princes through his own prudent campaigns on behalf of Rus’. Just as Charlemagne is portrayed as the champion of France and all Christendom, so Sviatoslav is presented as the champion of Rus’ and defender of her interests:

(49, ll. 31–3/50, ll. 1–13)
In seeking their own ends Igor and Vsevolod have thwarted their liege lord in his princely office and the heroic ideal of loyalty have been overturned: N" se zlo—kniazhe mi ne posobie: naniche sia godiny obratisha (51, ll. 27–8). In the Slovo the person and office of Sviatoslav are hyperbolized to the extent that he manifests an ideal rather than any historical reality.17 In his vision of a strongly unified Rus' with Kiev at her centre, the author sees the prince of Kiev as the father and protector of all the Russian princes, their senior and their lord; he therefore lays emphasis on Igor’s obligation and disloyalty towards Sviatoslav. Since the head prince must be mighty and fierce, Sviatoslav emerges as velikyi and groznyi (49–50, l. 33/1.1),18 even though he was in truth one of the weakest princes ever to rule Kiev.19

Just as the epithet groznyi represents an ideal, so too does the picture of venerable old age. Sviatoslav, who at the time was actually in his early thirties, emerges as the ‘father’ of Igor and Vsevolod (49, l. 33; 50, l. 24; 51, l. 11), reproaching them with the words: Se li stvoriste moei srebrei sedine! (51, l. 16). This line not only reinforces his patriarchal status but implies as well that beneath those silver hairs lies the great wisdom that is expected to accompany age. And indeed, in his Zlato slovo, cautious wisdom stands out in sharp contrast to the youthful excesses of the heroes. He (and through him also the author) admires Igor and Vsevolod for their bold spirits (51, ll. 14–5), but laments the disastrous consequences of such unbridled enthusiasm. They have unleashed their premature attack on the Polovtsy without sufficient thought and preparation, causing Rus’ to be overrun by her enemies, whereas an ‘older falcon’, like himself, takes care to attack his enemies at a safe distance from his ‘nest’ (951, ll. 25–7).20

Turning once more to the heroic literature of early medieval Europe, kings on the whole tend to be characterized not so much, if at all, by their skill as generals, as by the supreme wisdom attending longevity. In the first part of the Chanson de Roland, Charlemagne, in marked contrast to his headstrong nephew, Roland, is reminiscent of the venerable patriarchs that proliferate in medieval manuscript painting and stained glass.21 White-haired and over two hundred years old, he sits and deliberates on his golden throne before delivering his careful judgement:

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17 For princes as ideals and the embodiments of the power and dignity of Rus’ in the chronicles of the 11th–13th cc., see Likhachev, Chelovek, ch. 2, especially 34–5, 53–4; also idem, ‘Izobrazenie liudei v letopisi XII–XIII vekov’, TORDR, 10, 1954, passim.

18 The Russian chronicles also testify to this ideal, that great princes should strike terror in the hearts of their enemies. See the eulogy on the death of the aforementioned Grand Prince Vsevolod of Vladimir-Suzdal’ (1212): sego imeni teko treptakh vasia strany i po vse semli iside slukh ego (Laur., col. 436); also the eulogy on the death of Vladimir Monomakh (1126): ego goshe slukh provode po vsim" stranam". Naipache zhe xe strashen", poganyym"...(Hyp., col. 286)

19 Kiev in fact belonged to Riurik Rostislavich (d. 1215) who, doubting his ability to hold on to the city, installed Sviatoslav there, keeping the remaining towns of the Kievian province for himself. The exact terms of the deal are not known, although Sviatoslav apparently promised not to forge alliances with the Polovtsy, but to take part in campaigns against them with the other Russian princes (Likhachev, Velikoe nasledie, 143).

20 Dmitriev and Likhachev, eds, SP, 505n., cites N. V. Sharlemann’s widely accepted explanation that when a moultng falcon reaches puberty it protects its nest with extraordinary ferocity. Boris Gasparov takes Roman Jakobson’s view that v mytakh refers to a falcon that has undergone many moltings and is therefore middle-aged or old, rather than simply mature (op. cit., 81).

On Beowulf’s departure for Geatland, Hroðgar delivers a lengthy sermon which, like Sviatoslav’s Zlato slovo, points up the eternal contrast between the senex (the wise but physically enfeebled king) and the juvenis (in this case the youthful foreign hero-adventurer on whom Hroðgar is forced to rely to rid his people of Grendel and his dam). After praising Beowulf and declaring his fame immortal, Hroðgar addresses himself to the legend of the Danish king Heremod who, like Beowulf, surpassed other men in strength and also ended his days fighting monsters. It is a cautionary tale for Beowulf’s benefit, for Heremod was to grow niggardly and destroy his hearth companions. His rule ended in circumstances left vague by the poet, although earlier on ll. 901–4 suggest that his prowess suffered a lapse and he perished at the hands of monsters. His death left the Danes leaderless and they suffered many afflictions as a result.23 The king, therefore, cautions Beowulf especially against pride in his strength, reminding him that while a hero is young and hale he may easily forget that disease, the sword or old age could rob him of his might (ll. 1760–8). Hroðgar applies this theme of memento mori to his own experience: for half a century he succeeded in protecting his people from their enemies until, in his pride, he believed that he was entirely rid of every possible adversary. Then, when decrepitude set in, he was plagued by Grendel’s assaults for a space of twelve years (ll. 1769–78). In avoiding battle with Grendel, Hroðgar prudently opts for the lesser evil. With the example of Heremod before him, he foregoes pride and leaves the task to younger heroes, lest he leave the Danes leaderless at a time when, as heavily intimated by the poet, a power struggle for the throne during the minority of his sons would be certain to ensue.24 He reinforces the notion that kings cannot act solely for themselves and must therefore eschew rash, unreflective action as well as excessive concern for personal praise (lof); given how things come to pass for Beowulf the king, Hroðgar is justifiably concerned about what he sees as Beowulf’s tendency towards pride and foolhardiness. In the end, however, Beowulf acts neither upon Hroðgar’s prophetic caveat and example, nor upon the example of Hygelac, his king, who, motivated by pride (for włęco; l. 1206) launched a reckless raid on Frisia and perished, leaving the Geats in a precarious situation. Not recognising that after fifty years of rule his time as invincible hero is past, Beowulf refuses assistance and is consequently destroyed.

One of the principal kingly virtues, which has close links with princely generosity and gift-giving, is deference towards retainers or loyal servants (such as Beowulf, who becomes

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22 ll. 1700–84. The story is first mentioned in lines 898–913.
23 ll. 14b.–16a. allude to this period before the coming of the Danes’ saviour and culture-hero Scyld Scefing.
Hroðgar’s foster-son) in matters of counsel and warfare. Like Charlemagne, Sviatoslav of Kiev is portrayed surrounded by an elite body of counsellors, a faceless group of boyars to whom he confides his dream, which they in turn interpret. Likewise, in his campaigns he did not set out to fight alone, but gathered together and led coalitions of princes against the Polovtsy. In the same way Charlemagne demonstrates respect for his barons’ counsel:

Desuz un pin en est li reis alez,
Ses baruns mandet pur sun cunseill finer:
Par cels de France voelt il del tut errer.

[The King went beneath a pine tree
And summoned his barons to conclude his council:
He wishes to be guided by the men of France in this entire matter.]  
(ll. 165–7)

Hroðgar too seeks advice on how to deal with Grendel’s ravages:

Dæt wæs wraec micel wine Scyldinga,
modes bregða. Monig oft gesæt
rice to rune; raed eahtedon,
hwæt swiððerhðum selest wære
wið fægryrum to gefremenæ.

[It was a great distress to the lord of the Scyldings, breaking his heart. Many of his chief men often sat in council, to debate the means that were best to the brave in spirit to deal with the terror of the sudden attacks.]  
(ll. 170–4)

In his turn, Beowulf as king fails to rely upon the loyalty of his followers, who have sworn oaths in the beer-hall to assist him in his need (ll. 2630 ff.). All but one forsake him, but it was in fact he who had elected his solitary destiny:25

Nis þæt eower sið,
ne gemet mannæ, nefn(e) min anes,
þæt he wið æglæcan eofðo dále,
eorlcype efne.

[It is not your destiny, nor the task of any man, except mine alone, to manifest strength against the monster, to perform heroic deeds.]  
(ll. 2532b.–35a.)

25 This spirit of independence had already been manifested much earlier in Beowulf’s heroic career:

‘Symle ic him on feðah beforean wolde,
anan on orde, ond swa to oldre sceall
sæccne fremman, þenden þis sweord þolað.’

[‘Always I willed to go before him [Hygelac] in the troop, alone in the vanguard, and so shall I forever, while this sword endures.’]  
(ll. 2497–9)
In rejecting assistance from his retainers, Beowulf appears proud, ungenerous and ungrateful, failings against which he had been cautioned by Hroðgar (ll. 1709ff.). On the other hand, if the poet is levelling any criticism at Beowulf for his action, it is half-hearted, for, unlike his hero, he finds himself torn between pagan and Christian notions of wisdom and duty. Therefore, in order to vindicate to some extent Beowulf’s decision to fight alone, the poet has him abandoned by his retinue. After his death, his kinsman Wiglaf justifies the king’s actions, even though they have spelled disaster for the Geats, saying that he was compelled to follow his heroic destiny against the advice of his retainers (ll. 3077–86).

It is not difficult to see how notions of kingly wisdom and foresight may eventually be extended to comprehend prophetic qualities. Thus the concept of kingship swings back full circle to the chieftains of earlier civilisations for whom vatic powers and other magical gifts were prerequisites for ensuring their people’s prosperity. Both Sviatoslav of Kiev and Charlemagne of the Franks dream heavily symbolic and prophetic dreams. Normally in heroic literature, prophecy and prophetic dreams are the provenance of women. In the Slovo and the Chanson de Roland, however, such dreams have been delegated to the ‘fathers’ of the heroes for whom they foresee disaster. The vatic powers that come to be associated with the princely office recall a more primitive concept of divine kingship, which regards the king or chieftain as a descendant or a manifestation of the fertility or thunder god; in the case of the northern tradition, Óðinn fulfills both these roles, and is distinguished by his vatic, shamanic powers. It has already been suggested that a similar mythological interpretation might be applied to the ‘senior’ princes of the Slovo, in which case it would befit Sviatoslav, the ‘benefactor’ of Rus’, also to possess some measure of the gift of prophecy. Charlemagne too receives special tokens of divine favour, and, besides prophetic dreams, is accorded angelic encouragement (ll. 3610–13), although the poet is careful to limit any supernatural phenomena to admonition and moral support. The allegorical character of Charlemagne’s and Sviatoslav’s dreams invokes the shamanic spirit world: in the former’s, the principal characters enact the prophecy in the guise of animals, while the latter’s dream is of a highly ritualistic character.

The figure of the sovereign in heroic literature of the comparatively early Christian era, both in Kievan Rus’ and in western Europe, is elevated outside the sphere of human accomplishment, although not, as is the central hero, by means of martial superiority and an exalted sense of heroic purpose, but rather by the more abstract qualities of mind — wisdom and prudence — which, by extension, may endow him with a quasi-divine status. It would appear, then, that at some stage the hero-king of early heroic song, the chieftain fighting alongside his men, whose superior he is in the business of war, has split up into two distinct persons — the youthful, impetuous hero who, despite loyalties and alliances, ultimately acts for himself, and the wise, venerable king who acts on behalf of his subjects. In the case of Kievan Rus’ this change is particularly noticeable in the contrasting careers of the first Sviatoslav and his

26 Hroðgar’s warning that overweening pride leads to a progressive loss of wisdom is derived from the Augustinian view of pride as the beginning of all sin, as the enemy of sapientia, leading to avarice which, according to one line of early Christian thought, is the root of all sin. Hroðgar’s ideas on superbia and avaritia as the sources of evil are examined in R. E. Kaske, ‘Sapientia and Fortitudo as the controlling theme of Beowulf’, in Nicholson, Anthology, esp. 260–1.

27 Infra, Ch. 5a. 157–8.

28 See supra, Chapter 2b., 104–5.


30 Ross, op. cit., 90.

31 Dreams as motifs in heroic literature are examined infra, Chapter 5a.

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descendants, Vladimir and Iaroslav: the first being renowned primarily as a formidable warrior, the others, as administrators and patrons.

This phenomenon, in the view of Professor John Leyerle, is what makes up the theme of Beowulf, and may be seen as 'the fatal contradiction of heroic society. The hero follows a code that exalts indomitable will and valour in the individual, but society requires a king who acts for the common good, not for his own glory. The greater the hero, the more likely his tendency to imprudent action as king. The three battles with the monsters, the central episodes in the poem, reveal a pattern in which Beowulf's pre-eminence as a hero leads to the destruction of the Geats when he becomes king... Heroic society inevitably encouraged a king to act the part of a hero, yet the heroic king, however glorious, was apt to be a mortal threat to his nation'.

It becomes evident that the contradiction of ideals confronting poets has its roots in the social and political changes effected by the establishment of Christianity. In the first place, it introduced a new concept of sovereign authority, culminating in the concept of the state, which naturally affected the nature of a ruler's duties. His relationship with his army in particular may have been affected. As in the case of many Byzantine emperors, he may have ceased to lead his armies; in a literary context, Hroðgar's delegation of responsibility for the Danes' welfare meant relinquishing his heroic status. On the other hand, a king may command his own troops without evincing what are understood to be heroic qualities, since he is circumscribed by consideration for the common good. Despite the hyperbolised account of Sviatoslav's martial achievements in the Slovo, that prince is nevertheless shown subordinating any personal aspirations by prudently allying himself with other princes of Rus'. Furthermore, to return to the work itself, his literary portrait is of a man, not so much of action, as of words, and lofty ones at that. The 'fatal contradiction' of which Leyerle speaks is to be found in Igor, who, although a prince in his own right, is ruled by an unyielding will and a thirst for personal glory.

In the first section of the Chanson de Roland Charlemagne's martial successes are frequently alluded to. He heads the French army on its return to Aix-la-Chapelle, and returns with it to avenge the destruction of his rearguard, but he is depicted by the poet, first and foremost, as a sedentary sage. In the second part, it is true, he engages in single combat with

32 op. cit., 89; 97. In early Gmc societies a king was expected to ensure public welfare and peace, but also to wage successful warfare, and so it would be scarcely credible that the king would delegate the latter, the most crucial test of his fitness for leadership, to a deputy (de Vries, 'Das Königtum bei den Germanen', 289).

33 See C. Diehl, Byzantium: Greatness and Decline (trans. N. Walford), New Brunswick–NJ, 1957, 268. Diehl suggests that, following the conversion of Vladimir, the Russian Grand Prince became a sovereign by divine right in the image of the Byzantine emperor (see also Meyendorff, Byzantium and the Rise of Russia, 111–17). Simon Franklin disputes the received view that Kievans 'accepted Byz. universalist ideas. While Vladimir and his son Iaroslav 'might have enjoyed the thought of sole rule... they made no provision for the establishment of a monarchic system, and none of their successors shows any signs of having aspired to one... monarchy was not a relevant concept.' (The empire of the Rhomaioi as viewed from Kievan Russia: aspects of Byzantino-Russian cultural relations', Byzantion, 53, 528). He stresses that Kievan political life was dominated by kinship, a concept more mystical than political (529). This argument gains force in the light of what has already been said here concerning OR notions of clans and ancestors, as they are manifested in the Slovo. Nevertheless, the portrayal of Sviatoslav and the other senior princes reflects early Russian literary and chronicle convention which dictated the portrayal of princes as ideals, a convention no doubt influenced by Byz. ideas about their emperors. In OR chronicles, princes are depicted in scenes or portraits pertaining to their office, in 'stock' royal situations—at the head of their armies, in conference with their boyars, etc. (see Likhachev, 'Izobrazhenie liudei v letopisi...', 16ff.).

34 From the 8th to the 11th cc. Byzantium was ruled by brilliant military leaders who shared the hardships of a soldier's life with their men. After 1025 the army deteriorated, while the government became a civil body of bureaucrats and intellectuals. The military aristocracy made a recovery under the Comneni, but declined again after 1204 (Diehl, op. cit., 10 ff.)
Baligant, but by then he is not so much the king of France anymore, as France and Christendom
rolled into one.

As a ruler is progressively distanced from the activities of his army, he necessarily forfeits
the close mutual bonds of love and fealty enjoyed by the early chieftains and their retinues,
by Sviatoslav Igorevich and his men, and even perhaps by Vsevolod Sviatoslavich and the
men of Kursk. After the death of Sviatoslav, his son and grandson, Vladimir and Iaroslav,
relied heavily on paid mercenaries who, judging from the unflattering accounts preserved in
Norse sagas, entertained little respect for their adopted overlords. The Byzantine emperors
likewise placed more reliance on foreign soldiers, whom they treated liberally, than on their
own national troops, entrusting them with high commands and even their own personal safety
in the belief that a well-paid mercenary was more surely the emperor's man. This lack of trust
and the increased use of foreigners resulted in bad discipline within the Byzantine armies, which
in turn must have contributed enormously to the Empire's decline.35 The historical reality of
the nature of kingly rule and its implications, therefore, has found expression in literature.

It is easy to see how the portrayal of kings in the heroic literature of the early Christian
era reflects historical change. These figures eventually become remote embodiments of wisdom,
formal and inflexible as icons, who, yielding the heroic lot to younger, more impetuous men,
retire to the status of fatherly counsellors on whose behalf others perform deeds of valour. 36

As the heroic genre deteriorates, so too does the royal figure, until he becomes totally
ineffectual and at times even comical. This degeneration is perceived early in the Waltharius.
There the fierce Atli of the Heroic Edda has mellowed into a paternal Attila who saves himself
the trouble of waging war by exacting tribute from other nations. His young hostages, Walter
and Hildegund, whom he has favoured with fatherly affection, place him in the undignified
position of being drugged in his cups while they make their escape (ll. 304–379). The poem
proper opens with the cowardly Frankish king, Gibicho, who, not trusting in the strength of his
men, agrees to send Attila tribute, and also Hagen, rather than his own infant son, as hostage
(ll. 17–26). Gibicho's cowardice is perpetuated in his foolish son, Gunther (ll. 1304–33). A
long departure from the fearless Gunnarr of the Edda, Gunther makes a poor and unwilling
warrior who, as Walter maintains, has forfeited his right to respect:

\[ \text{Postremum volo Guntharius bibat, utpote seignis} \\
\text{inter magnanimum qui paruit arma virorum} \\
\text{et qui Martis opus tepide atque enerviter egit.}\]

['I want Gunther to drink last, inasmuch
as he had shown himself sluggish in a battle
of brave men, and did the work of Mars lukewarmly
and slackly.\

(ll. 1412–14)

In the Niebelungenlied Etzel's dignity is somewhat reinstated, although he is nonetheless
unable to avert the wholesale slaughter at his court, standing helplessly by while catastrophe
is visited upon him. Gunther, meanwhile, is degraded still further into cowardice, vanity,
treachery and hypocrisy, although he redeems himself to a certain extent later in the battle
at Etzel's hall. Of his royal brothers, Gernot is to all intents and purposes ineffectual and


36 In the OF geste du roi cycle, Charlemagne, although usually the central character, tends to act as a 'father
figure' who directs and controls the action, leaving heroic exploits for the most part to his subordinates. It may be
worth noting that Indian epic accommodates both kinds of kings: (1) the warrior prince, and (2) the 'quiescent' king,
the embodiment of virtue, who rises above the 'hurly-burly' of human activity, and on whose behalf wars are fought
(J. D. Smith, 'Old Indian: the two Sanskrit Epics', in Hatto, Traditions, 56–65).

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forgettable, while 'young' Giselher, although portrayed as the gentlest, noblest and most loyal of the three Burgundian kings, makes no move to prevent the treacherous plot against Siegfried despite his sister's deep affection for him. His ineffectualness and apparent lack of conscience make him an unconvincing foil of youthful innocence and loyalty to the darker figures of Gunther and Hagen. The gap existing between Beowulf and Hroðgar becomes a chasm when applied to the figures of Gunnarr and Gunther. The king of romance is for the most part a king in name only, and is often merely a pivot for heroic ventures undertaken by others.\(^{37}\)

In the absence of more sophisticated and better documented Russian secular literature, the *byliny* nonetheless furnish evidence of a similar development, or rather, disintegration, of the central royal figure. Like the Arthur of numerous romances, Vladimir's primary function is to preside over banquets and to provide excuses for others to undertake quests and battles. Often he does not actually figure in the narrative, but is merely invoked in some indirect way. The figures of Sviatoslav, Hroðgar and Charlemagne are all to varying degrees symptomatic of a steady decline in the king's status within literature of an heroic nature, which may or may not in each case reflect historical events. There emerges a consistent pattern, however, of the literary hero-king who is allowed to grow old in wisdom and dignity; with the loss of his physical powers, this aloofness is gradually taken for weakness and ineffectualness, and soon the royal figure, stripped of his honours, is regarded with contempt or derision when he is regarded at all. The focus of interest has long ago shifted away from him to the new younger heroes by whom he has been supplanted.

\(^{37}\) This is what eventually happens in the *chansons de geste*. With the decline of the *gestes du roi*, comes the decline in Charlemagne's hitherto exalted role. In the *chansons* dedicated to the exploits of the rebel barons, he loses his favoured position and is depicted as a decrepit old man or as a wise but impotent monarch, and sometimes as an unwise tyrant (H. Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', *Romanica Gandensia*, 15, 1972, 75); W. C. Calin, *The OF Epic of Revolt: Raoul de Cambrai, Renaud de Montauban, Gormond et Isembard*, Geneva-Paris, 1962, 182ff.). W. W. Comfort believes that literary portrayals of kings depend on their relationships with their great vassals. In Charlemagne's case, his degeneration may be attributed to the fact that, as the king's power and the Capetian idea of centralisation took root in the 11th and 12th cc., so the envy and resentment of the great lords increased ('The character types in the OF *chansons de geste*', *PMLA*, 21, 1906, 283-7).

\(^{38}\) cf. Nastasia in *Dobrynia i zmei* (Gil'ferding, 157, II. 197ff.); *Dobrynia zhenshna* (Rybnikov, I, 24); Dunai (Gil'ferding, 94, II. 220ff.).

\(^{39}\) Among the most notable are the Polish witch, Marinka in *Dobrynia i zmei* (Danilov, 8), Grendel's dam, and the troll-woman in *HamŠismal*. The association of malignant influences with women is widely reflected in Scripture and in early church writings (see supra, Ch. 2b., 104-5). This deviation from conventional literary notions of femininity also reveals certain primitive fears in relation to women.
Women's roles are defined by the social and cultural principles governing the works themselves. The various feminine types may be grouped roughly according to what Bowra identifies as the three stages of heroic literature: the 'primitive', the 'proletarian' and the 'aristocratic'. These stages, however, are not necessarily consecutive nor separate, and more than one may be found within a single tradition.40

The 'primitive' stage is characterised by poetry with a strong shamanistic bent, of which the best recorded examples are the poems of the Finns and various Turkic and Tatar groups, notably the Kalmuks, Yakuts, Narts and Kara-Kirghiz.41 These retain many so-called pre-heroic elements including magic. Here, women may become powerful and influential in their domestic positions. Often they wield oracular authority, and are sought for their advice on matters of great importance. While continuing to carry out their feminine duties, these women are also capable of rising to action when the occasion calls. Vestiges of these formidable qualities survive variously in the female characters of both literary and folk epic.

Bowra believes this stage branches out separately in two general directions according to specific social developments and movements, becoming either 'proletarian' among the peasantry, or 'aristocratic' among the old ruling order.42 This theory suggests that the peasantry had a predominant hand in the creation of the bylina and other folk epic traditions, reinterpreting the old tales of princes according to their humble lights. Now, however, most scholars support Vsevolod Miller's theory that the byliny were not original creations by the peasantry, but aristocratic in origin.43 Nevertheless, his general classification provides a convenient base for the present discussion.

Bowra's 'proletarian' stage consists of 'lower heroic poetry', the stuff of folk epic, embracing most of the extant heroic literature of Russia, Armenia and Yugoslavia. Here, women have forfeited their prophetic and magical powers, as well as any influence over important political or administrative issues. With the decay of their prophetic powers goes also their martial prowess.44 They exist primarily to look after their men, and, regardless of their social station, to exercise the homely wisdom and caution of peasants in their efforts to save their men from the consequences of their more foolish actions. They are free to advise, but they no longer wield oracular authority, and so the men seldom heed their more practical counsels.45

In the 'Aristocratic' stage, in which literary epic has its roots, heroic literature retains some of its original respect for women, developing it in new ways.46 These women are more awe-inspiring than their bylina counterparts and may even retain vestiges of their former prophetic

40 op. cit., 477ff.
41 See also Chadwick & Zhirmunsky, op. cit., 5, 234ff.; F. J. Oinas, 'Russian byliny', in idem, Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology, Columbus, 1985, 11.
42 op. cit., 477-8
43 This idea had general currency in Russia until the mid-thirties, when the government and party sought to bring it in line with Soviet doctrine by setting folklorists the task of disproving the aristocratic origins of the bylina. A similar condemnation of similar theories also took root in Yugoslavia (Oinas, 'Russian bylina', 34ff.).
44 The bylina about Nastasia and Dobrynin illustrate the decline of the character of the woman warrior, which, at one time, must have played a part in Russian heroic lays. Nastasia, a poleniatsa, defeats and captures Dobrynin, and as a final humiliation, she stores him in her pouch. When they marry, however, her power is destroyed, and she becomes a meek and docile wife (Gil'ferding, II, 157). In the same bylina, however, Dobrynin's mother is able to foresee danger, showing that the women of the bylina still retain something of the gift of prophecy, although their forebodings usually do not amount to anything. Note also, that Brunhild, the warrior-maiden in the Nibelungenlied, also loses her powers after marriage.
46 ibid., 489ff.

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status. In some cases the warrior-woman has also survived into this stage.\(^47\) The women of this class continue to function as mistresses of the household, only their duties now become considerably more complex. This ideal is best developed perhaps in *Beowulf*, where Hröðgar’s wife, Wealhþeow, presides graciously, with an acute sense of her social responsibility, over her husband’s court. There she welcomes Beowulf with a cup, gifts and thanks for his help. In her way she wields considerable authority in being allowed to interpret Hröðgar’s will in her speech on the ideal of loyalty in the heroic world (ll. 1228–310), and demonstrates a quality of wisdom and intuition when speaking pointedly of her faith in the loyalty of Hröðulf, whose treachery has been hinted at earlier (l. 1015), as though she is anxious for it to be so despite what she may foresee (ll. 1180–7).\(^48\)

It is to this exalted class of women that the women of the *Slovo* belong. Apart from Iaroslavna, to whom the discussion will address itself presently, the women in the *Slovo* are assigned brief but significant and highly stylized cameo roles. On the whole they are portrayed as wives and mothers representing the far-away security of home.

The first such is Vsevolod’s wife, Ol’ga (‘Glebovna’), invoked in the passage devoted to Vsevolod’s performance on the battlefield, appearing as the last and most precious of the warrior’s homely comforts:

Кая раны, дорога братие, здыть чту и живота, а града Чрьнгова отня злата стола, и своя милых хоти, красныя Глебовны, свычна и обычаця!

(48, ll. 1–4)

Later, when the battle is lost, the women of Rus’ undertake the traditional feminine duty of lamentation. Their concerns and their mode of expression are typical of traditional Russian and Balto-Finnic laments,\(^49\) and their reference to gold and silver demonstrates a practical preoccupation with domestic life:

Жены Русская въсплакацца, а ркучи: «Уже намь своих милых лади ни мыслию смьлзити, ни думою сдмнати, ни очымъ сглаждати, а златы и сребра ни мало того потремати!»

(49, ll. 21–5)

There is also a reference, though passing, to the lament of the mother of Rostislav Vsevolodovich, who perished in retreat in 1093 (55, ll. 33–5).\(^50\)

In the *Slovo* it is Iaroslavna who embodies all the requisite qualities of the feminine persona in heroic literature. On a simple level she too represents the feminine aspect of domestic life.

\(^{47}\) For example, Guðrun in *Atlamál* (v. 47), Brunhild and, to a lesser degree, Kriemhild of the *Nibelungenlied*, and Hildegund in the *Waltharius*, who, while taking no part in the fighting itself, actively shares her lover’s adventures and dangers.

\(^{48}\) The womanly ideal, stressing hospitality and generosity, is further expressed in *Beowulf* through Hygd, Hygelac’s consort, with whom the shrewish Modþrysa, is contrasted (ll. 1925–57a.). The latter enjoyed a reputation for meanness, violence and cruelty before she was married to and transformed by Offa. Like Hygd, queen Hildeburh also provides a parallel to Wealhþeow, particularly in her role as ‘peace-weaver’. Caught between two warring factions, she suffers innocently (ll. 1066–1159). The emphasis on her suffering is reflected not only in Wealhþeow, but also in Iaroslavna. For further discussion of the women in *Beowulf*, see Bonjour, *Digressions*, 58–61.


\(^{50}\) The projection of human emotion onto the natural environment will be discussed later in Chapter 5c.
in her concern for her husband and, like the rest of the women of Rus', she weeps at home while the men do battle. Her invocation of natural phenomena and the reproachful, sorrowful character of her questions have many analogues in Russian and other lament traditions, but her lament also possesses the force of an incantation, since Igor subsequently escapes with, apparently, the assistance of the sun and the Donets, two of the elements to which his wife has addressed her petition. The potential cosmic and chthonic significance of Iaroslavna's lament has already been discussed at some length; therefore, it suffices to say that in one respect she conforms to the ideal of woman as the centre of domestic life, for she expresses no political aspirations, only concern for her husband's well-being. It has been shown, however, that there is another dimension to her lament which places her in the category of those women in literary epic who have retained certain powers.

In short, women in heroic literature are either restricted to a domestic role, or they embody the traditionally masculine virtues of valour and wisdom in their feminine manifestations. With the development of the romance genre in the West (possibly also in conjunction with the growth of the Marian cult from the 12th c. onwards) women eventually become the passive objects of masculine adulation, often on whose behalf valorous deeds are performed. The heroic literature of Rus' was never to evolve into anything comparable as a result of the long years of the Tatar occupation from the mid-thirteenth century, which were also characterized by acute economic poverty. Such a situation precluded the establishment of an influential middle class which, in the West, played a major part in the rising popularity of romance.

d. The enemy

While the Christian author of the Slovo must have despised the paganism of the Polovtsy, he seems to lack the unrestrained mockery and contempt shown in the byliny towards the Tatars.

Similar restraint may be observed in other heroic traditions. Although the Chanson de Roland emphasises the treachery and uncontrolled passions of the Saracens, and the Serbian poems about Marko stress the brutality of the Turks, it would seem that even where the struggle takes place between Christians and pagans, certain rules of behaviour are observed and the heathens allowed some elementary human rights. In The Battle of Maldon the Norsemen are dealt with fairly and given the chance to fight on equal terms, while in the Chanson de Roland, the Saracens even come in for a certain amount of admiration and respect, for

51 See supra, Ch. 2b., 102-6.

52 Here also may be included Kostbera and Glaumvgr in Atrm., and Kriemhild in Nibel., who are visited by prophetic dreams foretelling their husbands' deaths. Both works are comparatively late, bordering on romance, and so contain a number of folkloric or fairy tale elements. Their dreams, like those of Charlemagne and Sviatoslav, are allegorical, and, like the former's, contain animal imagery (Atrm., st. 15-6, 18, 21-2, 24-5; Nibel., st. 13, 921, 924). In each case the warnings go unheeded: Hogni and Gunnarr either know and accept their doom (v. 26) or they dismiss the dreams with banal interpretations (vv. 17, 19, 23). Likewise, Siegfried and Uote, Kriemhild's husband and mother, either disregard or misinterpret her dreams. On the misinterpretation of dreams see infra, Ch. 5a., 157-6.

53 Women in the chansons de geste play a very subdued role on the whole, although they may be privileged to receive prophetic dreams. They are seen as functions or projections of the male 'other' (spouse, fiancé, son), rather than as persons in their own right (Braet, 'Le songe. . .', 71-2).

54 See A. N. Robinson, 'Literatura Kievskoi Rusi sredi evropeiskikh srednovekovykh literatur (Tipologii original'nosti metod)', 59-60. In early French epic, the insignificant role played by women increased in importance only with the emergence of the ethos of courtly love—a definite sign of lateness and decadence in the heroic epic genre (Ross, op. cit., 88.)

55 See supra, Ch. 2a., 53ff. The definition, poganye, later acquired a meaning which did not exist in Igor's time (See Osetrov, op. cit., 66; O. Jansen, 'Sobaka Kalin Tsar', Slavia 17, 1939, 82-98).
although they may be on the wrong side of the religious struggle, they are not necessarily evil or unchivalrous. In fact, apart from their religious proclivities, they differ very little from Christians. Far worse in contemporary eyes are the enemies within, traitors such as Ganelon, or trouble-makers such as Oleg. In the Slovo, Maldon and Roland, where religion plays a comparatively less dominant role in the heroic outlook than in the Zadonschina, the Russian military tales and the later French lays, the enemy is not rendered particularly grotesque, and both sides in war may treat each other with more ease and equality.

Historical realities notwithstanding, it is extremely important in heroic terms for the epic hero to cross swords with an enemy who in every way presents an antithesis to what the former understands to be true and right. This lends the drama a certain element of terror, grotesqueness and anticipation, giving the adversary what appears to be an advantage over the hero, so that when he is eventually defeated, the hard-fought victory exalts the hero still further. This is perhaps best illustrated in Beowulf, which is devoted almost entirely to the hero's three fights with monsters, while his exploits against hostile neighbours are merely glossed over. His triumph over creatures which live outside and in direct opposition to the laws of God, man and nature earns him the position of hero without equal. It is also easier to find moral justification for combat against monsters, where the hero is not circumscribed by troublesome considerations of mercy and fair play. For Christians (and particularly Christian authors), however, the problem of killing other Christians is a vexing one, and so the ideal human enemy would be one who is godless and everything this notion implies. Better still if he is able to attribute to pagans a single-minded desire to topple Christendom, as does the author of the Chanson de Roland, although in the Slovo there is no overt suggestion that the Russians are defending their faith as well as their land, as there is in the Zadonschina and the military tales.

There is of course no virtue in fighting and defeating an enemy unless he is worth the trouble and poses a challenge. Although the Chanson de Roland presents a series of formidable adversaries, individual merits are rarely dwelt upon. As it would not do to present a pagan warrior as quite the equal of the Christian hero, poets tend to emphasize instead the enemy's numerical advantage. The Slovo and Roland share this feature in common. In the case of Maldon, the enemy is given strategic advantage through ByrhtnoS's magnanimity, by which they are able to defeat the English. The audience is expected to understand that such technical advantages are offset by the courage and right-thinking of the Christian heroes, although these qualities do not guarantee victory.

All the above-mentioned features may be found in the Slovo: the Russians are hopelessly outnumbered, and the implicit fury with which the Polovtsy join battle shows they are a force to be reckoned with. As they approach, the entire cosmos seems to reverberate, awakening terror in nature and in the audience, if not in the brave Russian hosts:

Солнце ему тьмою путь заступаще, ношь стонущи ему грозою птичъ убudi,
свисть звяръя въста, звяся Дивъ клчетъ врху древа, велий послушати

See 1. 899. Honour forbids Charlemagne to treat the captives cruelly.

The reality concerning relations between Frankish Christians born and reared in Jerusalem and Saracens is not unlike the situation existing between the Rus' and the Polovtsy in the twelfth century: often expediency called for Christians and Muslims to fight side by side against a common enemy (as they also did in Spain), inter-marriage was common (provided the Saracens agreed to be baptised), and there were many reports of courteous dealings between members of different faiths. Home audiences, however, were not always interested in the truth, although such courtesy and tolerance between Muslims and Christians is also given mention in some French poems. (W. W. Comfort, 'The literary role of the Saracens in French epic', PMLA 55, 1940, 647–8; 659). See also Halperin, op. cit., 1–20.

A recurring feature in the byliny (a variation on this is to render the enemy grotesquely large), as well as in popular French poetry (See Comfort, 'The literary role of the Saracens... ', 631–2).
Nor does the author omit the ingredients of cunning and treachery essential to the portrayal of the pagan enemy; and so, towards the end of the work, he appends the conversation between Gzak and Konchak (a product of purely literary fancy) in which they plan to ensnare Igor's son into marriage with Konchak's daughter (56, ll. 1-13).

Likhachev notes that, whereas the 'positive' figures in the Slovo are characterized by secular virtues, the author defines the 'negative' characters (the Polovtsy) in ecclesiastical terms. This would imply that, unable to find the necessary models in the heroic literary tradition, the author has fallen back to some extent on contemporary ecclesiastical cliches for the pagan enemy. As noted in Chapter Two, however, there is no moral force behind his nomenclature for the Polovtsy.

* * *

Heroic epic is invariably populated with secondary characters whose close relationships with the hero appear to have a common artistic purpose. As in the case of the early Russian chronicles, historicity is sacrificed to ideology pertaining to heroism, kingship, comradely loyalty, and so on. The principal function of this supporting cast is to set off the qualities of the central hero. The 'junior' partner must possess enough heroic characteristics to highlight the hero's superiority, while the royal figure's caution and wisdom act as foils to the hero's fearlessness and independent spirit. The enemy, meanwhile, must pose a challenge that tests the hero to his limit. In some cases women may also serve to enhance the hero's valour by expressing forebodings which he can reject. In a curious twist, however, women also reflect the darker side of heroic action. It is they who, unable to take action, respond to the usually tragic consequences of heroism through lament or some other manifestation of suffering.

The secondary characters of the Slovo are not unique or complex, although they are perhaps less static than the figures encountered in old Russian vitae, chronicles and military tales. Evgenii Osetrov notes that in portraying the secondary figures of the Slovo (Vsevolod, Ovlur, the Polovtsian who assists Igor in his escape, was a Christian; therefore it is natural that he be presented in a positive light.

Chelovek, 37.

Likhachev underlines the contrast between the so-called 'monumental' style of the chronicles from the 11th to the 13th cc. (in which princes are portrayed in an iconographical fashion only in situations pertaining to their office, thus giving them 'heraldic status'), and the 'epic' style of the same period where, he believes, the portrayal of man is deeply rooted in folklore, particularly in the 11th cc. Since folklore at this time was not, as were official writings, subordinated to the interests of a single ruling class, the portraits of heroes tended to be more individualistic. He believes these two styles to be fused together in the Slovo (Chelovek, chs 2-3).
Sviatoslav, Iaroslavna, etc.), the author is a traditionalist, but that in characterising Igor he is an innovator in that he has created the warrior-prince as described by Monomakh, a character found nowhere else in old Russian literature. What makes the figure of Igor in the Slovo especially unique, is the ambivalence attached to his representation. This is contrary to the conventions of portraying princes in early Russian literature. For bookmen there could be no such ambivalence: princes are either exemplary, and thus usually described in identical terms, or, less often, iniquitous. There is no middle ground, no probing the inner man and the moral conflicts that beset him. The kind of idealisation of princes that portrays them as great warriors and wise rulers regardless of historical reality, sometimes moulding faults into virtues (cowardice, for example, might be interpreted as 'prudence'), is what the author has reserved for the figure of Sviatoslav of Kiev.

1 op. cit., 41–2.
Chapter Five

Imagery, Themes and Motifs

a. Dreams

As one of the temnye mesta in the Slovo, Sviatoslav’s dream has inspired numerous studies and analyses whereby scholars have attempted to reconstruct corrupt words and passages to arrive at the precise meaning of its symbolism — often with quite different results. The object here is to leave such linguistic and textological problems as remain in the hands of the respective experts, and to address the question of the dream’s literary function in the Slovo and its place in heroic literature.

Sviatoslav’s troubled and heavily symbolic dream comes on the heels of the author’s panegyric to him, in which he contrasts Sviatoslav’s achievements with Igor’s failure:

«Си ночь съ вечера одвзахуть мя...чрьною паполомою на кровати тисовь; чръпахуть мя синее вино съ трудомь смьщено, сщахуть мя тьщыми тулы поганыхъ тльковинь великихъ женчоь на льдо, и ньгуть мя. Уже дьски безь киса в моемь теремѣ златовртѣ смья. Всю ночь съ вечера бусови враны вьзграха у Плѣньска на болони бѣшь дѣбры Кисаню и несошася къ синему морю».

(50, ll. 15–22)

Powerless to act on his own behalf, Sviatoslav lies helpless, forced to submit to the actions of others on his person.¹ His ‘death’ here symbolizes his inability to save Rus’ from destruction, and the irresistible power of the pagan enemy.²

This dream, like so many other elements of the Slovo, sets the work apart from early Russian military tales. Dreams, in fact appear rarely in old Russian literature as a whole. But, although there is very little evidence for the existence of a literary dream tradition in early Rus’ (since references to dream-books—sonniki—did not occur in lists of proscribed

¹ It is generally agreed that the pearls poured onto his breast by his enemies from empty quivers symbolize tears (See V. Peretis, ‘Slovo o polku Ihorevmit’: pamâtniâ foedal’noi Ukraïni-Russi XIII viku, Kiev, 1926, 249, 257, who shows that this symbolic association is widespread in Russian folklore, literature and Greek-Byzantine iconography). These now stand in place of the arrows spent in killing the men of Rus’, whom the tears in turn represent. The image of the pearl is again invoked in the episode dedicated to the death of Iziaslav (izrvi zhmchizhnu dusku iz’ khrahra tela —53, l. 17). This latter reference would suggest that pearls also acted as symbols for the soul, as they do in Western European iconography (See Matt. 13: 45–6; T. Bogdanos, ‘Pearl: Image of the Ineffable, Univ. Park & London, 1983, 16–17; W.H. Schofield, ‘Symbolism, allegory and autobiography in The Pearl’, PMLA, 24, 1907, 575–65; E. V. Gordon, ed., Pearl, Oxford, 1953, ll. 411–12.). The image of the soul as pearl is also found in the Chronicle of Hamartolus, and is believed to be of Byzantine origin (R. Jakobson, in ‘L’authenticity de Slovo’, in Grêgoire, et al., La geste du prince Igor’, 267). If pearls were also associated with souls in early Russian iconography, then the image would be extremely apt — men’s souls substituting for the arrows which have slain them.

² A more political interpretation has been put forward by A.G. Stepanov, who believes that the dream reflects Sviatoslav’s anxiety about his power to retain authority (‘Son Sviatoslava i sines vino v SP’, in Derzhavina, ‘SP’, pamiatnik, 148–9). While this view may reflect political reality, the author’s idealised perception of Sviatoslav as the embodiment of Rus’ and her interests lends the dream a more public and universal significance.
books until the early fifteenth century), Sviatoslav’s dream no doubt reflects an ancient and widespread belief in dreams.3

Determination on the part of clerics to eradicate pagan beliefs and practices in Rus’ probably accounts for the scarcity of dream topoi in the early Russian chronicles over which they, as copyists and compilers, exercised almost total control. Although belief in dreams and omens was apparently widespread, any traces of such things in literary works would have been carefully extirpated.4 Quite understandably, therefore, secular persons were strictly excluded from receiving visions or performing miracles; such phenomena were the exclusive province of ecclesiastical figures.5 The secular dream tradition, however, survives in a single version of the Povest’ vremennykh let, in the Letopisets Pereiaslav’ia Suzdal’skogo.6 The dream of Mal, prince of the pagan Drevliany and enemy of princess Ol’ga of Kiev, has aroused interest among scholars owing to the parallels in tone and imagery between it and Sviatoslav’s dream.7 That the dreamer is not only a secular person but also a pagan enemy is a particularly noteworthy point to which the discussion will return at a later stage.

The dream motif in early Russian literature is probably indebted not only to an indigenous native tradition, but also to translated literature and the Bible. The possibility of a Scandinavian literary influence should not be ruled out altogether either. Scandinavia, with its deeply-rooted cult of dreams, has produced a body of literature rich in dream-symbols, both subtle and highly sophisticated, and there is no reason to suppose that the Vikings did not disseminate this tradition in the European lands in which they settled, although this influence would probably have been confined to the sphere of the nobility.8

Given the lack of contemporary records concerning dream interpretation in early Rus’, it would be useful to look at the Western European dream tradition, for which documentation is abundant.

The somnium as a literary device appears to be common to all early European traditions, and is found in the earliest literary sources, most significantly, the Bible and classical Greek and Roman writings. These doubtlessly exercised considerable influence over much of the early

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3 Early references to an indigenous Russian dream tradition, including some dream interpretations, are to be found in M. D. Chulkov, Abevega russkikh sueverii, idologoklnicheskikh shertvoprinoshenii, svadelnykh prostonarodnykh obriadov, koldovstva, shemanstva, M., 1786, 396 (and passim, for references to individual objects or persons appearing in dreams, and to the practice of dream interpretation among gypsy fortune-tellers). In the 1760’s Western European dream-books were being translated, becoming very popular in Russia from the late 18th c. The folk beliefs in dreams set down by Chulkov, however, show that dreams were not conceived in narrative form, the focus being on individual objects which were endowed with specific meanings. For more on dreams in folk tradition, see Peretts, op. cit., 244-6.

4 A.L. Nikitin, ‘Nasledie Boiana v SP. Son Sviatoslava’, in Derzhavina, ‘SP’: pamiatnik, 119. For later clerical admonitions against belief in dreams see Peretts, op. cit., 243-4 (such beliefs were considered to be demonically inspired, for they did not distinguish between what was sent by God and what came from the Devil).

5 See the prophetic dream of bp. Nifont in Hyp. (1156), PSRL, II, col. 468; N. Nikol’skii, ‘Legenda mantuanskogo episkopa Gumol’da o sv. Viacheslave Cheshkom slaviano-russkom perelozenii’, Pamiatniki drevnei pis’mennosti i iskusstva, 174, SPb., 1909, 2-77. See also Peretts, op. cit., 244, for dreams in ORL.

6 N. M. Obolen’skii, ed., Sbornik Moskovskogo glavnogo archiva inostrannykh del, XV v., no. 902-1468, M., 1851, 11. (See also Peretts, op. cit., 243.)

7 Nikitin, op. cit., 112-33; D.S. Likhachev, ‘Son kniazia Sviatoslava v Slove’, in ‘SP’ i kultura, 229-34.

8 For the dissemination of Norse oral tradition in northern France see A.H. Krappe, ‘Le songe de la mère de Guillaume le Conquérant’, Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur, 61, 1937, 19ff. (Krappe believes that the Scandinavian dream topos in its turn originated in Byzantium and was brought to Scandinavia by Norsemen serving in the Varangian Guard). For further discussion on Scandinavian influences on other European literatures, see also Nikitin, op. cit., 119-20; E. O. G. Turville-Petre, ‘Dreams in Icelandic Tradition’, in idem, Nine Norse Studies, London, 1972, 30.
vernacular literature of Europe, although it is likely that many of these nations also possessed an indigenous tradition with its own images and symbols.\(^9\) A certain amount of cultural cross-fertilisation must also have made some impact.

Another important influence on the dream topos in European literature, though often indirect, was the long and widespread dream-book tradition for which there is written evidence extending over a period of more than four thousand years.\(^{10}\) Greek oneiromancy was already well-established by the time the first known dream-book author, Artemidoros of Daldis (ca. 135–200 A.D.), produced his *Oneirokritikon*, a collection of older dream traditions allegedly compiled in the course of his travels through Greece, Italy and Asia.\(^{11}\) His work was to influence succeeding writers, notably Macrobius (fl. end of 4th c., beginning of 5th c.), whose doctrines were to become widely known and implemented among medieval writers.\(^{12}\) The earliest Greek dream-books formed the basis for the most popular dream-book of the Middle Ages, the *Somniale Danielis*, originally compiled from the fourth-century prose *Oneirokritikon* of the Prophet Daniel dedicated to the King Nabuchodonosor, and translated into Latin in the seventh century.\(^{13}\) Apart from the hundreds of existing Latin manuscripts dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, the *Somniale* is also found in translations into Old and Middle English, Welsh, Old French, German, Polish, Italian and the Scandinavian languages.\(^{14}\) In addition to the many Greek-Byzantine writers and compilers of dream-books, the Mohammedans also influenced the European dream topos through such important authors of Arabic dream theory as ibn Sina (Avicenna, d.1037) and ibn Rušd (Averroes, d.1198), among others.\(^{15}\)

The widespread popularity of dream-books in western Europe as a method of divination posed a dilemma for clerics who, on the one hand, were attempting to justify biblical dreams while, on the other, struggling to suppress pagan beliefs. Even among churchmen, there existed a broad spectrum of views on the subject. While many believed dreams to be the snares of the devil, tempting men into error and creating ‘false prophets’, other early writers defended them and their prophetic virtues, although Christian writers were generally agreed that it is difficult to ascertain whether a dream be inspired by God or the Devil.\(^{16}\) This situation is not unlike that in Rus', although it was not until the fifteenth century that *sonnik* began to appear regularly in lists of proscribed books.

Both Artemidoros and Macrobius, the ultimate sources for medieval dream-books, together also with John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus* (1159), distinguish five classes of dreams, only three of which are mantic and prophesy the future, and therefore deemed worthy of interpretation: the *somnium* (an enigmatic dream that, through strange symbols and veils, disguises the true meaning of the information offered, and requires interpretation); the *visio* (a prophetic vision of a future event which actually takes place); and the *oraculum* (in which a parent, god

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\(^{11}\) See C. Blum, *Studies in the Dreambook of Artemidorus*, Upsalla, 1938.


\(^{13}\) Fischer, op. cit., 25; Turville-Petre, ‘Dream symbols in Old Icelandic literature’, 353.

\(^{14}\) Fischer, op. cit., 28.

\(^{15}\) ibid., 25–6.


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or other revered person reveals what will or will not be, and what action to take or avoid. These types are not always clear-cut and, as in the Dream of Scipio itself, more than one of these classes may be embraced within a single dream.

While the Russian dream tradition owes nothing to that of the Greek-Byzantine dream-book, the latter is indirectly manifested in Rus' through translated literature. The most obvious literary models for prophetic dreams in early Russian literature are found in the old Russian translations of Byzantine works such as Digenis Akritas, the Alexandria, Josephus Flavius's History of the Jewish War, the Chronicle of Georgius Hamartolus, and numerous sacred writings. Despite their common origins, the dreams themselves may vary quite dramatically in style and content from one work to another. For example, the dreams visited upon Philip of Macedonia, his wife Olympiada and their son Alexander belong to the oracular class, in which exalted personnages (Nektanebus, the magician king of Egypt, and the god Ammon) appear. In contrast to these dreams, whose meanings are self-evident, stand the dreams of Amir and his Greek wife, the parents of Digenis. In both cases these are enigmatic somnia, the persons in the dreams represented by hawks, a golden-winged falcon and ravens. While Amir is able to understand the purport of his dream, his wife requires the services of sorcerers, scholars and 'Pharisees' to interpret hers.

As with the above examples, the types of dreams encountered in other medieval European literatures may vary considerably, sometimes even within the same work. The somnium, or enigmatic dream, however, is the type most often exploited in literature of the heroic genre. It is to this category that the dream of Sviatoslav in the Slovo may be said to belong.

The significance of Sviatoslav's role as dreamer, as well as that of his French counterpart Charlemagne, has already been discussed at some length. The dreamer could just as easily have been Jaroslavna, since women, especially wives and mothers, act as recipients of dreams in heroic literature at least as often, if not more so, than men. Had this been the case, however, not only would the substance of the dream (that is, the death of Sviatoslav and, by implication, Rus') have had to change, but it would have detracted from Sviatoslav's symbolic stature (the wise, vatic prince and almost god-like nurturer of his people). Whether an author assigns prophetic dreams to men or to women depends largely on his dramatic purpose. If, for example, a woman appears in a chanson de geste it is never in her own right, but as a projection of her spouse, fiancé or son, and so she dreams on his behalf and identifies with him in her dreams. Although her receptiveness in this respect reflects an

17 Commentary, 87-90.

18 Aleks., I.6, 10; I.7, 10; I.35, 37; I.36, 42; II.13, 60. Dreams heralding the birth of an illustrious hero are more prevalent in classical and medieval Latin literature and chronicles (H. Braet, 'Fonction et importance du songe dans la chanson de geste', Le Moyen Age, 77, 1971, 406.)

19 Dev., 160—70. See also the enigmatic dream of Phillip, son of Herod the Great, which foretells his death. He dreams that an eagle pecks out his eyes, and requires the help of sages to interpret it (Meshcherskii, Istoriia iudeiskoi voiny, Bk 2, ch. 9, 257—8). On dreams in the Bible, classical literature and translated literature, see Peretts, op. cit., 238—42.

20 One notable exception being the Cid, which contains a favourable oracular dream (I, 19).

21 supra, Ch. 4b.

22 The patriarchal status of Sviatoslav and Charlemagne in their respective works recalls similar dreamers in the Bible, esp. the OT, such as Abraham (Gen. 15:12-16); Jacob (Gen. 28:12-15); Joseph (Gen. 37:5-9); Pharaoh (Gen. 41:15-24); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:5-17); Daniel (Dan. 7:1-28); Joseph, husb. of Mary (Matt. 1:20-4; 2:13); the 3 kings (Matt. 2:12); Paul (Acts 16:9). Women dreamers are rare, but note the portentous dream of Pilate's wife in Matt. 27:19. OT dreams may be either somnia or oracula; those in the NT are strictly of the oracular type.

23 Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 72.
older belief in the vatic powers of women, her warnings to the hero usually go unheeded, often dismissed as 'feminine reverie' by men who pretend to either greater science or more sense than their simple wives. The calculated interpretation of menacing dreams as trivial and harmless is a dramatic device well known to the Atlamál poet from native sources, and bears a close resemblance to the bylina hero's traditional dismissal of his mother's instinctive forebodings, although in the latter case, the usually happy outcome vindicates the hero's behaviour. In literary epic, such a device has great dramatic potential, as it foreshadows disaster without defining it, thus heightening the anticipation; for an audience or reader to whom the outcome is already known, it intensifies the tragedy through irony.

The dreams of men in heroic literature serve no less a dramatic function, especially as they are not always able to interpret them as well as their womenfolk or an audience well-versed in literary or folk dream symbols. Occasionally in sagas men have dreams which they believe foretell prosperity, but their wives know otherwise. Both Sviatoslav and Charlemagne respond to their dreams with an obscure presentiment of disaster, which is elucidated only when events have taken their course (in Sviatoslav's case the circumstances are more clearly unfolded when his dream is effectively reiterated in symbolic language by the boyars).

In heroic literature masculine dreams as a privileged means of knowledge are reserved for exalted persons, usually kings or chieftains. It is exceptional for a simple knight or a person

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24 See supra, Ch.2b., 103-6.
25 This, despite the fact that women are usually able to interpret dreams as well (see esp. Atm., st.10-26; Nibel., st. 14; Laxdæla Saga (M. Magnusson & H. Pálsson, trans., London, 1976) ch. 74, 220). In some cases the heroes dismiss the dreams as dishonourable counsel, or because they are driven to embrace their heroic destiny (Nibel., st. 1510; Walth., II. 628-31; Atm., st. 26; Renaut de Montauban (M.J. Thomas, ed., L'épisode ardennais de Renaut de Montauban, Bruges, 1962, MS 'R', 453-4), ll. 1935-68). Occasionally the heroes overtly scorn such warnings as feminine superstition and the foolish preoccupation of women (Roman de Troie (L. Constans, ed., Le Roman de Troie par Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Paris, 1907, vol. 3) ll. 15329-54; 15582-92; 15682-5; Døbevssaga (E. R. Haymes, trans., The Saga of Thidrek of Bern, (Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 55, series B), NY-London, 1988), ch. 362). This latter group demonstrates the progressive decline in the status of women in literature. See also S. Koljević, The Epic in the Making, Oxford, 1980, 159, 247, 332; Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 48-52. Braet claims that while 'feminine intuition' in dream interpretation is often useful, it does not signify that women traditionally fulfilled this function (91). The conclusions arrived at in Chapter 2 of this work, however, show that in early literary tradition women were respected for their occult talents.
26 Dronke, op. cit., 112-3.
27 See, for example, the opening of Dobrynia i změi (Gill'ferding II, 157).
28 ibid., 113. Yugo-slov epic also features treacherous women who give innocent interpretations to their husbands' dreams (Koljević, op. cit., 328).
29 Only after Sviatoslav recounts his muen "son" and the boyars clarify its meaning does he launch into his Zlato slovo (elezam směšenom—50, ll. 14-20/51, ll. 1-16). Following his first two dreams (laisses 56 & 57), Charlemagne knows whence the danger comes (Ganelon) and guesses at its victim (Roland, and so France), but he cannot perceive its exact nature (in the first Ganelon appears as himself and shatters Charlemagne's spear; in the second dream the characters all appear as animals, thus obscuring its meaning):

"Śi grant doel ei ne puis muēr nel pleigne.
Par Guenelun seret destruite France.
Chi ad jugeit mis nes a rereguarde
Jo l'ai lesset en une estrange marche,
Deus! se jol pert, ja n'en avrai escange!"

['I am suffering much anguish that I can't help showing it. France will be destroyed by Ganelon. Now he has nominated my nephew for the rearguard. I have left him exposed in dangerous country. God! if I lose him, I'll not find anyone capable of replacing him!']

(II. 834-40)
not of noble lineage to receive them, and villains or evil-doers are invariably excluded from this privilege. Pagans, however, are not necessarily barred from receiving prophetic dreams providing they are royal figures, although it is usually left to a ‘believer’ to interpret them. Such examples are of course rare, but that they exist at all demonstrates a greater tolerance on the part of early medieval authors towards the infidel than towards traitors or miscreants.

It has been shown that chieftains or kings in earlier societies were not so much individuals as representatives of their nations, a concept also reflected in literature. Their dreams, therefore, become a matter of public interest and are assigned by Macrobius to a special category: the somnium publicum. The ancient Greeks attached great significance to the ‘public dreams’ of their kings; similarly, the Norsemen believed they could come to know their future through the dreams of their chieftains. In the oldest chansons de geste, Charlemagne is the principal beneficiary of celestial counsels and warnings, while in the Chanson de Roland, where his stature approximates that of a biblical sovereign, he receives dreams in which he is personally closely associated with the fate of those near to him. Only later, in the chansons devoted to the so-called rebel barons, when his myth has fallen into decline, does he lose this favoured position.

Given his status, therefore, it is fitting that Charlemagne appear as the central figure in his dreams. In the first two dreams warning him of Ganelon’s treason and Roland’s death (laisœs 56 & 57) he himself is the object of attack. In the first, Ganelon seizes his lance, a symbol of his princely rule, and breaks it; in the second, a ‘fierce bear’ bites his right arm and a leopard attacks him. While both the lance and his right arm represent his sovereign authority, they may also be taken as symbols for Roland, leader of the rearguard on whom the king’s authority depends, his ‘right-hand man’. Seeing himself rendered impotent in this way, Charlemagne knows that somehow through Ganelon’s agency France will be brought low. In the third dream, which foretells his battle with Baligant (laisse 185), Charlemagne watches helplessly as the French army is consumed by a celestial fire and set upon by wild beasts and devils (the Saracens), until he is forced to grapple with a ferocious lion (Baligant). In the three dreams based on animal allegory (laisœs 57, 185 & 186), the only person not represented by an animal is the dreamer himself. What happens to Charlemagne happens to him in his person as sovereign of France.

In Njal’s Saga, Hoskuld (ch. 23, 79–80) and Flosi (ch. 133, 278–9) need help in interpreting their dreams, although Gunnarr (ch. 62, 147) is able to understand his. So too does Hagen in Walth (ll. 621–27). (It is he, rather than the craven king Guntharius, who is privileged to receive the portentous dream.)

30 Braet, ‘Le songe dans la chanson de geste’, 74, 92–4. In the OT, only Joseph is able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh and his servants (Gen. 39 & 41), while his own dreams are misinterpreted by his envious brothers and his father (Gen. 37). Daniel is likewise the only one able to interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:5–27).

31 As opposed to the somnium proprium (concerning the fate of the dreamer) and the somnium alienum (concerning the dreamer’s entourage). See Commentary, 90 (ch. 3).

32 Braet, ‘Le songe dans la chanson de geste’, 75ff.; Nikitin, op. cit., 120.

33 ibid., 76–8.

34 In the fourth dream foreshadowing Ganelon’s trial (laisse 186), he is primarily a spectator and addressed in his royal office.

35 Both Ganelon and Marsile’s nephew refer to Roland as Charlemagne’s ‘right arm’; Ganelon states that were he to lose it from his body, Charlemagne’s force would be spent (II. 596–8; 1194–5).


37 This is in accordance with allegorical dream tradition. See A.H. Krappé, ‘The dreams of Charlemagne in the CdR’, PMLA, 36, 1921, 136; Braet, ‘Le songe dans la chanson de geste’, 111–12. Women’s dreams are usually of the somnium alienum class, in which the dreamer is absent.
The above observations prove valuable in understanding the significance of Sviatoslav's dream in the *Slovo*. It is certainly not, as Nikitin alleges, merely an historical inaccuracy. Nikitin believes that, since Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich died nine years after the events narrated, the dream must be one of the many direct borrowings on the author's part from the repertory of Boyan relating to the career of Sviatoslav Iaroslavich (d. 1076). But if such a glaring inconsistency did not trouble the author, it is because he intended the 'death' of Sviatoslav to symbolize the death of Rus' and her armies through Igor's defeat, in the same way that Charlemagne's dreams of direct attacks on him symbolize the attacks on Roland and France. His *somnium publicum* relates to the fortunes of the nation of which he is conceived to be the 'father'. Like Charlemagne in his dreams, Sviatoslav is also helpless, his power undermined in his case by the ill-conceived actions of Igor and Vsevolod.

The vast majority of dreams in medieval heroic literature foretell in enigmatic fashion some disastrous event: the death of the dreamer himself or, more often, of someone close to the dreamer, an encounter with the enemy, treason, ambush, etc. Only very rarely do they prophesy a happy outcome. Such is the nature of heroism, that doom and death are its natural consequences.

Sviatoslav's dream, therefore, conforms closely to its western European counterparts in its allegorical structure and its association with death. What distinguishes it from the majority of epic *somnia*, however, is the absence of animal imagery, which otherwise abounds in the *Slovo*, and characterizes the dreams of Scandinavian sagas and poetry, Germanic epic, and most of the *chansons de geste*. The animal imagery so characteristic of epic *somnia* comes promptly on the heels of Sviatoslav's dream in the boyars' reply, which essentially recapitulates the sense of the dream in allegorical fashion. The symbols used are those of birds, especially popular among Germanic and French authors, and of cosmic phenomena, sometimes also encountered in French and Yugoslav songs. On these grounds, therefore, the boyars' reply may be viewed as a continuation of the prince's dream, a reiteration of Igor's defeat by the pagans and of the imminent threat to the Kievan dynasty, its sovereignty, and the nation of Rus'. In the course of their allegorical narration of events no digressionary analytical asides appear:

Се бо два сокола слётка съ отня стола злата поискати града Тъмутороканя, а любо испити шеломомъ Дону. Уже сокола крильца припява гонаныхъ себяльме, а само опучаша въ путины желяннн. Тёмно бо бъ въ 3 денни: два солнца помъркоста, оба багряня стъпня погасоста, и въ моръ погрузиста, и

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38 op. cit., 120-1.
39 Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 71. In the Baligant dream (*laisse* 185), the poet deliberately conceals a favourable outcome through a hyperbolised representation of the danger posed to the French by the Saracens. This is an unusual practice but if, as most scholars believe, this dream together with the whole Baligant episode is a later interpolation, the poet may be attempting to preserve the artistic unity of the work by imitating the style of the other three dreams.
40 For analogues in Yugoslav epic see Koljević, *loc. cit.* For a study of parallels between Sviatoslav's dream (*U zhe d'ubь besh" knesa...*) and Russian death and funerary rites among the peasantry, see M.P. Alekseev, 'K snu Sviatoslava v SP', in Adrianova-Peretta, 'SP': sbornik issledovanii i statei, 226-48.
41 Likewise uncommon among medieval *somnia* is Charlemagne's first dream in the *CdR* and *Das Rolandlied*, in which Ganelon appears as himself and not in the guise of an animal (Fischer, *op. cit.*, 46.)
42 *Atm.*, st. 18; *Nibel.*, st. 13/1509; Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 124-37. Note also the bird imagery in *Devg.*, 180/180-70.
44 See Nikitin, *op. cit.*, 123.
The celestial and animal imagery here is not unlike that of the Chanson de Roland. The image here of the heroes as falcons under attack also has close parallels in Kriemhild’s first dream foretelling the death of Siegfried (Nibelungenlied, st. 13). Only with the following words can the actual ‘commentary’ on the dream’s significance be said to begin: ‘uzhe snesesia kula na khvalu; uzhe tresnu nuzha na voliu’ (51, ll. 5–9). Such a device—the allegorical recapitulation of a dream by its ‘interpreters’—is unknown among medieval European somnia. This gives rise to the conclusion that, either this is simply a concept unique to the Slovo, or the original text has been tampered with by an interpolator, and that the first part of the boyars’ reply once constituted part of the dream itself.

Dreams in heroic literature have an artistic function extending beyond simple narrative expedient. In the first place they create a heightened sense of anticipation which involves the audience emotionally, irrespective of its familiarity with the tale and its outcome. Suspense is achieved by the allegorical character of these dreams which conceals their explicit or entire meaning.

Sviatoslav’s dream comes after the laments following Igor’s defeat, by which time the audience knows what turn events have taken. His dream, nevertheless, has great emotional impact, for it not only discloses in enigmatic fashion what is taking place at that moment, but it also reveals the long-term and far-reaching consequences of those events as they affect the whole of Kievan Rus’ (the ‘death’ of the Kievan dynasty, or at least its ascendancy). Charlemagne’s dreams also begin well after Ganelon’s treachery has been made known to the audience. The two dreams prior to the fatal ambush at Roncevaux, confirm Ganelon’s treachery, and warn that France will be somehow undermined if not actually destroyed. Likewise Kriemhild’s plot for revenge against Hagen and her brothers begins to unfold long before the day of their departure for Hungary on her invitation (st. 1259). Uote, her mother, attempts to dissuade the Burgundians from going after she has dreamt that all the birds in the land lay dead (st. 1509), but Hagen dismisses her warnings with true heroic feeling:

«Swer sich an troume wendet...,
der enweiz der rehten maere nich ze sagene,
wenn’ ez im ze éren vollelichen stë.»

(st. 1510)

[‘Those who set store by dreams cannot rightly know where their whole honour lies’. (90)]

The suspense, therefore, depends not on audience surprise at the dreams’ revelations, but on the dreams being misunderstood, underestimated or even dismissed by those to whom they directly relate.

The tragedy is intensified, not only because Charlemagne and Sviatoslav do not understand straightaway the purport of their dreams, but also because they are powerless to control the course of events unveiled in them. In order to sustain an atmosphere of suspense, the dreams must not alter the plans of the protagonists; this is achieved to some degree by their ambiguous nature. The heroes on whose behalf others dream must either fail to understand the omens, or, if their meaning be clear, reject them. In northern literature particularly, princely heroes are also powerless to resist omens because they have embraced the heroic life and are compelled,
therefore, to confront their fate.\textsuperscript{45} The kind of fatalism which permeates northern heroic literature has also made its way into the \textit{Slovo}; not by way of a dream, but through images often visualised in dreams. In disregarding the menacing cosmic signs that attend his departure for war, Igor upholds the principles inherent in the heroic ethos as it is expressed in Germanic literature. He accepts that his fate lies in either victory or defeat, and goes to meet it under the darkness of the solar eclipse.

The concept of immutable and inexorable fate does not necessarily apply to most of the French \textit{chansons de geste}, where dreams usually disclose only possibilities, not inevitabilities.\textsuperscript{46} Man compelled not by fate, but master of his destiny, is a notion which owes not a little to the influence of the Christian doctrine of free will.\textsuperscript{47} In the \textit{Chanson de Roland}, however, Charlemagne's third dream is the only one of the four which conforms to this idea, the others being genuinely more prophetic.\textsuperscript{48} If, as many scholars believe, this \textit{somnium} and the Baligant episode it anticipates are later interpolations superimposed by Turoldus on an older version of the Roland tale,\textsuperscript{49} then its uniqueness may be explained: as it was apparently Turoldus' idea to exalt Christianity through Charlemagne's fight with Baligant, the dream naturally also reflects the significant influence Christian ideas had begun to exert on secular literature by this time.

In a sense, Sviatoslav's dream in the \textit{Slovo} also conforms to the idea that the portents revealed therein need not be realised. The dream follows Igor's defeat, the subsequent laments of the women of Rus' and Rus' itself, and the author's panegyric to Sviatoslav of Kiev respectively. These episodes create a continuity of images which culminate in the funerary imagery of the dream. While it encapsulates the present situation, the death envisaged for the Kievan prince also forebodes disaster of a greater magnitude. This particular premonitory dream was devised and deliberately placed before the appeal for unity among the princes of Rus' as a warning of what may, but need not, transpire. Just as Kriemhild actually invents one of her

\begin{verbatim}
'Seinat er at segia
svá er nú ráðit.
Forðumka furuð,
alz þó er fura velat.
Mart er migk glikligt,
at munim skammœir.'

['It is too late to talk of this
now it has been decided.
I cannot ignore my doom,
since we have purposed to go.
Much shows it is most likely/
that our lives will be short'.]
\end{verbatim}

\textit{(Atm., st. 26)}

\textsuperscript{45} Refusing to be frightened by their wives' dreams, Gunnarr and Hagni offer harmless interpretations of them. By the time Glaumvgr's last dream finally drives the message home, Gunnarr knows that his fate is sealed and he must keep to his purpose:

\textsuperscript{46} Braet, 'Fonction et importance du songe', 414–6; \textit{idem}, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 108–9. See also Krappe, 'The dreams of Charlemagne', 138 (on the general lack of fatalism in the \textit{CdR}).

\textsuperscript{47} This idea begins early with Macrobius, who distinguishes between dreams whose predictions are inevitable, and those which may be changed, either through prayer or other means (\textit{Commentary}, 117–20); Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 108.

\textsuperscript{48} See also the threatening dream of Count William of Orange in \textit{Le couronnement de Louis}, which turns out to be only a warning (E. Langlois, ed., \textit{Le couronnement de Louis: Chanson de geste} (Société des anciens textes français), Paris, 1888, ll. 289–97).

dreams to warn Siegfried, so the author of the Slovo contrives his for the same purpose. In so doing he makes it clear that he does not share the heroic fatalism of his central hero.

Determinist philosophy characterizes the oldest texts of Germanic literature, but it also survives to varying degrees, mainly through dreams, in later more ‘christianized’ reworkings of heroic songs such as the Nibelungenlied and the Chanson de Roland. Many of the earliest surviving epics, however, contain no dreams at all—Beowulf, Hamðismál, Atlakvösa and the Battle of Maldon (of which only the middle has survived). Saving Maldon, these poems are still more or less rooted in the old world of magic, in which the natural and supernatural co-exist on the same plane and closely interrelate. Here omens manifest themselves through the real, physical world, as they also do in the Slovo. Dreams as vehicles for portents become more widespread once explicit references to magic in secular literature become less admissible, and poets have had the benefit of long exposure to biblical, classical and other literary models.

Because the European dream tradition is so varied and flexible, owing to so many different influences and traditions, it is difficult to tell which tradition the dream of Sviatoslav fits most closely, although it does in many respects conform to the classifications of dreams with which Western European writers would have been familiar. As far as Byzantine translated literature is concerned, the dream is too enigmatic to find any parallels in the Alexandría, which features mainly oracular dreams; on the other hand it lacks the animal imagery contained in the dreams found in Digenis Akritas or the History of the Jewish Wars, unless the boyars’ reply is taken into account. In this latter respect it also differs from the dreams in the Chanson de Roland, the Edda and the Nibelungenlied. Its imagery, then, may be viewed as unique, possibly (although there is no concrete evidence for this) based on an indigenous Russian tradition. What it shares with the Northern European dream topos is its enigmatic character, its narrative structure and its negative prophetic quality. Unlike in other early epics, metaphor in the Slovo is not confined to the dream, which may be regarded as an extension or culmination of the portents and images of death that pervade the work.

Sviatoslav’s dream reinforces the notion that the Slovo, like most of its European counterparts, hovers somewhere between two worlds. On the one hand there is the mystical, supernatural and deterministic cosmos inhabited by Vseslav of Polotsk and to some extent still cleaved to by Igor; on the other stands the Christian, bookish and pragmatic world of the author who, while esteeming the old heroic ways, finds himself struggling against them, if at times seemingly reluctantly. Like other Christian writers of epics based on early heroic songs, he still cherishes a certain nostalgia for the impetuous spirit of old times.

50 Fictitious somnia like Kriemhild’s (st. 921–24) are more likely to be found in later more ‘courtly’ works, than in heroic literature. Kriemhild’s first dream—the fatalistic falcon dream—is generally regarded as the oldest of the three pertaining to her (Fischer, op. cit., 138–9). See also Braet, ‘Le songe dans la chanson de geste’, 49 (in the Roman de Troie, Andromaque invents a warning dream in an effort to prevent Hector going into battle).


52 In the case of the Anglo-Saxons this is surprising since they already possessed a highly sophisticated genre of dream allegory, the earliest extant example being The Dream of the Rood (before c. 750). Dream-visions were apparently reserved for religious subjects, and later became popular in the courtly and didactic literature of England in the 14th and 15th cc. In France, however, starting with Chrétien de Troyes, poets and the courtly public of the 12th and 13th cc. considered dreams insignificant. The new literature tended towards introspection, with its more worldly, profane and independent heroes and laicized human history (Braet, ‘Le songe dans la chanson de geste’, 53–5).

53 See supra, Ch. 2b. & c.
b. Laments

The universal presence of lament in heroic poetry is a natural consequence of its inherently tragic nature. Laments serve not only to enhance the drama, but also as an opportunity to glorify the deceased.

While often serving as vehicles for the expression of an ‘heroic’ point of view, both panegyric and lament predate the heroic epic genre, surviving in the literature as well as the oral traditions of nearly all language groups. Like oneiromancy, the lament, owing to its sometimes patently pagan attributes, was at certain times condemned by ecclesiastical writers and church councils, but has nevertheless continued to survive in outlying districts of eastern and northern Europe. As in the case of all oral literature, no lament is performed twice in exactly the same words, although it closely adheres to certain stylistic norms. It has been found that even in cultures which have had no mutual contact for thousands of years, the same grieving questions and tender addresses are echoed, resulting in similar modes of expression and poetical images of sorrow. Because the similarity is ultimately more psychological than formal, an audience would find little that is new or surprising in any given lament.

‘Laments are the poetry of final parting’, which means their use is not restricted solely to mourning the dead. Indeed they may be encountered in most rites of passage or important turning-points in human life, including weddings, festive occasions commemorating the departed, and occasions prior to a long or dangerous separation, such as departure for war.

Laments are given voice on three occasions in the Slovo: by the Russian women (49, ll. 22–5), by Sviatoslav in his Zlato slovo (51, ll. 10–30), and by Iaroslava (54, ll. 20–34/55, ll. 1–7). In addition, there are allusions to the laments of Rostislav’s mother (55, ll. 33–4), and of Rus’ and nature as a whole (49, ll. 5–7, 25–7; 50, ll. 12–13; 55, ll. 34–5). The laments proper may vary in length and focus, but they share many common themes and motifs with traditional Russian lament and also the literary laments incorporated in Western European epic poetry. Far less discernible is any Byzantine influence, although the laments contained in Byzantine translated literature exercised considerable influence on early Russian hagiography and military tales.

In his detailed study of Balto-Finnic lament poetry, Lauri Honko has produced a structural and stylistic breakdown of the lament into three ‘acts’, which are further subdivided into ‘episodes’. Although Russian laments clearly differ from those of Karelia both in style and in much of their content, there remains a number of thematic parallels, also echoed in the heroic literature of France, Germany, England and Scandinavia. The most common themes of folk lament include: a sense of loneliness and separation, the desire for death, and a feeling of helplessness intermingled with anxiety for the future.

The intense sense of loneliness and separation which spells insecurity and hardship for the lamentor is poignantly, if briefly, expressed in the lament of the women of Rus’:

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54 See supra, Ch. 1d.
55 As, for instance, in ancient Roman funeral dirges (see Honko, ‘Balto-Finnic lament poetry’, 13).
56 ibid., 13–14, 56; Vinogradov, Russkie plachi, ix; Barsov, Prichidan’ia severnogo kraia, i, vii–viii.
58 Honko, Balto-Finnic lament poetry’, 10.
The same abandonment of joy, together with the refrain 'no more do I see...', is expressed in all the versions of the *Zadonskchina* by the wife of Timofei Voluevich, and later by the Tatars:

«Се уже веселие мое пониче во славном граде Москве, и уже не вижу своего г(о)д(а)ря Тимофея Волуевича в животъ нету.»

*(Und., 538)*

... 

«Уже намъ, братье, в земли своей не бывать и датен своих не видать....Уже бо веселие наше пониче....»

*(Und., 539-40)*

Often the lamenters also express a wish to die, rather than endure life alone without the deceased. While such a sentiment is not explicitly stated in the *Slovo*, it is indirectly expressed in Iaroslavna’s desire to be with Igor (54, ll. 21–23). Mourning his separation from his lord, the author of the *Zhитие Александра Невскаго* would gladly share his tomb if he could (9). Gleb, in his laments for his brother Boris, would also prefer death to carrying on alone:

«луче бы мо умерти съ братомъ, нежели жити во святъ семь; аще бо быхъ, брате мой, видвъ лице твое ангельское, умеръ быхъ с тобою: нынь же что ради остахъ азъ единъ?»

*(PVL, 133, ll. 4–7)*

Уне бо съ тобою умерти ми, неже уединену и усирену отъ тебе въ семь жити пожити. Азъ мнѣхъ въ бѣрѣ узрѣти лице ангельское, ти се селика туга съ тиже мя, и уне бо съ тобою умерти, господине мой!»

*(Skazanie o sviatykh muchenikakh Boris i Glebe)*

Possibly the finest example of this theme of lonely separation, with its grieving questions and tender addresses, is the lament of Prince Ingvar for his brothers and fellow-warriors of Riazan' in the *Повест' о разорении Рязани Батыем*:

«О милая мо братья и господие! Како успе животе мои драги! Меня единаго оставиша въ толице погибели. Про что азъ прежде васъ не умрохъ? И какъ заидесть очи мою, и где отошли есте сокровица живота моего? Про что не промолвите ко мне брату вашему, цветы прекрасныя...? Уже не подасте сладости души моей! Чему...не зритъ ко мне...не промолвите со мною? Уже ли забыли есте мне брата своего...?..О милая моя братия и дружина ласкова, уже не повеселися съ вамъ! Свете мои драги, чему помрачися есте? Не

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61 See also Hist. 1, 544; Hist. 2, 546; KB, 850; Syn., 554.

62 See also Hist. 1, 545; Hist. 2, 547; Syn., 555.

63 Desire on the part of the retinue to die with their prince is also encountered in the lament for prince Vladimir Vasilevich ('добрыи ны господинъ съ тобою умерти'—Hyp. 1289, col. 920).

Many parallels to Ingvar’s lament may be found in the lament of Princess Evdokia for her husband Dmitrii Donskoi in the *Slovo o zhitii i predstavlenii velikogo kniazia Dmitriia Ivanovicha, tsaria Russkogo* (mid-fifteenth century). Like the former, it derives much from traditional lament, as well as from the Bible, the liturgy, and various literary works both native and translated. Her plaint reiterates the same questions as Ingvar’s: ‘why did I not die before you?’; ‘why will you not look at/speak to/answer me?’; ‘where is your glory now?’, etc. (218–20). An example of the parallels in imagery, is the comparison of the deceased to a light that has been extinguished, an image also to be found in folk lament (220). Evdokia’s lament makes extensive use of natural imagery in general, and, while in many respects ‘literary’, is strongly reminiscent of oral lament tradition in its overall simplicity. This is perhaps because the person being mourned here is her husband, a great and clean-living prince perhaps, but not some remote saint. Also characteristic of folk laments is the lamenters’ request that the deceased intercede on her/his behalf or proffer some kind of protection, a notion easily translated into Christian lament as a request that the deceased pray for the lamenters’ soul, as seen in both these works and in the tales concerning Boris and Gleb.

To a lesser degree oral Russian lament motifs are also integrated into the typical ‘word-weaving’ style (*plesenie sloves*) commonly associated with the ‘Second South Slav Influence’ in the laments contained in Epifaniï’s *Zhitie sviatago Stefana episkopa Permskogo*. These, however, are confined to a few lyrical outbursts and formulaic phrases (such as *Uvy mne…*), while the theme of loneliness, for example, is presented in a purely Christian context (the Permian ‘flock’ laments its ‘shepherd’; the Permian church, in the allegorical guise of a widow, its head and master; the ‘sinful’ author, his spiritual mentor). In this last lament, Epifaniï moves still further away from traditional oral lament motifs, referring less to the qualities of Bishop Stephen (which have in any case been enumerated in the Lament of the Permian People) than to his own woefully sinful state and helplessness.

To varying degrees, the same expressions of lost joy, tender sorrow and longing for death found in the *Povest’ vremennykh let*, the *Skazanie o Borise i Glebe*, the *Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem* and in the laments of Iaroslavna and the Russian women in the *Slovo*, may be observed in the laments of Western European heroic writings. Norse literature in particular, with its proclivity for poignant calamity, provides some of the richest examples through one of its principal heroines, Guðrun:

‘Svá var minn Sigurðr hiá sonom Giúca,

eða væri biartr steinn á band dreginn,

iarnasteinn yfir spelingom.

…

nú em ec svá lítíl, sem lauf sé

opt í íslístrum, at ísfur dauðan.

Sácn ec í sess; oc í sæingo

---


"My Sigurd was to Gjuki's sons
like a bright jewel on a string of beads,
a priceless jewel among the princes.

... now I am so little, like a winter leaf
clinging to a willow, since the king is dead.
I miss in the hall, I miss in bed
my companion killed by Gjuki's sons."

(Guðrúnarhvögt, Neckel, 202–6, st. 18–20; Terry, 179)

It is worth noting that, like the objects of Ingvar's and Evdokia's laments, Sigurðr here is also compared with a bright thing (in this case, a jewel). In Guðrúnarhvögt, Guðrun also mourns for Sigurðr, her first and most beloved husband, ending with a passionate call for death (st. 20–1). Her lament for her murdered daughter, Svanhildr in Hamðismál (st. 5) has a haunting elegiac quality:

'Einstöð em ek orðin
sem þesp í holti,
fallin at fröndom
sem fura at kvisti,
vaðin at vilia
sem vîðr at laufi,
þá er in kvistskeða
kemr um dag varman.'

['I am left standing alone
like the aspen in woodland,
shorn of kinsmen
as a pine-tree of branch,
stripped of joy
as wood of leaf
when the girl, branch-robbing,
comes on a hot day.]

The 'Father's Lament' in Beowulf echoes the same feelings of solitude, desolation and antipathy to life. Where once joy and music resounded, his son's dwelling now lies dark, silent and empty; for the father, life has lost its savour (ll. 2444–59). In temperament and in its mode of expression (indirect though it be) this elegy shares much in common with its Scandinavian and Russian counterparts.

While the Chanson de Roland also has its fair share of tragedy and mourning, it is not given to such brooding elegiac treatments of grief. This is probably due in no small part to its Christian proclivities. Nevertheless, the laments of both Roland and Charlemagne display such conventional elements as tender terms of address, praise for the fallen, and, in Charlemagne's case, a keen sense of loss accompanied by a (no doubt rhetorical) longing for death:

'Ami Rollant, ...

... Jamais n'ert jurn de tei n'aie dulur.
Cum decarrat ma force e ma baldur!
Nen avrai ja ki sustienget m'onur,
Suz ciel ne quid aever ami un sul!
Se jo ai parenz, n'en i ad nul si proz.'

68 See supra, Ch. 3b., 128, for full text. This lament, like those of Queen Hildeburh (ll. 1017–18; 1076–80), the Geat woman (ll. 3150–55) and the Geat warriors (ll. 3169–82), is related indirectly by the poet. Only Hroðgar's lament for Æscere (ll. 1322–29) is expressed through direct speech.
... A grant dulur tendrai puis mun reialme,
Jamais n'ert jur que ne plur ne n'en pleigne.
...
E! France, cum remeines deserte!
Si grant doel ai que jo ne vuldreie estre!
...
Si grant dol ai que ne voldreie vivre,
De ma maianee, ki pur mei est oceise!
Ço duinset Deus, le filz seinte Marie,
Éinz que jo vienge as maistres porz de Sirie,
L'anme del cors mei est departie,
Entre les lur aluee e mise
E ma car fust delez els enfui'e!

['Roland, dear friend...
I shall grieve for you each day.
How my strength and ardour will fail!
I shall have no one to sustain my honour,
I don't think I have a single friend on earth!
Though I have kinsmen, there are none so worthy.
...
Henceforth I shall rule my realm in great sorrow,
I shall weep and lament each day.
...
Ah, France, how deserted you remain!
I have such great anguish that I'd rather be dead!
...
I have such great anguish that I'd rather be dead,
Because of my household, which has died for me!
May God, the Son of Holy Mary, grant
That before I reach the main pass of Cize
My soul shall be separated from my body,
Be placed and settled amid theirs,
And my flesh be buried beside them!']

(laisse, 207–10)

Dietrich's lament for his warriors, slaughtered to a man at Etzel's court, reflects identical sentiments, though much more succinctly:

'Owë, lieber Wolfhart,  sol ich dich hän verlorn,
so mac mich balde riwen,  daz ich ie wart geborn!
Sigestap und Wolfwin  und och Wolfprant!
wer sol mir danne helfen  in der Amelunge lant?
Helpfrich der vil küene,  und ist mir der erslagen,
Gerhart und Wichart,  wie solde ich die verklagen?
daz ist an mën vreuden  mir der lestac.
owë, daz vor lide niemen stérben nemac!

(st. 2322–3)

['Alas, if I have lost you, dear Wolfhart, I shall utterly regret that I was ever born!—And Sigestap and Wolfwin, and Wolfbrand, too! Who will help me now in the land of the Amelungs? If most valiant Helpfrich has been killed, and Gerhart and Wichart, how shall I ever cease to mourn them? This is the doomsday of my joy! Oh, that no man can die of grief!']

(Ch. 38, 285)

This last example brings to mind another pervading theme in both oral and literary lament tradition, expressed in the question—'who will help me/us now?'. Here the more practical side
of grief asserts itself. In the case of non-heroic laments, ensuing material hardship is often a focus of concern. Even in the Slovo, the practical consequences of their husbands' deaths are not altogether lost upon the women of Rus': 'a zlata i srebra ne malo togo potrepati!' (49, ll. 24-5).\(^69\) At other times, the question takes on a more specific personal significance, usually expressed in the form of—'to whom shall I tell my troubles/turn to for advice?'\(^70\) Both the chronicle account of Gleb's lament for Boris, and Boris' lament for their father in Skazanie o Borise i Glebe manifest this particular concern:

«кды суть слоыесь твоя, яже глагола къ мнѣ, брате мой любимы ный въ уже не услышу тихаго твого наказания.»

(\textit{PVL}, 133, ll. 7-9)

... Сердце ми горить, душа ми смысль съмушаеть, и не въмь, къ кому обратиться и къ кому сию горькую печать простерти...»

(\textit{Skaz. o Borise i Glebe}, 29)

The same question arises outside the sphere of old Russian literature, as, for instance, in \textit{La Prise d'Orange}, one of the chansons de geste in the cycle of Guillaume d'Orange. Here, on hearing of the death of his valiant brother, Guielin, Count Bertrand grieves to be left alone with no one to give him good counsel.\(^71\) Bertrand's principal fear, however, is the inevitability of hostile incursions by Slavs and Saracens, now his brother is no longer there to repel them.\(^72\)

This brings us to one of the chief concerns expressed in heroic laments: 'who will aid us against our enemies?' The deceased is often a man of such stature, that his people would have relied upon his reputation to keep the foe at bay. Once the enemy gets wind of the hero's death, however, there is nothing to hold him back from attacking.\(^73\) A most potent example of this predicament may be found towards the end of \textit{Beowulf}:

\begin{quote}
swylce giomorgyd (s)io g eo)meowle
(aefter Biowulfie b)udenheirode
(song) sorgcearig, sæde geneahhe,
æt hi0 hyre (hearmda)gas hearde (ondre)de,
waelfylla worn, (wigen)des egesan,
hyn80 (ond) h(æftny)d. Hecfon rece swe(a)lg.
\end{quote}

[So too, an old woman, her hair bound up, sorrowfully sang a very mournful song]

\(^69\) Note how similar words are used to different effect in the Lament of the Permian People in the \textit{Zhitie sviatago Stefana episkopa Permskogo} ('Ashche bykhom poteriali hi srebro, to inoe v togo mesto obriashchem, a tebe ostavshch, inogo takova ne obriashchem' (87)). Here, on the contrary, the people would gladly rather lose gold and silver, which can always be replaced, unlike their bishop and 'shepherd', Stephen.

\(^70\) See Honko, 'Balto-Finnic lament poetry', 30; Nenola-Kallio, \textit{op. cit.}, 50-1.

\(^71\) In C. Régnier, ed., \textit{Les rédactions en vers de la Prise d'Orange}, Paris, 1966 (AB text), 164, ch. 57, ll. 1659-78. In HroSgar's lament for Æschere in \textit{Beowulf}, the king mourns the loss of, among other things, a counsellor, confidante and comrade (ll. 1325-26a.).

\(^72\) The Christian ideal of chivalry in the \textit{chansons de geste} tended to jumble the enemies of France with enemies of the faith, thus portraying Normans, Saxons, Vandals, Slavs, etc., as Mohammedans (Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 73).

\(^73\) In the Lament of the Permian People, it transpires that Stephen not only protected the Permians against officials and bureaucrats from Moscow, but that he also successfully exhorted the neighbouring nations not to wage war on Perm (87). This he did by inspiring, not fear, but respect, thus accommodating the secular heroic ideal with Christian values.
about Beowulf, saying frequently, that she sorely feared evil days, many slaughters, the warrior’s terror, humiliation and captivity. Heaven swallowed up smoke.] (ll. 3150–55)

The untimely death of Roland evokes similar fears, to which Charlemagne gives voice in his second lament:

'Morze est mis niés, ki tant me fist cunquere. Encunte mei revelerunt li Seisne E Hungre e Bugre e tante gent averse, Romain, Puillain e tuit icil de Palerne E cil d’Affrike e cil de Califerne. Puis enterunt mes peines e mes suffraites. Ki guierat mes oz a tel poèste Quant cil est morz ki tus jurz nos cadelet?'

['My nephew, through whom I conquered so much, is dead. The Saxons will rebel against me, The Hungarians, the Bulgars, and so many infidel peoples, The Romans, the Apulians, and all the men of Palermo, The men of Africa and those of Califerne. Then my suffering and distress will begin anew. But who will lead my armies with such power Now that the one who always commands us is dead?'] (ll. 2920–7)

The same anxiety also arises in the Nibelungenlied. In his lament already quoted above, Dietrich wonders who will help him to defend his kingdom, now that all his men have been slain. Earlier in the work, the hero Rüdiger is mourned in the same way by Wolfhart:

«wer wiset nu die recken so manege hervart, alsô der maregrâve vil dicke hât getân? owê, vil edel Rüedegrê, daz wir dich sus verlorn hân!»

['Who will now lead the warriors on the many expeditions, as the Margrave has done so often?...Alas, most noble Rüdiger, that we have lost you in this way!'] (st. 2260)

Nowhere in old Russian literature is this kind of gloomy anticipation and despair more poignantly expressed than in Sviatoslav’s Zlato slovo, in which he laments the Russian defeat and reproaches the heroes:

«O, moy synovci, Igoru i Verevolde! Rano esta nachala Polovetsku zemli moci cibity, a себê slavy iskatyi. Ñ nechesto odolyste, nechesto bo krivy poganyu prolyaeste. Vao hryabrya sereda v catalogem haralusz skovanu, a v buesti zakalen. Se li storiviste moei sребreniy sadiny! A уже не вижду власти сильнаго и богатаго, и многовид брата моего Ярослава, съ Черноговскими болями...Ти бо бес щитов съ засапожики кликомъ плыхь побы— ждаютъ, зовячи въ преданий славу. Ñu rekoste: ‘Мужайся сами: преданно славу сами похотимь...в се зло—кнjej

74 This potentially dangerous situation has already been predicted earlier following the messenger’s report of Beowulf’s death (ll. 2911ff.).
Seen here are the kinds of grieving questions and complaints typical of laments in general.\(^7\)

Chaos has descended; the Polovtsy, unopposed, pour into Rus', and there is no one among the princes to help him.

Sviatoslav's invocation of mighty Jaroslav of Chernigov and his larger-than-life hosts recalls another prominent feature of heroic lament: the *ubi sunt?* theme. Pausing for reflection in the course of his plaint, the lamenter, usually a prince, sometimes the poet himself, will look longingly back on better times and mourn their passing with eulogies to the men whose achievements invested those times with an aura of greatness.\(^7\) This theme regularly overlaps into panegyric, and forms the essence of the *Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli*. Although only the introductory panegyric and a tiny fragment of the lament bewailing the Mongol conquest of Rus' survive, it is a fine example of the way in which past grandeur is contrasted with present ruin in early Russian literature.

A more literal expression of *ubi sunt?*, set in a more heroic context, may be observed in Prince Ingvar’s grieving address to his fallen comrades in the *Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem*:

«Лежите на земли пусте, ни ким брегами, чести-славы ни от кого приемлете!
Изменися бо слава ваша. Где господство ваше? Многим землям государи были есте, а ныне лежите на земли пусте, зрак лица вашего изменися во истилении.»

(16)

This kind of reflection on the transitory nature of worldly joy, honour, glory and power finds many echoes in other European heroic traditions, most notably the Anglo-Saxon, forming the basis for such elegies as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, as well as the ‘Father’s Lament’ in *Beowulf*. In the *Chanson de Roland* the *ubi sunt?* theme forms the first stage of Charlemagne’s lament for Roland and the peers of France. On reaching Roncevaux and seeing the battle-field strewn with corpses, Charlemagne cries out:

> ‘U estes vos, bels niés?
> U est l’arcevesque e li quens Oliver?
> U est Gerins e sis cumpainz Gerers?
> U est Otes e li quens Berengers,
> Ive e Ivorie, que jo aveie tant chers?
> Que est devenuz li Guaschinz Engeler,
> Sansun li dux e Anseis li bera?
> U est Gerard de Russillun li veilz,
> Li XII. per, que jo aveie laiset?’

> ‘Where are you, dear nephew?
> Where is the Archbishop and Count Oliver?
> Where is Gerin and his companion Gerier?
> Where is Oton and Count Berenger,
> Yvon and Yvoire, whom I love so dearly?
> What has become of Engelier the Gascon,
> Duke Samson and brave Anseis?
> Where is old Gerard of Rousillon,

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\(^7\) Among the motifs shared by Russian laments with those of other nations is the *uprek-vopros* (‘reproach-question’), as well as the ‘complaint’ (Vinogradov, op. cit., x). Although the *Zlato slovo* is never actually termed a lament, it is prefaced with tears and contains enough features in common with laments to qualify as one.

\(^7\) For additional observations on the function of the *ubi sunt* theme in heroic literature, see supra, Ch. 3, 127-8.
Where are the Twelve Peers I had left behind?' [ (II. 2402-10)

The theme of *ubi sunt?* is inherent in the heroic ethos, and not necessarily an expression of the Christian concept of *memento mori*, although it is easy to see how the two themes may come to overlap. The notion of fortune's vicissitudes is often pressed into the service of Christian didacticism, but just as often it serves to underline the inevitable tragedy that comes as a consequence of the heroic life. It is worth noting that the laments contained in the literary works under discussion appear as more or less self-contained units and, in the instances where they occur, quite independent of any prayers. This fact, and the pervading theme of tragic loss, with the consolation of peace and joy in the Christian afterlife notably absent, testify to the lament's enduring links to a time when death was seen as the end, an enemy to be feared and resisted.

That laments played an important part in pre-Christian death ritual is further attested to by their use of natural imagery, ranging from metaphors for the departed (most commonly of the setting sun or vanishing stars), as well as for the mourner, to the animation of grief and direct appeals to the forces of nature. These latter scarcely occur in laments featured in Western European literature, where pathetic fallacy is a distinct poetic device; but they survive in early Russian literature, exploited perhaps to the greatest degree in the *Slovo*. Ingvar's appeal to nature to mourn with him in the *Povest o razorenii Riazani Batyaem* (*'O zemliia, o zemliia, o dubravy, poplatichite so mnoiu!*', 16), is realised in the *Slovo* several times following the author's laments for Rus' and her calamities:

Ничить трава жалощами, а древо с туюко к земли преклонилось.

...(49, ll. 5-7)

Уныша бо градомъ забралы, а весение пониче.

...(50, ll. 12-13)

Уныша цвйты жалобюю, и древо с туюко к земли пръклонилось.

...(55, ll. 34-5)

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77 The possible exception being the laments of Boris and Gleb in both the PVL and the *Skazanie*, which end with prayers. In the 2ad., the *PRRB* and the *Slovo o zhiti*, this holds true, as it also does for the *Chanson de Roland*, *Beowulf*, et al.

78 See Barsov, *op. cit.*, x—xi. As Barsov also notes, laments, strictly speaking, do not really belong in the *vita* in which they sometimes occur (death is normally welcomed by the saints). While retaining some of their 'folk' characteristics, these laments are nevertheless modelled on the Byzantine tradition; they are, on the whole, artistically contrived, and are used primarily to honour the dead (*ibid.*, vi).

79 See *PRRB*, 16; 2ad. (Und., 538; Hist. 1, 544; Syn., 554); *Slovo o zhiti* Dmitriia Ivanovicha, 218, 222; *Gus*, st. 15. In the *Slovo*, the boyars' reply, which also contains certain features of lament, compares the princes to setting suns and waning moons (50, ll. 28—51, 1—3). This section, then, not only contains imagery that corresponds to medieval *somnia*, but it also uses the language of lament. For studies on natural imagery in folk laments, see Barsov, *op. cit.*, xix; Vinogradov, *op. cit.*, xviii; Sapunov, 'Iaroelavna i drevnerusskoe iazychestvo', 321—2. Such metaphors are primarily a Russian phenomenon (Honko, 'Balto-Finnic Lament Poetry', 54).

80 See *SP*, 54, ll. 21—3 (cuckoo); *Hamb.*, st. 5 (aspen); *Gešrærkviða in fyrsta*, st. 19 (winter leaf).

81 Projection of the emotions into the environment is also a feature of Balto-Finnic lament (Honko, 'The lament. Problems of genre, structure and reproduction', 28—9). A common theme in Ingrian lament is—"Where shall I relieve my pains?". The singer, having no one to whom to tell her sorrows, goes to the forest and unburdens herself to the trees—alders, junipers, willows (Nenola-Kallio, *op. cit.*, 50—1).
The literary practice of animating nature in this way is deeply rooted in Russian folklore. It was observed in an earlier chapter that the literary concept of pathetic fallacy originated from a time before man conceived a distinction between himself and his environment. Its role in Iaroslavna’s lament also recalls a time when lament exercised an important active function in death ritual.

The formulaic structure of this lament embodies many of the conventions which make up traditional Russian and Balto-Finnic laments:

The ‘question-reproach’ motif:

«О ветр, ветрело! Чему, господине, насильно вешьи? Чему мычешь Хиновы-скуя страшны на своем нетрудно крицю на моея лады вон? Мало ли ти бышет горйцовъ облакы вять, лелючи корабли на синё морё? Чему, господине, мое веселие по ковылию разьшя?»

(54, II. 25-30)

«Святое и тресвятое сльяще! Всёмъ тепло и красно еси, чему, господине, простре горячою свою любою на ладь вон? Въ полѣ безводнѣ жаждею имъ люби съпряже, туюю имъ тули затч.»

(55, II. 4-7)

The mourner’s tenderness for and desire to be with her loved one:

«Полечо...зегаищо по Дуневи, омою бебрянъ рукавъ въ Каялъ рѣшъ, утрю князя кровава его раны на жестопамъ его тѣлъ.»

(54, II. 21-3)

«О Днепре Словутици!...Взелейш, господине, мою ладу къ мнѣ, а бычъ не спала къ нему слезъ на морѣ рано.»

(54, II. 32/55, II. 1-2)

The incorporation of panegyric:

«О Днепре Словутици! Ты пробилъ еси каменинъ горы сквозь землю Половецкую. Ты лелайтъ еси на себѣ Святославли носады до плѣкъ Кобякова...»

(54, II. 32-4)

«Святое и тресвятое сльяще! Всёмъ тепло и красно еси...»

(55, II. 4-5)

As demonstrated here and earlier, these conventions have found their way into heroic lament where they have been subjected to certain literary refinements. Just as conventional are Iaroslavna’s addresses to the forces of nature: the wind, the Dnepr and the sun. See supra, Ch. 2c. Also Likhachev, ‘SP i esteticheskie predstavleniia ego vremeni’, 46; Robinson, ‘Zakonomernosti razvitiia srednevekovogo geroicheskogo epoca i simbolika SP’, 162.

These conventions are not, of course, unique to folk lament tradition, or even to secular literary tradition, for they may also be found in works treating exclusively Christian themes (cf. the ‘question-reproach’ motif and panegyric in the Lament of the Permian People in the Life of St. Stephen—86-91). For the full text of Iaroslavna’s lament, see supra, Ch. 2b. 102-3.

Robert Mann has discovered a traditional Russian lament closely resembling Iaroslavna’s, in which the lamenting widow compares herself to a cuckoo and addresses the winds, the sun and a river successively. While it is less metaphoric, and less tightly-knit than Iaroslavna’s lament, it shows that both laments are rooted in a common formulaic convention (Lances Sing, 76-7).
distinguishes them from other literary invocations of nature is that their function appears to be more literal than simply literary. 85 An analysis of the close relationship between Iaroslavna's lament and shamanistic incantations has already been made in an earlier chapter. 86 There it was shown how her petition to the three natural elements may be linked to Igor's subsequent escape, thus reaffirming the lament's original purpose in death ritual: to appease, and thus control, the spirits of the dead. The object of Iaroslavna's panegyric and petition, however, is not the 'departed spirit' (Igor is alive in any case), but the potentially hostile forces of the cosmos. Her otherwise conventional lament must therefore take on the force of an incantation powerful enough to subdue the dangerous 'unknown land', the steppe. 87

The treatment of this lament is very different to its counterparts in the Zadonskhchina. In the first place, the prefatory image of the lament as sorrowing cuckoo, with all its shamanistic implications, has been reduced to a straightforward case of pathetic fallacy—birds introducing the lament with sorrowful songs. 88 In the second place, the praises and reproaches to the Don and the Moskva rivers respectively, although typical of traditional Russian lament, lack the mystical, occult quality Iaroslavna injects into her lament. 89 Where Iaroslavna brings into play, not only the three cosmic regions, but also the four principal natural elements—earth (cuckoo), air (wind), water (Dniepr) and fire (sun)—the princesses in the Zadonskhchina pragmatically confine their addresses to the waterways conveying the warriors to and from battle. 90

The women's lament in the Zadonskhchina, then, is executed with no regard for the kind of artistic unity that exists in the Slovo. There Iaroslavna's lament carries through and underpins the imagery that begins with Boian, his artistic vision and his 'forays' into the cosmic spheres. 91 This difference in the handling of the laments in the two works underlines the predilection for pre-Christian imagery on the part of the Slovo's author in order to express the social and political situation in Rus' as he understands it.

Although there are many examples, both in early Russian literature and in Western European literary sources, of men performing laments, this function is more often undertaken by women, at least in society as a whole. 92 While the laments of both sexes share certain features in common, they diverge in purpose and motivation, barring personal grief.

That the role is particularly suited for women becomes more apparent once the pre-Christian origins and functions of the lament are understood. The belief that after death a person's needs and concerns reflected those in life led to the notion that the deceased had the power both to help and to harm the living. For this reason not only did he have to be buried in a way that would please him, but his spirit also needed to be appeased through appropriate addresses. 93 The magical powers often attributed to women in early pre-Christian cultures must have been seen as conducive to this end.

85 See, for instance, Evdokia's lament which contains many images connected with natural phenomena. Here, however, they are used as metaphors for the deceased according to customary practice ('Solntse moe,—rano zakhodishi, mesiata' moi svetyi,—skoro posibaeshi, zvezda vostochnaia, pochto k zapadu griadeshi?—218).

86 See supra, Ch. 2b., 103–6.

87 See Barker, op. cit., 188ff.

88 I vospeli biashe p'tisy zhalsnuye pesni (Und., 538). See also Hist. 1, 544; Hist. 2, 546; Syn., 554.

89 See esp. Jakobson, 'Kompozitsiia i kosmologiiia placha Iaroslavny', passim.

90 Und., 538–9; Hist. 1, 544; Hist. 2, 547; KB, 550 (panegyric to the Don only); Syn., 554.

91 See supra, Ch. 2b. & c..

92 Honko, 'Balto-Finnic lament poetry', 11; Nenola-Kallio, op. cit., 42; Vinogradov, op. cit., ix; Chadwick & Zhirmunsky, op. cit., 70–1 (among Turkic peoples laments were never sung by men, except by professional minstrels in public assemblies in honour of some famous man).

93 Vinogradov, op. cit., vii–viii.
On a more mundane level, the social position of women must also have determined their predominance in the tradition of lamentation. As both nurturers and dependents, the loss of a child, husband or parent would have been felt more keenly. Also, where revenge was an option, a woman's only recourse would have been lamentation.94

In the sphere of heroic literature as well as the chronicles, women continue to fulfill this role, only now the boundaries have been expanded to include princes and the heroes themselves.95 Although men's laments may echo the same sentiments of loneliness, tenderness, etc., they are distinguished from the latter by concern for military and national, rather than personal, security and by their greater use of panegyric as a means of glorifying fallen heroes.96

Where the lament enters heroic literature it has two main objectives: to honour great departed heroes, past and present (which is the function of all heroic song) and to reveal to us the tragic nature of heroism. The laments contained in the Slovo fulfill these criteria to varying degrees. Through nature's participation in particular, the force of the tragedy takes on a broader cosmic dimension. To invoke nature thus, and involve it closely in men's affairs, is to reaffirm the man-centred universe that lies at the heart of the heroic ethos.

Such lavish use of natural imagery is far more prevalent in early Russian literature than in Western Europe. Only in Scandinavian and Old English heroic literature, where oral tradition also exercised a powerful hold on the imaginations of Christian poets attempting to resurrect the spirit of the pagan heroic age, do we encounter laments containing any significant use of natural metaphor. However, lament themes such as loneliness, desire for death, fear for the future and ubi sunt? appear regularly in both Russian secular laments and Western European heroic literature. Where these themes differ from those in hagiography, for example, is in their handling and adaptation to the larger themes. The laments in the Zhitie sv. Stefana, which owe more to the Byzantine tradition, are much less personal and emotionally charged in their grief, and the concerns they express relate more to the spiritual, rather than the material or practical aspects of life. It has been noted in the course of this section how certain features in the laments of the Slovo re-emerge in the Zhitie in a modified guise adapted to the work's Christian context.

Despite their deep folkloric roots, the laments in the Slovo and in the secular literature of early Rus' may be said to reflect more the ideas and concerns expressed in the laments of the Chanson de Roland, the Nibelungenlied, the Edda and Beowulf than in those of the Byzantine tradition, with their elaborate use of ornament and rhetorical devices. Beowulf in particular, despite differences in the stylistic handling of the lament theme, comes closest to the Slovo in its integration of the laments into the narrative and in the effect they achieve. In each case lament seems to pervade the work.97 Looking back on a 'glorious age', the authors

94 Two notable exceptions being Guðrun/Kriemhild in the Nibelung legends, and Princes Ol'ga in the PVL.

95 As well as the pagan enemy. See Cdr (laisies 187, 194; the Polovtsian lament at the beginning of the Galitko-Volynskaia letopis' (Hyp., col. 716); Zad. (see supra,165, n.62).

96 Note the following examples of laments mingled with panegyric: Cdr (Roland's lament for Oliver and the rearguard (laisies 140, 165); Charlemagne's lament for Roland and the Franks (laisies 177, 207); Beo. (HroSgar's lament for Eschere (ll. 1322-9); the Gests' lament for Beowulf (ll. 3169-82)); Skazanie o Borise i Glebe (Boris' lament for his father (29)); Hyp. 1289 (lament for Vladimir Vasil'kovich (col. 920); PRRB (Ingvar's lament for his comrades-at-arms (16)); SP (Svistoslov lamenta Igor's defeat, but also praises him and Vsevolod for their valiant hearts (khvostaya serdtsa—81, ll. 14-15)). See also Vinogradov, op. cit., ix.

97 See Abaev, op. cit., passim (esp. 102), who claims that the narrative has merely a tertiary role in the Slovo, and that the entire work is one long lament. While it is true that lament seems to take over and that the narrative is skeletal, the latter contains enough pertinent motifs and conventions for it to be discerned as an heroic tale. The principal criterion on which Abaev dismisses the Slovo as a lament is that the campaign was a failure, but similar 'failures' characterise most heroic epics.

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lament its passing. As the events they narrate mark the downfall of great nations, their works may be perceived on another level as elegies for a dying age.

c. Natural imagery

As noted repeatedly in the course of this work, the most striking feature of the *Slovo*, distinguishing it not only from its Western European counterparts, but also from other works of early Russian literature, is the pervasiveness of its natural imagery.\(^98\) Although present to a greater or lesser degree in most heroic literature, in the *Slovo* it accompanies and permeates every sphere of human action: in sleep, in battle, in death and in grief. From this abundance emerge four distinct categories of natural images: botanical, agricultural, animal and 'cosmic' (this latter embracing more abstract, less visible phenomena such as heavenly bodies, storms, wind, rain, the earth, etc.).

**Botanical imagery**

The function of trees and vegetation in the *Slovo* has already been discussed in some detail, particularly in the preceding section on laments.\(^99\) On two occasions they act as a silent chorus, lamenting the fall of Igor’s warriors (49, ll. 5–7) and the earlier death of young Rostislav (55., ll. 34–5). While some examples of lamenters identifying with nature may be found in Scandinavian literature,\(^100\) this kind of literary animism or subjectivity in nature’s participation in tragedy does not normally occur in the heroic literature of Western Europe.\(^101\)

**Agricultural imagery**

The mythological connotations of the agricultural images in the *Slovo* have likewise been explored earlier in this study.\(^102\) These appear in descriptions of war and its aftermath, ironically underlining the contrast between the orderly peaceful life and the chaos inflicted by the warring princes. Of the three episodes in which extended agricultural metaphor is used to depict battle scenes two recall the times of the *dedy*, Oleg and Vseslav. The first describes the impact of the feuds instigated by Igor’s grandfather Oleg Sviatoslavich:

Тогда при Оле Гориславичи съящесть и растянешь усобицами, погибашешь жизнь Даждь-Божа внука, въ княжнихъ крамолахъ идти человъкъмъ скрытись. Тогда по Русской земли рѣко ратей вкивауть, въ часто времени грахютъ, трупь себѣ дальше, а галицы свою рѣчь говорятъ; хотять полетъ на уедин.

(48, ll. 16–22)

The second passage relates to Vseslav of Polotsk and his struggle against the Iaroslavichi, culminating in the battle on the river Nemiga in 1067:

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\(^98\) For some views on this subject, see Adrianova-Peretta, ‘*SP* i ustanova narodnaia poeziiia’, passim; N.V. Sharlemann, ‘Iz real’nogo kommentariia k *SP*’, in I. I. Skliarevskii, et al., eds, ‘*SP*’—800 let, M., 1986, 78–89; idem, ‘Priroda v *SP*’, in Adrianova-Peretta, ‘*SP*’: sbornik, 212–17; D. S. Likhachev, ‘*SP*’: istoriko-literaturnyi ocherk, M., 1976, 95–9; Osetrov, op. cit., 71–96; Gasparov, op. cit., 28–47, 88–127; Barker, op. cit., passim.

\(^99\) Supra, Chs 2b. 94, 44–5 & 5b., 172–3.

\(^100\) See supra, 166–7.

\(^101\) Among the few exceptions is the *CdR*, in which nature mourns for Roland (ll. 1423–37).

\(^102\) See supra, Ch. 2b., 93–5.

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In employing agricultural images to describe these particular episodes, which he uses as prototypes for Igor's campaign, the author establishes his case against princes who engage in military exploits for personal motives. This is reinforced when the author extends the image from his digression concerning Oleg into the present time:

His message, illustrated here by the disruption of the harmless, yet essential, occupation of sowing and harvesting, states that such ventures contradict the sacred duty of princes to secure and safeguard social stability and prosperity for their people.\(^{103}\) In depictions of battles which end successfully for the heroes, such imagery would be out of place.

Such sophisticated examples of agricultural imagery scarcely exist in Western heroic poetry. The explanation for this lies to some extent in the role played by the poet's environment in shaping his use of language and imagery. The author of the \textit{Slovo} describes events taking place in an area where land was devoted primarily to agriculture. It is, therefore, only natural for him to seek inspiration in the familiar images that surround him.\(^{104}\) Anglo-Saxon poets, on the other hand, nurtured in a predominantly sea-faring culture, rely more upon the sea and its surroundings for metaphorical and dramatic inspiration. For them, the sea affords all that is required for expressing moods and ideas, from melancholy reflectiveness to the struggle between order and chaos.\(^{105}\)

\textbf{Animal imagery}

Birds and beasts play a predominant role as images and motifs in the \textit{Slovo}: as metaphors for the heroes and their enemies, as harbingers or personifications of doom, as shamanic transmutations, and as both active and symbolic participants in battle.

The first instance of birds used to symbolise the Russians and the Polovtsy appears near the beginning of the work with the armies converging on the Don to join battle. This, the author claims, would have been how Boian would have described the scene:

\begin{quote}
«Не бури соколы занесе чресь поля широкая—галици стады бьжать къ Дону Великому.»
\end{quote}

\(^{103}\) The idea of princes and chieftains possessing the attributes of fertility gods is an old one and has been discussed at some length \textit{supra}, Ch. 2b.,78–9, 90–1.

\(^{104}\) Agricultural images for battle may also be found in folk epic and song, as well as translated Russian works such as \textit{Digenis Akritas}, the \textit{Alexandria}, \textit{The History of the Jewish War}, and in John Chrysostom's 'Sermon for All Saints' Sunday' (see Likhachev, 'SP i esteticheskie predstavleniia ego vremeni', 66–7).

This passage establishes a metaphorical pattern in which the Russians are hereafter portrayed as falcons, the Polovtsy as ravens or magpies. Without recourse to bestiaries, it is quite plain how these birds have come to represent the heroes and their enemies. The aggressive predatory nature of falcons and their widespread use as hunters by the nobility makes them especially suitable for expressing metaphorically the noble, warlike character of the Russian princes. The Polovtsy, on the other hand, are represented by members of the crow family: the jackdaw and the magpie, known for their thieving habits, and the raven, a carrion bird normally interpreted as an evil omen. Dark, raucous and ignoble in their habits, these creatures provide a sharp contrast to the heroic qualities embodied in the falcon.

In the literary and folk tradition of Russia, as well as of many other nations, birds, especially predators and scavengers, traditionally portend disaster. In the Slovo they first make their appearance together with the ominous eclipse that attends Igor’s departure for war:

Солнце ему тьмою путь заступаше, нощь стонущи ему грозою птичъ убуди, свистъ звяринъ въста, збися Дивъ, клицеть върху древа, велить послушати земли незнамъ...А Половцы неготовами дорогами побѣдшо къ Дону Великому. Крычаютъ полунощи, рці, лебеди роспушени.

Игорь къ Дону вонъ ведеть. Уже бо бдны его пасеть птицъ по дубику, влюдь грозу вържать по крутамь, орлы клюкомъ на кости звяръ зовуть, лисицы брещуть на чрѣдению щиты....

Длъ ночь мркънетъ. Заря снѣтъ запала, мѣгля поля покрыла, щекотъ славни успе, говоръ галичъ убудися.

(46, II. 12-27)

Although other carrion beasts such as wolves and foxes also take part in the upheaval, it is the birds which alert them and give the lead. Even the screeching of the Polovtsian carts evokes the sound of swans, a bird which later reappears as the swan-maiden Obida. While the swan is neither a predator nor a scavenger, nor is it necessarily a creature of ill omen, in Norse tradition

106 47, I. 6; 49, I. 18; 50, II. 24-7; 51, II. 25-7; 52, II. 19-21; 55, I. 21; 56, II. 6-13. The exception here is the author’s metaphor for Vsevolod and the warriors of Riurik and David (tär tur—47, II. 26-30/48, I. 1; bus tur—56, I. 23; tür—52, I. 5), meant to emphasise their strength and ferocity in battle.

107 47, I. 8; 56, II. 1-2. They are also likened to wolves (47, I. 9) and cheetahs (51, I. 4), no doubt because of these animals’ reputation for ferocity and speed. The wolf appears numerous times in the Slovo, mainly in the form of a shamanic ‘assistant’, possessing spirit or magical body (see supra, Ch. 2b., 98-100), for such diverse characters as Gzak (47, I. 9), Bolan (43, II. 5-7), Vseslav (53, II. 31-2; 54, I. 6), Igor (55, I. 18) and Ovlur (55, I. 21).

108 See Sharleman’, ‘Is real’nogo kommentariss k SP’, 78-9. Hunting was considered the most fitting diversion for princes not pursuing their main occupation of waging war (see Monomakh’s Pouchenie, 140, 148; Likhachev, ‘SP i esteticheskie predstavlenii ego vremenii’, 64, 67-8). This idea enjoyed widespread currency throughout medieval Europe. It was believed that the demands made by this activity on both mind and body protected men from idleness, the root of all sin (especially lust), a notion that is reflected in numerous English and French hunting treatises of the 13th and 14th cc. (see W. A. & F. Baillie Grohman, eds, ‘The Master of Game’ by Edward, Second Duke of York, London, 1904; G. Tilander, ed., Les livres du Roy Modus et de la Royne Ratio, I (Société des anciens textes françois), Paris, 1922, 6-7, II. 101-32; Henry of Lancaster’s penitential hunting treatise, Le livre de seyn tz medecines, ed., E. J. Arnold, Oxford, 1940, 106-12). That sloth leads to evil is also stressed by Monomakh: Lenost’ bo usenu [slomu] mati—eshe imes’t, to zakudet’, a ego zhe ne umees’t, a tomu sia ne uchit’. Dobro zhe tovriashche, ne moshite sia leniti ni na chto zhe dobrov. ... (Pouchenie, 138/140). For hunting imagery in the byling, see Jakobson & Szettel, ‘The Vseslav epos’, 31-9; F. J. Oinas, ‘Hunting in the Russian byling revisited’, SEEJ, 31, 1987, 420-4.

the swan-maiden (or swan-battle-maiden) is attributed with prophetic powers, as well as with a penchant for instigating war. On the other hand, Byzantine and Slavic tradition held the swan to be an unclean bird and therefore associated it with the infidel. This latter view no doubt gained currency in the Christian period, and while it may have been widely held in twelfth-century Rus', it does not really fit with the tolerance the author otherwise shows for the Polovtsy. There is, however, more evidence for the concept of the swan-battle-maiden along the lines of the Norse valkyrie and her Turkic counterparts in the author's description of Obida stepping on to Rus', flapping her swan's wings and driving away prosperity:

Въстала обида въ силахъ Дажь-Божа внuka, вступила давно на землю Троянью, всплюскала лебедины крылы на синьмъ море у Дону, плещучи, убudiant жизнь времени. Усобица княземъ на поганыхъ погабе, рекоста бо братъ брату: «сее мое, а то мое же». И начинала князи про малое «сее великое» млывин, а сами на себѣ крамолу ковати, а погании съ всѣхъ странъ прихожаху съ побѣ дами на землю Русскую.

(49, ll. 9-17)

The impression that Obida is stirring up strife is reinforced by her presence among the forces of the Russian princes (Dazh'-Boga vnuka) and by the surprisingly realistic, if succinct, description of what the princes' squabbles probably amounted to ('that's mine, and that's mine too'). Once they begin to make issues out of trifles (i nachiaša...pro male 'se velikoe' ml"viti), they bring war on themselves, thus giving the Polovtsian invaders a free hand in Rus'.

Not surprisingly, the raven is more or less universally regarded as a harbinger of doom in European folk tradition. Apart from the role he shares with the wolf and the eagle as one of the beasts of battle (which will be discussed shortly), he also plays a brief but significant part in Sviatoslav's portentous dream: 'Vsiu noshch' s' vechera busovi vrani v "zraiakhv. (50, ll. 20-1). As already discussed in the previous section on dreams, animals play a leading role in the prophetic symbolism of dreams in medieval literature. In the Slovo, this symbolism has been externalised to suffuse the entire work with what is normally reserved for dreams elsewhere. Nevertheless, despite only a cameo role, the raven, who, as a beast of battle, is traditionally associated with military defeat, death and corruption, adequately reinforces the menacing purport of the prince's nightmare.

In Chapter Two it was noted how certain pre-Christian animistic beliefs and practices have filtered through in the author's imaginative handling of theme of heroism in the Slovo. It was concluded that these were something more than mere rhetorical devices, that they reflected a world view not yet altogether supplanted by Christianity.

Despite the author's stated resolve to steer clear of Boian's story-telling method, which he then proceeds to describe (43, ll. 3-7), he nevertheless relies on his mentor's shamanic art, if only at second hand, on several occasions. Through the use of the instrumental case (serym" v"lkom", zegizteiu, etc.) he achieves more than a simple metaphorical identification of the characters with members of the animal world. Not only Boian's composition techniques,


111 Blankoff, op. cit., 186; Grégoire, et al., op. cit., 274, 306.

112 As are jackdaws, which are also associated with the Polovtsy. See Sturm, op. cit., 305; Barsov, Prichitan'ia severnago kraia, xi; Schlauch, op. cit., 117.


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but also Vseslav's nocturnal forays, Iaroslavna's preface to her lament and Igor's flight, are expressed in terms of actual animal metamorphosis, where the characters seem literally to take on the physical attributes of bird and beast. In this respect the Slovo reflects pre-heroic shamanistic poetry in which heroes triumph, not through their own abilities, but through some magical transformation into animals or supernatural forces. Indeed, in the case of figures from the mystical past, such as Vseslav, with his reputation as a skin-changer, and vatic Boian, poet of the older occult order, the allusions to physical metamorphoses would no doubt have carried more literal connotations for the audience; where contemporary figures are concerned, the extent to which these references are meant to be taken literally or figuratively remains more ambiguous. For although strong evidence that dvoeverie characterised the society in which the Slovo was composed precludes the interpretation of these passages as simply formal or symbolic, it is likewise improbable that they were either intended or construed as literally as, for example, would have been the physical transmutations of the byлина hero Volkh Vseslavich (Danilov, 6). The entire narrative hangs on Volkh's ability to change himself, and even his army, into animals and insects, for he relies at least as much on his craft as on his more heroic qualities for success in his ventures. For the more discriminating audience of the Slovo, this phenomenon is handled with more subtlety. In keeping with the demands of the heroic genre, events take their course unaffected by the occasional lapse into shamanic practice. The Boian and Vseslav episodes, though relevant to the present as exemplum and caveat, are nevertheless firmly and safely rooted in the occult past (43, ll. 5–8; 53, ll. 25–32/54, ll. 5–10). The author's invocation of the cuckoo prior to Iaroslavna's appeal to the forces of nature suggests magical metamorphosis and may be viewed as a fitting spiritual preparation for a lament which also has the force of incantation (54, ll. 20–3). Despite her stated intention, however, she does not in fact fly to Igor's side, while any connection between her lament and his subsequent escape from the Polovtsey remains unstated and can only be inferred. Likewise, the fact of Igor's escape owes nothing to the kind of magic which enabled Volkh and his army to scale the high walls surrounding the Indian kingdom. His assistance comes through human agency alone. Only in the course of his flight is it implied that he and Ovlur take on the shapes of animals to expedite their journey (55, ll. 16–23).

While the above passages portray unmistakeable manifestations of pre-Christian magic, they are not crucial to advancing or determining the course of the narrative, and, taken on their own, their purpose seems unclear. And yet they are not altogether incidental, for they play an important part in the larger thematic scheme of the work. The ambivalence here between the magical and the symbolic mirrors the ideological struggles which permeate the Slovo: the conflicts between heroism and prudent leadership, paganism and Christianity. It has been noted throughout this study how the author finds himself pulled at times in opposing directions, as though wavering on the threshold of change, uncertain which course would serve his art best. When he opens his work, still apparently debating which style to employ, it is a signal that what follows will also be fraught with such conflicts and contradictions. By including overtly shamanistic concepts, yet excluding them from any decisive role in the narrative, the author begins to bridge the gap between mythology, that which is intended to be taken at face value, and the poetic art, which relies more on figurative representation.117

114 See Bowra, op. cit., 5. It is common for shamanistic elements to exist in heroic poetry, and vice versa. Only the degree to which they exist determines whether a work may be categorised as heroic or shamanistic (ibid., 7). For more on 'instrumental metamorphosis', see Robinson, 'Zakonomernosti razvitia...', 163–4. On metamorphosis as an occult and sophisticated science in early Rus' see Jakobson & Szefel, 'The Vseslav epos', 27–9.

115 Gzak (47, l. 9); Iaroslavna (54, ll. 20–3); Igor and Ovlur (55, ll. 16–23).

116 He turns himself and his men into an army of ants (loc. cit., l. 43).

117 See Robinson, 'Zakonomernosti razvitia...', 164.
Certain powers or properties, then, whose nature is expressed through the animal to which they are attributed, are bestowed upon those characters in the *Slovo* who may be said to have some kind of mythological or occult associations, either legendary or by virtue of their social and literary roles.\(^{118}\) Of the birds and beasts invoked as 'helpers', the most recurrent is the wolf, associated with all but Iaroslavna. As it is not uncommon for one animal to give rise to several, sometimes opposing, iconographical interpretations, the wolf in the *Slovo* has been identified with such disparate characters as Boian, Vseslav, Gzak, Igor and Ovlur.\(^{119}\) In each case this is motivated by the character's need under the circumstances for great speed, for which the wolf is renowned: Boian (or his *mysl*, at any rate) must traverse vast tracts of land to 'witness' the battles he celebrates in song; Gzak is racing to do battle at the Don; Igor and Ovlur are in flight, while Vseslav, a werewolf by reputation, depends upon speed (and disguise) to attack and to flee. Where Gzak and Boian are concerned, the wolf acquires added symbolic force through his traditional association with the carrion beasts attendant upon the aftermath of battle, to which the discussion will turn in due course.

Practical need also dictates what other sources of power and protection are invoked in Igor's escape. While fleeing along the river and its banks, he requires the stealth and alacrity of the ermine and the duck to negotiate their habitats. Once he reaches the open meadows of the Donets, the falcon, a recurring symbol for Igor and the Russian princes, best serves his purpose.

Behind Iaroslavna's invocation of the cuckoo, a traditional symbol of sorrow, lies a more artistic purpose, lending this section not only artistic unity, but a note of realism as well. Before commencing her lament proper, Iaroslavna, longing to reach Igor on the distant battlefield, would effect her physical presence there by projecting her spirit through the cuckoo. As noted earlier in this study this introduction to what already amounts to an incantation is strongly reminiscent of the metamorphic process undertaken by shamans to gain entry into the spirit world through which they practise their magic.\(^{120}\)

The most explicit display of shamanising technique comes at the outset of the *Slovo*. To further his creative aims, Boian is said to invoke the wolf and the eagle as his 'helping spirits'. The eagle, a favoured helper among Siberian shamans, is, like the wolf, also one of the beasts of battle.\(^{121}\) In the course of Igor's march to the Don, it is the eagles who alert their fellow scavengers to the promise of a good feast: *orti klektom* "na kosti zveri zovut" (46, ll. 22). There is a certain grim logic in assigning these particular creatures to Boian. For a poet renowned for celebrating the deeds of princes, which, more often than not, entailed waging war, there

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\(^{118}\) In early societies, chieftains, poets and women were attributed with vatic powers (see *supra*, Ch. 2b.). In Europe, at least, this notion persisted to varying degrees well into the Middle Ages and beyond. All the characters identified with occult powers in the *Slovo* conform to one of these groups (even Gzak—47, l. 9).

\(^{119}\) For animals which have double meanings in the *chansons de geste* and medieval iconography as a whole, see Braet, 'Le songe dans la chanson de geste', 158-9; Whitehead, 'Charlemagne's second dream', 190-1; van Emden, 'Another look at Charlemagne's dreams in the *CdR*', 261.

\(^{120}\) See Ch 2b., 105-6. For more on the lament as a means of appeasing the spirits of the dead, see *supra*, 173-4.

\(^{121}\) This close relationship between the eagle and the shaman stems from the belief that the eagle is the father of the 'first shaman', and so, in a way, represents the Supreme Being, if only in solarized form. He stands at the centre of a mythical complex that includes the shaman's ecstatic journey and the World Tree (a feature of many world mythologies, including Norse) (Eliade, *Shamanism*, 156-8). This latter point sheds some light on the meaning of the tree in the words: *rastekashetsia mysliu po drevu* (43, l. 6). In medieval European iconography, the eagle continues to represent the Supreme Being and retains his solar associations (see T. H. White, *The Bestiary*, NY, 1969, 105-6). Visual iconography recalls that the source of inspiration (or 'helping spirit') for the Gospel of John, the most mystical of the four, was the eagle. Despite its exalted place in medieval iconography, however, the eagle's more sinister association with the beasts of battle dates back to the Scriptures (see Sturm, *op. cit.*, 299).
can be no better way to witness at first hand the unfolding of events than through the eyes of the carrion beasts who watch and wait on the periphery. Such a sinister association, however, can only portend tragedy, and this is confirmed directly following Boian's metamorphoses:

[Боянъ]...растикается мыслью по древу, сърымъ вълкомъ по земли, шишымъ орломъ подъ облаки. Помышлять бо, речье, първыхъ временъ усобицы.

(43, 11. 6–8)

By thus invoking the tragic past, the author sets the tone of his work, preparing the audience for a repetition, or rather a continuation, of those first deadly feuds to which Boian bore witness.

In the war-centred world of heroic literature the beasts attendant on the carnage of battle form a conspicuously recurring theme. These conventional creatures appear three times in the *Slovo*: once prior to Igor's battle with the Polovtsy, and twice in passages recalling earlier battles. The first instance, cited earlier in the discussion of animals as omens, features the widest range of birds and beasts—eagles, jackdaws, wolves and foxes (46, ll. 20–3). In the next instance, ravens and jackdaws appear, forming part of the agricultural imagery used to illustrate the tragic consequences of Oleg's feuds (48, ll. 19–22). Finally, in the passage describing the death of Iziaslav and the slaughter of the men of Polotek by the Lithuanians, unspecified birds and beasts are said to fall upon the corpses: 'Druzhinu tvoiu, kniashe, ptits' krily priode, a zveri krov' prolizasha' (53, ll. 14–15). As in other heroic literary traditions, the beasts of battle here act as an ornamental theme serving to embellish a battle scene or references to warfare.

Before launching into a discussion of animal imagery against the larger background of the European heroic genre, some observations should first be made concerning its place in early Russian literature, particularly in the *Zadonshchina*, where wholesale borrowing from the *Slovo* is very much in evidence. As in many other respects, the *Slovo* is unique in its lavish, pervasive use of animal imagery, for elsewhere, apart from the *Zadonshchina*, its presence is negligible. The absence in other Russian works of references to shamanic techniques is self-explanatory, while animal metaphors and omens are somewhat rare and normally incidental to the more pragmatic style which characterises the chronicles and military tales.122 In the *Slovo*, on the other hand, animal imagery, like all other categories of natural imagery, is closely bound to the work's theme of heroic doom. By the time these images have made their way into the *Zadonshchina*, however, they have deteriorated, having lost not only their magical and dramatic impact, but also any artistic consistency.123

Beginning with the use of animal as metaphors for the heroes and their enemies, it quickly becomes clear that their original significance has scarcely survived in the *Zadonshchina*. While the princes in this work continue to be associated with the falcon, albeit to lesser degree,124 they are also symbolised by the eagle (*Und.*, 536; *Hist. 1*, 541, 544; *KB*, 548; *Syn.*, 551, 555), who

122 For a discussion of the beasts of battle as creatures of omen in later medieval Russian texts, see Sturm, *op. cit.*, 302ff.

123 A more general analysis of Sofonii's misuse of images and metaphors from the *SP* may be found in T. Čitevka, 'A comparative lexicon of the *Igor* Tale and the *Zadonshchina*, American Contributions to the Fifth International Congress of Slavists, Sofia, 1963, passim. See also the detailed analysis of Adrianova-Peretts, which juxtaposes passages from the two works (*SP* i *Zad.*), in *'SP'*—*XII*, 131–68).

124 *Und.*, 536, 537, 538, 539; *Hist. 1*, 541, 543; *Hist. 2*, 547; *KB*, 548, 549; *Syn.*, 552, 553. The aurochs is also associated with the Russians, but not, as in the *SP*, because of its might and ferocity: here its roar is compared to the cries of dying warriors (*Und.*, 538; *Hist. 1*, 543; *KB*, 550).
at the same time retains his place among the traditional beasts of battle.\footnote{125} The pagan enemy here retains his associations with the wolf (serye voltsy—Und., 537, 540; Hist. 1, 542, 545; KB, 549; Syn., 552), but has forfeited his metaphorical relationship with the inauspicious raven and jackdaw, which provide an excellent contrast to the noble falcon in the Slovo. Instead, the Tatars are represented by honking geese and splashing swans (the author here subscribes to the traditional association of swans with pagans), images lifted from the Slovo to symbolise nothing more sinister than the enemy’s noisy approach (Und., 537, 538; Hist. 1, 542; KB, 549; Syn., 552, 553). It soon becomes apparent that only individual epithets, minus the accompanying body of imagery, have been absorbed from the Slovo into the Zadonskhchina.

The role of birds and animals as harbingers of doom has likewise suffered dilution and distortion in the transmission.\footnote{126} This is mostly a consequence of the incompatibility between the subject matter and the borrowed imagery, for in the Zadonskhchina fortunes are reversed and victory favours the Russians. The awesome scene accompanying the convergence of the two armies on the Don is stripped of its atmosphere of magic and tension by the time it reaches the Zadonskhchina, where, at Mamai’s advance, the birds either flee (KB, 548) or simply create an uproar without conveying any sense of threat. And although the wolves may howl menacingly (grozo noyit), the significance of grozu v zrozhat” in the Slovo has now been lost. The hostile barking of the foxes at the Russian shields in the Slovo has been reduced in most cases to foxes merely barking in chorus with the rest of the creatures, while in the KB version the image is completely reversed, their barking presaging defeat for the Tatars (548).

Failing to grasp the artistic value of the passages appropriated from the Slovo, as well as those which have been neglected, the author and copyists of the Zadonskhchina have rendered the role of animals not only inessential but an awkward encumbrance. The animal imagery of the Slovo testifies to an older heroic world view in which man and nature lived on closer terms, the latter reflecting, sensing, as it were, the former’s struggle against death. Dominated by the Christian outlook, the Zadonskhchina is uncomplicated by heroic wills striving against indomitable fate, reflecting rather, the elementary principle which appears to govern the Chanson de Roland: that pagans are wrong and Christians are right (Paien unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit—l. 1014). The fact that these images, which are so powerful in the Slovo, have become mere formulae of which the original sense has changed or disappeared, shows that they were no longer really understood, and strengthens further the case for the Slovo’s textual primacy.

In the heroic tradition of Western European literature, animal imagery is generally restricted either to portentous dreams (as in the Chanson de Roland, the Nibelungenlied, Waltharius and in much of Norse literature), or to the beasts of battle, a theme especially prevalent in Old English and Scandinavian literature. Seldom do the poets make metaphorical comparisons of warriors with birds or animals.\footnote{127}
Where the affinity with the *Slovo* proves strongest is in the frequency and handling of the theme of the beasts of battle. These appear time and again in all periods of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse literature, from the earliest songs of the ancient Britons and Germanic peoples to the *Battle of Maldon* (10th c.) and the age of Snorri Sturluson (14th c.).128 To catalogue all these references would be to exceed the scope of this study, for their number is great.129 Better to restrict ourselves to a discussion of the parallels in function and artistic treatment of this theme in the *Slovo* and its non-Russian counterparts.

The wolf, the raven and the eagle remain constant as chief representatives of this group, although they may not always appear together, and occasionally other creatures may join their fraternity.130 While the beasts of battle are essentially an ornamental theme, they also play an important role in advancing the drama. Their presence earlier in the narrative always bodes ill for the heroes,131 while in descriptions of battle scenes and their aftermath they add a harsh note of reality.

The extent to which this theme is developed varies considerably with the poets who make use of it. References ranging from a cursory mention signalling imminent death in battle, as in the case of *Zadonschina*, to elaborate prophetic monologue, as in the case of *Brot*, where a raven foretells the destruction of the Burgundians (see supra n.131). At times the poet may allude to the beasts of battle to emphasise a particular hero’s reputation as a grim adversary. ‘Honour was earned by the feaster of eagles’, says Egil of himself in the saga dedicated to his life and exploits.132 Sigurðr, flushed with recent victory, utters a similar boast: when Sigdrifa, the valkyrie whom he has just awakened, asks who has cut her byrnie, he replies, ‘Sigmund’s son and Sigurðr’s sword/which just gave the ravens cause to rejoice’ (*Sigdrifomál* (Neckel, 189–97), st. 1).

These latter two examples illustrate one of the features recurrent in this theme: joy and festivity on the part of the beasts of battle against the backdrop of human tragedy. Warriors in *Beowulf* are slain ‘for the raven’s joy’ (ll. 2447–8) or ‘to gladden the birds’ (l. 2941).133 In

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129 Francis Magoun has provided a useful comprehensive list of passages from AS poetry containing this theme, followed by a chart of parallels which match elsewhere formulae and formalistic systems noted in the quoted passages (‘The theme of the beasts of battle’). See also the list of references for the *Gododdin* (*loc. cit.*).

130 Such as jackdaws (*SP*, 48, l. 21); bears (*Akv.*, st. 11); cranes (*HamB*, st. 17).

131 A good example of ravens as harbingers of death and battles is found in the ON fragment *Brot af SigutHarkvi&* (Neckel, 198–201), where, following the slaying of Sigurðr, a raven prophesies Atli’s destruction of the Burgundians (st. 11 (5)—Neckel’s ed. places st. 5 after st. 11). After a night of feasting in the hall, the sleepless Gunnarr uneasily recollects how the raven and the eagle cried out from a tree on their return journey (st. 13). See also *Hl&avka& Hundingsbana in fj&rr* (Neckel, 130–39, st. 5–6). Wolves, identified in the *Edda* as ‘curs of the Norms’ (*HamB*, st. 29), have a similar function. In *Akv.* (st. 8) the heroes recognise the wolf-skin in which Guðrun’s ring is wrapped as a symbol of treachery. Glaumvgr’s ominous dream in *Atm.* features wolves howling at each end of a spear jutting through Gunnarr’s body (st. 22) (See also *King Harold’s Saga*, 140–1). In Kostbera’s dream an eagle is also recognised as a bad omen (st. 18).

132 H. Pálsson & P. Edwards, trans., *Egils Saga*, Harmondsworth, 1980, 129. It should be stressed at this juncture that the theme of the beasts of battle is essentially poetic, and where it appears in the sagas is almost exclusively confined to the verse extracts that punctuate the prose narrative. Another example of this practice is found in *King Harald’s Saga*.

133 In *Beo.* the beasts of battle do not appear until the second part of the poem when Beowulf becomes king of the Geats. Their presence in these examples, although unrelated to the narrative present, foreshadow the tragedy to come. A third reference to them is made by the Messenger announcing Beowulf’s death in his premonitory speech concerning worse times ahead for the Geats (ll. 3024–27).
one hungry raven tells another that he knows of a battle to come, and that ‘When the wolf wins, we’ll have cause for joy’ (st. 5-6). Later in the same poem Gudmund tells Sinfjotli: ‘Ravens will feed at Freka Stone—I’ll delight them with your dead body’ (st. 44).\(^{134}\)

Although this element of joy is not perhaps as explicit in the Slovo, the audience nevertheless senses an atmosphere of excitement and expectation among the carrion beasts:

Уже бо бды его пасеть птиц по дубин, влды грозу всржать по яругамъ, орды клектомъ на кости зври зовутъ, лисицы бршутъ на чрления циты.

(46, ll. 20-3)

Parallels to this passage appear in Anglo-Saxon verse:

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Dær wearð hream ahafen,}} & \quad \text{hremmas wundon,} \\
\text{\textit{earn æges georn;}} & \quad \text{wæs on eorðan cyrm.}}
\end{align*}

[There an outcry was raised, ravens circled, an eagle eager for carrion; there was noise upon earth.]

(Maldon, ll. 106-7)

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Byman sungon}} & \quad \text{hlude for hergum;}} \\
\text{\textit{hæflin weorces gefeah;}} & \quad \text{urigfeðera earfn sið beheold,}} \\
\text{\textit{wæthreowra wig.}} & \quad \text{Wulf sang ahof,}} \\
\text{\textit{holtes gehleða.}} & \quad \text{Byman sungon}}
\end{align*}

[The wolf of the forest sang its war-song, made no secret of its hope for a corpse. The dewy-feathered eagle raised its song in pursuit of the foe... The trumpets sang out loudly in the presence of the troops; the raven rejoiced in the work; the dewy-feathered eagle watched the march, the warfare of men cruel in war; the wolf raised its song, co-spoiler of the grove.]

(Elene, ll. 27b.-30, 109b.-14a.)

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Hreopan herefugolas,}} & \quad \text{hilde graedige,}} \\
\text{\textit{deawigfeðera oðer dryhtneum,}} & \quad \text{wonn wælceasiga.}} \\
\text{\textit{Wulfas sungon}} & \quad \text{æfænleða ætes on wan.}}
\end{align*}

[The war-birds screamed, greedy for battle, the dewy-feathered one, the carcass-picker contended over the warriors' corpses. Wolves howled their terrible evening-song in expectation of food...]

(Ezodus, ll. 162-5)\(^{135}\)

\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{Dynedan scildas,}} & \quad \text{hlude hlummon.}} \\
\text{\textit{Fæs se hlanca gefeah}} & \quad \text{wulf on walde and se wanna hrefn,}} \\
\text{\textit{wælgifre fugel.}} & \quad \text{Wistan begun}} \\
\text{\textit{þæt him 5a þeodguman bohton tilian}} & \quad \text{þæt him fleag on last} \\
\text{\textit{fylle on fægum;}} & \quad \text{se hrefn gefeah}
\end{align*}

\(^{134}\) See also Brunn. (ll. 60-65a.); Elene (ll. 110b.-14a., in G. P. Krapp, ASPR II, 66-102); Judith (ll. 204b.-12a., 294b.-6a., in E. V. K. Dobbie, ASPR IV, 99-109); Reginamål (Necel, 173-9, st. 26); King Harold’s Saga (110).
[Shields sounded loudly. In this the lean wolf
of the forest rejoiced, and the dark raven, corpse-greedy bird:
both knew that the warriors were intending to provide them
with their fill of men doomed to die; but in pursuit of them
flew an eagle eager for food, dewy-feathered one,
dark-coated with a horny beak sang a war song.] (Judith, ll. 204b.-12a.)

These few examples reflect closely the circumstances in the above-mentioned passage in the Slovo. The carrion beasts watch as the warriors march into or commence battle; alerted, they raise a great clamour, the cries of the wolf and the eagle in particular expressing great excitement; with eagerness the creatures await the promised abundance of corpses.

Occasionally a poet will inject an even more macabre note into these scenes with allusions to feasting, a normally happy pastime for battle-weary warriors, the brightness, music and gaiety standing out in relief against the background of hostile nature, war and death. In certain cases the image of carrion beasts feasting may be implicit, but nevertheless evocative. One such example may be found in Beowulf, in the Messenger's speech describing how joy in the hall will be extinguished by death following Beowulf's passing:

"...nalles hearpan sweg
wigend wecean,  ac se wonna hrefn
fus ofer fægum     fela reorðian,
earne secgan,     hu him æt speow,
þenden he wið wulf     wæl reafode'.

[...neither shall the music of the harp
waken the warrior, but the dark raven,
poised over the men doomed to die,
shall speak of much, tell the eagle how he fared at his meal,
while he with the wolf plundered the slain.'] (ll. 3023b.-27)

Although, strictly speaking, 'æt' translates as 'meal', the implication here is that once men have been cruelly deprived of feasting and laughter, it will be the turn of the carrion beasts to feed and rejoice. This notion and the mood it creates are also reflected in the second passage of the Slovo devoted to the beasts of battle:

Тогда по Русской земле ратно ратаем кикахуть, ит часто врани граяхуть,
трупна себě дѣлячѣ, а галицы свою рѣчь говоряхуть: хотять полетѣти на
уѣдие.

(48, ll. 19–22)

Although the author uses agricultural imagery to achieve the contrast between the peaceful and plentiful life and widespread desolation, he manages, through the juxtaposition of images, to achieve the same dramatic effect as the Beowulf poet: man's loss becomes the carrion beasts' loss.

136 See Helgakviða Hundingbana in jfrri, st. 54 ('wolves were feasting on ravens' food'); King Harold's Saga, 59 ('the hungry wolves were feasted') and 158 ('The grey beasts of carrion/feasted on Norman flesh').
gain. The word *uedie* carries much the same meaning as *æt*, but the passage nevertheless also conjures up an image of feasting.\textsuperscript{137}

Several of the examples quoted or referred to above, including those from the *Slovo*, feature another characteristic common to this theme: anthropomorphism. The carrion beasts are invested with human emotions such as joy and greed, occasionally with prescience, and in many cases with speech. In heroic literature the attribution of human qualities to animals is unique to the beasts of battle.\textsuperscript{138}

In the *Slovo*, anthropomorphism in these passages is handled with more subtlety than in many of the *Edda* where ravens, for instance, are endowed with direct speech, usually of a prophetic nature. Any emotion aroused among the beasts as the Russians set out is implied in their behaviour rather than stated. Like their counterparts in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian literature, the birds are said to anticipate human misfortune. The wolves, apparently also comprehending what lies in store, express their excitement by stirring up a terrible storm, while the eagle, equally impatient, begins to summon his cohorts to the impending feast. In the second such passage of the *Slovo*, the carrion birds' faculty of speech is made more explicit, although like the eagle's summons it remains indirect. Here, as before, the sense of excitement has been sustained. Once the ploughman's voice had been silenced, the croaking of the ravens could be heard as they shared out the corpses, while the jackdaws, chattering in their own tongue, prepared to fly to the feast.

In ascribing to these creatures thought, emotion and a kind of camaraderie in their common purpose, the poets intensify the horror attendant upon the battle scenes they describe. Their quasi-human status invests their actions, otherwise merely dictated by nature to secure their survival, with a quality of premeditated malice and callousness (the opposite of pathetic fallacy). By this means the poet brings a whole new dimension to the theme of nature's hostility to man. The theme of the beasts of battle in heroic literature belongs to the paraphernalia of conventional battle descriptions such as arming, raising the standard, the clash of weapons, and so on. While injecting a note of realism into the action, they also reinforce the sense of the inexorability of fate, which so characterises this literary genre. Their presence prior to the commencement of battle suggests a prescience on their part, that those about to engage in war will fall; in broader terms, they are a reminder that death is foreordained for all men.

**Cosmic imagery**

In Chapter Two of this study it was shown that neither Christianity nor the pagan gods exercised any significant influence over the action or even the fundamental ideas inherent in early European heroic literature. Instead, many of the works reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, a more intangible body of beliefs, older and more enduring than any pantheon of pagan deities. These include strong vestiges of animism, notions of fate, a sense of being part of a vast, largely hostile, cosmos.\textsuperscript{139}

As already noted, most of this imagery has celestial associations. First come two mentions of the ominous solar eclipse (44, ll. 13–14; 46, l. 12). Then, as the Russians set out, night 'growls' and thunder rouses the birds and beasts (46, ll. 13–27).

The dawn of the second day of battle is blood-red, a bad omen. Black clouds streaked with blue lightning (the Polovtsy) race from the sea, aiming to veil (extinguish?) the four 'suns' (Igor, Vsevolod and their younger kinsmen). Soon, predicts the author, a great thunder (battle) will be unleashed, bringing a rainstorm (of arrows). Allegory is then briefly abandoned

\textsuperscript{137} For a discussion of the image of the 'battle-feast' see infra, Ch. 5c.

\textsuperscript{138} The same does not apply to the *bylina* tradition, where the hero's horse, for instance, may give him help and advice (cf. *Dobrynia i Alesha* (Rybnikov, 26)).

\textsuperscript{139} See supra, Ch. 2b.; also Ch. 3c., in which landscape in heroic literature is discussed.
while the image contracts to focus on the reality of battle—lances will break, sabres strike, here on the Kaiala (47, ll. 11–17). This is soon followed by a series of indirect images announcing the Polovtsian attack. Apart from the winds of Stribog blowing arrows from the sea, the images here are terrestrial—the earth rumbles, the rivers become turbid and dust covers the plain. In the same breath, this grandiose picture contracts once more as the Polovtsian banners come into view and they surround the Russian forces (47, ll. 19–25). Then the image contracts still further to focus on the actions of a single warrior—Vsevolod (47, ll. 26ff.).

The next instance of cosmic imagery comes in the boyars’ allegorical reiteration of the ill-fated battle. On the third day, they say, it was dark; the two suns and the two moons (the four princes), veiled in darkness, sank into the sea (were captured).140 Chaos and violence have descended over the earth: the Polovtsy have overrun Rus’ like cheetahs, and Div has hurled himself to the ground (50, ll. 28–9/51, ll. 1–6).

The appeal to the Russian princes also provides an opportunity for images of cosmic proportions. Iaroslav of Galich is credited with hurling weights through the clouds and thunder over the lands (52, ll. 9–15), while the ferocity of Roman and Mstislav has made the earth rumble (52, ll. 21–5). This is followed by the author’s final reproach to Igor: now, he mourns, the sun has been dimmed, the trees have shed their leaves (Rus’ is dying) and the Polovtsy control the river towns. Seduced by the Don’s fickle promise of victory, the princes went to battle and fell, never to rise again (52, ll. 25–30).141

In the build-up to Igor’s escape the description once again starts with the universal (‘the sea foams at midnight, the mists advance...the glow of the evening stars has faded’), then moves in to focus on the particular (Igor awakes and sees his chance, he ‘measures the steppe’ and receives the signal from Ovlur). The hero shouts, the earth rumbles, the grass rustles, the tents stir and he is away (55, ll. 8–16). On his return to Rus’, the sun shines in the heavens, the birds of ill omen fall silent, while the cities and countryside rejoice (56, ll. 2–5/18–21).

Once again the hitherto consistent imagery brings us to a ‘happy’ resolution that, given all that has gone before, comes out looking artistically weak and lacking in any conviction. Hitherto the cosmic elements—the sun, the heavens, the wind, the earth—have either presaged or reflected disaster for the Russians; in Iaroslavna’s Lament they are represented as actually hostile. At the same time, the magnitude, and thus the long-term consequences, of this calamity are repeatedly stressed.142 The absence of these features in the final section of the Slovo causes it to sit somewhat uncomfortably with the rest of the work. The escape episode may be said to follow on from Iaroslavna’s Lament, suggesting that her mediation has been successful, and does at least reflect something of the metaphorical ‘system’ that operates throughout the rest of the work. Igor’s return to Rus, however, with its unconvincing optimism, its strong Christian bias and its ‘positive’ natural imagery is totally out of keeping with what has gone before. If all is going to end well anyway, why bother to write the work at all? What on earth, we may ask, was all that fuss about?

Taking all these factors into account, a case may be made for a separate, perhaps slightly later, origin of the final section of the work, possibly even including Iaroslavna’s lament, although a second singer or scribe would have required an intimate knowledge of the original

140 This image acquires force through the association of of the sea (and the Polovtsian land) with the Other World.
141 Iaroslavna’s lament has been omitted here, since its cosmic nature has already been discussed at some length supra, Ch. 2b., 103–6.
142 V’stala obida...ubudi zhirmia wremena (49, ll. 9–12); A Igoreva khrobrago p’ku ne kresiti. Za nim” kliknu Karmn, i Zhila poskokchi po Ruskoi zemli... (49, ll. 19–21); Ushe snezea khula na khvolu; ushe tresnu nuzha na volu; ushe vi”hesa Div’ na zemlu... (51, ll. 5–9); ‘naniche sia godiny obratisia’ (51, ll. 27–8); A Igoreva khrobrago p’ku ne kresiti! (52, l. 28); O, stonai Ruskoi zemli, pominuvshe pr”oviu godinu i pr”vykh” kniazei! (54, ll. 15–16).
lay in order to be able to compose the escape sequence. This may have been appended to the original work once Igor's fate became known.143

By bringing the cosmos into play to such an extent, the author universalizes his theme, moving it from a specific time and place and endowing it with grandiose proportions. Nowhere else in heroic literature do the heavens and the elements play such an important role, except perhaps in Beowulf. There, it is the sea, rather than the steppe, which dominates men's lives. Not only do its storms and currents pose a threat, but it brings with it enemy attacks. In addition, it has strong chthonic associations: Scyld, the founder of the Danish royal line, arrives under mysterious circumstances from across the sea, as though from the Other World, and is sent back there on his death. Although the sea is expressed less through metaphor than through metonym, its function in Beowulf parallels that of the steppe in the Slovo, which is to present nature as an antagonist. Although the deeds of great men dominate heroic literature, the constant references to the heavens in Beowulf ('hood of heaven', 'under heaven', 'weeping heavens', 'the arch of heaven', 'heaven's jewel', etc.) serve to dwarf mankind and his works to a certain extent. They act as a reminder that heroes, despite their greatness, are nonetheless circumscribed by the workings of a greater power, manifested here in the notion of fate. It has been shown in Chapters Two and Three that other European heroic works subscribe, to varying degrees, to the concept of nature's hostility to man, but this theme is not as sustained there as it is in the Slovo and Beowulf.

* * *

Although the natural imagery of the Slovo finds many parallels in its Western European counterparts, especially with respect to omens and the theme of the beasts of battle, nowhere else do we find such a close integration between man and nature, either through animal metaphor, 'instrumental metamorphosis' or pathetic fallacy. In the Slovo nature both reflects and takes part in the action. Even in Beowulf, despite the sense that nature threatens or controls man, the overall feeling is that it is an independent and arbitrary force, its terror lying in the fact that it remains outside the human framework.

The use of natural imagery in heroic literature enables the poet to set a scene forcefully, yet economically, evoking a readily conceived picture through a reality with which he and his audience are familiar. This now poetic device reflects a time when man was close to his environment, endowing it with human attributes and a kind of equal status with himself, in the belief that it functioned in close conjunction with human life. Although with time this sentiment becomes progressively weaker in most literary epic (as in France, for instance), it remains a strong feature of folk narrative and song. Doubtless, it is to this tradition, with which the ruling classes of twelfth-century Rus' would still have been intimately familiar, that the Slovo owes its abundance of natural imagery.144

143 If composed very soon after the battle, the Slovo may conceivably have finished either before or after Iaroslavna's lament, since both places provide convenient cut-off points. It is by no means uncommon for early medieval works to consist of two or more works patched together. This, it is widely believed, is what happened to the CdR (see supra, 162).

144 See Adrianova-Peretta, Drenerusskaia literatura i fol'klor, 99-119; Likhachev, 'Ustnye istoki khudozhestvennoi sistemy Slova', passim.
d. Arms, armour and military accoutrements

As an adjunct to the heroic life, weapons and armour quite naturally figure largely in the literature devoted to celebrating that life. In battle scenes, horses, standards and trumpets also receive due attention. But dearer than anything to the hero are his weapons, since it is through them that he must win renown. Consequently, poets are inclined to dwell on a warrior’s arms and armour, describing them with minuteness and great care. Since his weapons are both instruments and emblems of a hero’s greatness, they must be worthy of him, and so a poet will often make a point of their quality, describing how or by whom they were specially forged, or, in some cases, their magical properties. Usually, however, descriptions of war gear and its physical properties are both factual and professional. That arms and armour are the most important things in a hero’s life is demonstrated by the fact that they figure largely in every aspect of his life. Not only are they looked upon as friends and close companions with whom he wins glory, but they are also the most valued gifts a man can give or receive, and, at the end of his life, will be burned or buried with him. This close relationship in all its aspects is perhaps best expressed in Beowulf.

In the Slovo, weapons, armour and other paraphernalia of war dominate the realistic background as much as nature dominates the imagery. The kinds of military equipment and the frequency with which they occur in the work are shown below:

**Sword (mech)/Sabre (sabli) — 15 times**

46, l. 8 (sabli izostreni); 47, l. 15 (sabliami)/l. 27 (mechi kharaluzhnymi)/l. 30 (sabliami kalenymi); 48, l. 7 (mechi)/l. 24 (sabli); 50, l. 2 (kharaluzhnymi mechi)/ll. 26–7 (poganykh sabliami); 51, ll. 12–13 (mechi)/ll. 28–9 (sabliami Polovetskymi); 52, l. 5 (sabliami kalenymi)/l. 25 (mechi kharaluzhiy); 53, ll. 10–11 (ostrymi mechi)/ll. 13 (Litovskymi mechi)/l. 21 (mechi berezheni).

Mech’ and sablia are used interchangeably by the Russians, but where the Polovtsy are specifically mentioned, the term sablia is applied (50, ll. 26–7; 51, ll. 28–9; 52, l. 5). They are distinguished from one another by the epithet kharaluzhnyi (‘of Frankish steel’), which, quite obviously could not apply to a sabre, but is used for mech’ on three occasions (47, l. 27; 50, l. 2; 52, l. 25).

**Lance/Spear (kop’e/sulitsa/struzhie—‘shaft’) — 9 times**

44, l. 19 (kopie prilomiti); 46, l. 6, (konets’ kopiiia); 47, l. 5 (srebrostruzhie)/l. 15 (kopiem prilamati); 48, l. 25 (kopia kharaluzhnyaia); 52, l. 24 (sulitsi); 53, ll. 3–4 (sulitsi Liaisiki)/l. 27 (struzhiei”); 54, l. 19 (kopia pouti).
On two occasions the phrase 'to break a lance' is used (44, l. 19; 47, l. 15). As the lance is the weapon used in the first skirmish, this term becomes a metonym for 'joining battle'. A hero who is anxious to break his lance shows his readiness to go forward into the fray, to get in there from the start.

Helmet (shelom)—12 times

44, l. 21 (ispiti shelomom' Donu); 46, l. 6 (pod shelomy v"zleiany); 47, l. 27 (grem-leshi o shelomy)/l. 28–9 (zlaty"m" shelomom")/l. 30 (shelomy); 48, l.25 (shelomy); 50, ll. 25–6 (ispiti shelomom" Donu); 51, l. 33 (Don" shelomys vy'lati); 52, ll. 4–5 (zlagenymi shelomy)/l. 22 (shelomy Latinskimi); 53, l. 3 (zlatyi shelomy)/l. 11 (shelomy Litovskymi).

The image of drinking from the Don with helmets (44, l. 21; 50, ll. 25–6) is traditionally held to signify the joining of battle (like the breaking of lances). If, however, ‘emptying the Don with helmets’ (51, l. 33), is understood to denote military victory, then this metonym may perhaps also be viewed as signalling victory, as a kind of toast to success, as well as a ritual of almost sacramental significance. Such an interpretation presents a nice foil to the widely used metonym in the literature of the Tatar period—‘drinking the cup (of death)’ (see infra, 5e.). The author also uses the image of the helmet, together with trumpets and the lance, to emphasise that the men of Kursk, with their long and close association with the trappings of war, have been bred for war (46, ll. 5–6). On three occasions he refers to the helmets of some of the Russian princes as ‘golden’ or ‘gilded’ (47, ll. 28–9; 52, ll. 4–5; 53, l. 3). This epithet is doubtless intended to denote their stature and authority, much in the same way as a prince’s ‘golden throne’ (otniaj zlatyi stol)—48, l. 3; 50, l. 24; 51, l. 32; 52, l. 10; 53, l. 27).

Arrows (strely)/Quivers (tuli)/Bows (lutsi)—13 times

46, ll. 7–8 (lutsi...napriazheni)/l. 8 (tuli otvoreni)/l. 30 (rassushias' strelami); 47, l. 14 (itti dozhdiu strelami)/ll. 19–20 (veiut"...strelami)/ll. 26–7 (pryshcheshi na voi strelami); 48, ll. 7–8 (strely...seiashe); 50, l. 18 (t"shchimi tuly); 53, l. 5 (ostrymi strelami); 54, l. 26 (mycheshi Khinov'skyia strelky); 55, l. 6 (luchi)/l. 7 (tuly); 56, ll. 7–8 (zlagenymi strelami).

Arrows provide the author with a range of metaphorical possibilities owing to their visual effect when released in a volley from hundreds of bows. Thus, they may ‘rain down’ (47, l. 14), be ‘blown from the sea’ (47, ll. 19–20), ‘showered/sprayed on warriors’ (47, ll. 26–7), or ‘sown’ (48, ll. 7–8).

Shield (shchit)—5 times

46, l. 23 (chr"lenia shchity)/l. 27 (chr'lenymi shchity pregorodisha); 47, ll. 24–5 (pregradsja chr"lenymi shchity); 51, l. 20 (bes shchitov'); 53, l. 4 (shchiti).


149 See Prochazka, 'Origins and parallels to some uses of metonymy in OR military accounts', 74.
Standards (stiazi/Banner (khoriugov)—7 times

44, l. 31 (stoia' stiazi v" Putivle); 47, l. 4 (ch'r'len" stiazi)/l. 4 (bela khoriugov)/ll. 21-2(stiazi giagolit'); 49, l. 2 (padosha stiazi); 53, l. 20 (ponizite stiazi); 54, ll. 18-19 (staka stiazi Riurikovy, a druizzlyDavidovy).

Standards play an important role in military ventures. They not only identify and metonymically represent the army itself, but they signal here readiness for battle (44, l. 31; 47, ll. 21-2), victory (47, l. 4), defeat (49, l. 2), truce (53, l. 20) and disunity (54, ll. 18-19).

Trumpets (truby)—3 times

44, ll. 30-1 (truby trubiat' v" Novegrade); 46, l. 5 (pod" trubami poviti); 53, ll. 18-19 (truby trubiat" Goroden'skii).

Horses (komoni)—6 times

44, ll. 29-30 ('komoni rzhut' za Suloiu'); 46, ll. 3-4 (br"zyi komoni); 47, l. 4 (ch'r'lena chokla); 48, l. 26 (pod kopyty); 55, l. 12 (komon'/ll. 22-3 (br"zaia komonia).

Stirrup (stremen')/Saddle (sedlo)—4 times

46, l. 11 (v"stupi Igor' kniaz' v" zlat" stremen'); 48, l. 8 ([Oleg"] stupacet" v" zlat" stremen'); 50, ll. 11-12 ('Tu Igor' kniaz' vyysde iz sedla zlata, a v" sedlo koskchievo); 52, ll. 6-7 (ustupita, gospodina, v" zlata stremen').

'Golden' here denotes princely power, as do the 'golden helmets' (whereas in the Chanson de Roland, golden stirrups and helmets belong to both the French and the Saracens). The act of stepping into the stirrup is a conventional signal that, for a hero, war has commenced, and may be seen as one of the most critical moments of the narrative. The image of Igor forfeiting his 'golden saddle' for a slave's is echoed in other images of 'forfeited gold' throughout the Slovo (the women's lament—49, ll. 24-5; Igor has 'scattered Russian gold'—50, ll. 10-11; Gothic maidens 'jingle Russian gold'—51, ll. 7-8).150

On the whole, references in the Slovo to arms and armour lend a note of realism to the work,151 and also convey the close relationship that existed between men and the tools of their trade—warfare. This is an idealised state of affairs, of course, but an heroic one, which finds many parallels in the heroic literature of many nations.

This special relationship between warriors and their battle gear is, on the whole, more implicit in the Slovo than in, say, Beowulf and the Chanson de Roland, where, at times, swords are personified, given names and accorded the kind of treatment normally reserved for a beloved companion-at-arms.152 In Beowulf much detail is devoted in the two funeral scenes

150 For the above weapons and accoutrements as loci comunes in the Russian military tales, see Prochazka, Military Prose Narratives in ORL, 272-93.

151 See G. F. Odintsov, 'Zasapozhnik, mech, shereshir.. ..v SP', Russkiaia rech', 1984, no. 2, who stresses that the military terminology in the Slovo was not bookish, but in common usage at the time (126-7).

152 Beo., ll. 1143; 1457; 2660 ('Hunafling'; 'Hrunting'; 'Nsegling'); CdR, ll. 345; 988; 1353; 2501 ('Murglies'; 'Durendal'; 'Haltclere'; 'Joyeuse'). In the CdR, several horses belonging to 4 important persons on either side also bear names (ll. 1183; 1528; 1872; 1890), while the Saracen standard is named 'Precieuse' (ll. 3298; 3564). See also N. D. Isaacs, 'The convention of personification in Beo.', in Creed, OE Poetry, 215-48.
to the splendid war trapping surrounding Scyld and Beowulf at the time of their respective
departures (ll. 36-49; 3137-40), thus reinforcing the central role these objects played in the
warrior’s life. That Anglo-Saxon warriors closely associated themselves with their weapons
and armour is borne out by titles such as Gar-Dena (‘spear-Danes’—l. 1) and hlm Scyldinga
(‘helmet (protector) of the Danes—l. 371). Prior to his departure from Denmark for home,
Beowulf makes an affectionate address to his sword, Hrunting, calling it guftwine (‘battle/war-
friend’), a term equally applicable to a warrior (ll. 1807-12). Roland takes things a step further,
delivering a tripartite eulogy to his sword Durendal, in which he laments and recalls the battles
they fought together (ll. 2304–10/2316–37/2344–54).153

Nothing so extravagant takes place in the Slovo. Only in Vsevolod’s description of his
men’s familiarity with the instruments of war and the terrain is this kind of relationship made
erfectly explicit:

«А мок ти Куршн свядом къмети: подъ трубами повити, подъ шлемы
взлетны, конец копья въскрылены, пути имь видомы, яруты имь знамен
луци у нихъ напряжены, тюли отворены, сабли изострены, сами скачуть, якы
сѣрыя влѣцы въ полѣ, ищучи себѣ чти, а князю славѣ.»

(46, ll. 4–10)

In other words, these are born and bred warriors, not unlike some heroes of the byliny
and Byzantine romance who show military promise from infancy or early childhood.154 The absence
in the Slovo of any personal relationship between the hero and his weapons need not give rise to
the conclusion that such a concept did not exist in early Russian song. Svitoslav Igorevich’s
well-documented love of weaponry suggests that the poetic celebration of weapons was probably
not unknown in Rus’. Such panegyric, however, would have belonged more in the poetry of
Boian than in the general context of the Slovo.

Elsewhere the author of the Slovo employs subtler means to convey the sense that in the
heroic world, all aspects of life are in some way coloured by the military vocation. It has
already been shown how war gear may be used as a metonym to express the first engagement
in battle (‘breaking a lance’), victory (‘drinking from the Don with a helmet’) or the moment
of setting out on campaign (‘putting the foot into the stirrup’). The military imagery of the
Slovo, however, is also used to conjure up new images relating to other occupations, nature and
even the human psyche. Once again the author has uncovered interrelations between otherwise
quite distinct things, which evoke one another through their imagery.

With respect to nature, it was noted above that a volley of arrows fired simultaneously
invokes images of wind, rain and ocean spray.155 Elsewhere may be found isolated examples of
battles evoking images of storms (swords are said to ‘thunder against helmets’ (48, ll. 24–5);
Iaroslav of Galich hurtes ‘storms’/‘thunders’—his mighty hosts—over the lands (52, ll. 13–14)).156 On another occasion the victorious Russians scattering over the steppe in pursuit of
spoils evokes the image of a volley of arrows being fired in all directions (another example of

153 Earlier Ganelon is shown treating his sword Murglies as a companion and fellow-servant of the king (ll. 445–9).

154 cf. Volkh (Danilov, 6, ll. 22ff.); Digenis (Deyg. 143–4); Alexander (Aleks. I. 14, 17).

155 An association also not lost upon Geralndus. In one battle scene in Walth., the activities of the weapons
are described in terms of a storm: spears fly everywhere with great density (like a cloud?), hurled lances flash like
lightning, the arrows swirl like thick flakes of snow (ll. 185–9).

156 Rain and storm images are commonplaces in ORL in which battles figure. See Orlov, ‘Ob osobennostiakh
formy’, 13–16, 18–19; Prochazka, Military Prose Narratives in ORL, 302–3. For storm imagery in ON battle scenes,
see HelgakviSa Hundingsbana in fyrr, st. 12.
Much has already been said about the poignant way in which the author juxtaposes and fuses images of warfare and agriculture—two otherwise incomparable occupations—in order to inject a heightened sense of tragedy and horror into his narrative. The image he achieves is the result of the fusion of terminology from both worlds, a mutual borrowing of ideas which are then expressed in new ways. Consequently, Oleg is said to ‘sow arrows’ over the land (48, ll. 7–8), while in a different battle, ‘flails’ (i.e. swords) of Frankish steel ‘thresh’ heads (of men), ‘winnowing soul from body’ (54, ll. 1–3). Here, weapons have replaced agricultural instruments, giving their normally life-enhancing function a new and sinister dimension.

Indirect weapon imagery is also used to describe the martial spirit that imbues a man about to undertake heroic action. In the Slovo, Igor is first introduced, mentally preparing himself for the campaign:

Почнемъ же, братие, пои́сть сию отъ стараго Влады́мира до ны́нѣ́шняго Игоря, иже истягну умъ крѣ́постью своею и постри сердца своего мужествомь…

(44, ll. 8–10)

His mind and heart are thus likened unto swords, which are ‘sharpened’ and ‘girded’ in preparation for battle. Later, Sviatoslav refers to Igor and Vsevolod in similar, more explicit, terms:

Ваю храбрая сердца въ жестокемъ харалузѣ скованы, а въ буестви закалена.

(51, ll. 14–16)

The term ‘forge’ (kovat’) is employed on two other occasions, this time in conjunction with ‘discord’ (kramola—48, ll. 7–8; 49, l. 28). When Oleg, and the Russian princes in general, are said to be forging strife with their swords, it is a visually and aurally evocative way of saying that they instigated armed conflict. The hammer blows which created the sword, are in turn inflicted by that sword upon the enemy.

That sword imagery in particular is developed to this extent in the Slovo, shows that it enjoyed primacy among weapons. This notion has already been observed in the special treatment accorded to swords in Beowulf and the Chanson de Roland. Although not actually personified in the Slovo,159 their status in early Rus’ was no less sacred than in other traditions.

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157 See supra, Ch. 2b., 93–5 & Sc. 176–7.

158 The social and material value of all weapons (but particularly swords, shields, helmets and mailcoats) in heroic societies is especially highlighted in Beo., not only in the detail devoted to descriptions of the lavish gifts of arms and armour bestowed on Beowulf at feasts, but also in a later passage describing how, after the battle in which Hygelac was killed, Beowulf swam back to Geatland bearing 30 suits of armour. Swords in particular also represent a warrior’s self-sufficiency, which is why it is important that his weapons do not fall into the hands of his enemies. Tacitus notes that, for the early Gmc peoples, to abandon one’s shield on the battlefield was the greatest crime and disgrace, which led to ostracism (Germania, 6). In Beowulf’s report to Hygelac, it is shown how an arranged marriage for peace between enemies can backfire, once the bride’s kinsmen can no longer bear to see their old enemy flaunting the ancestral weapons he had captured from them (ll. 2032–66). See also CdR, laiisse 170 (Roland rescues his sword from enemy hands); Akv., st. 7 (Gunnarr gauges the wealth of the Burgundians in terms of the weapons and armour they possess).

159 This is reserved for lances: kopja point” (54, l. 19). The notion of weapons ‘singing’ is not uncommon in other heroic traditions: in Beo. the sword sings its ‘fierce war-song’ (ll. 1521–2); in Akv., the wéponsengr (‘weapon-song’) of the Huns may be heard.
As elsewhere, they were a symbol of princely power and, in both pagan and Christian practice, were the objects on which oaths were sworn, making the vows especially binding, since the sword was also a symbol of the hero's honour. Therefore, to wage dishonourable wars and feuds with one's sword, as both Oleg and Igor have done (48, ll. 6–8; 51, ll. 13–14), is to blaspheme against the sanctity of that weapon. Although the concept of a sword possessing special qualities owing to an illustrious pedigree or history is not found in the Slovo, the survival of a 'sword cult' with pre-Christian origins is reflected in the Hypatian Chronicle (1137), where the chronicler tells of the reverence shown towards the sword of the martyr prince, Boris, which was then in the possession of Andrei Bogoliubskii.160

The weapons and armour so lovingly described in heroic literature would have been costly items reserved for the privileged élite. This privilege in itself would have demanded a certain reverence on the warrior's part for his battle-gear. He must take care, therefore, not to desecrate the symbols of his honour and status, for he in turn must prove to be as worthy of the weapons he bears as they are of him.

A recurring motif in heroic literature is the arming scene prior to the hero's departure on an important military venture. This may be fairly perfunctory, or a long and lingering description of each item of accoutrement. There are many such scenes in the Chanson de Roland, whose author is given to lavish and detailed descriptions of every aspect of battle (ll. 342–8 (Ganelon); 994–1001 (the Saracens); 1797–1802 (the French); 2987–97 (Charlemagne); 2999–3005 (the French); 3088–91 (the tenth French division)). In Beowulf, the scene which stands out most, owing to its wealth of detail, is the one in which Beowulf arms himself prior to his fight with Grendel's dam (ll. 1442–72). At first glance it appears that such a scene is missing from the Slovo, apart from Vsevolod's exhortation to Igor to saddle his horses, and Igor putting his foot into his golden stirrup. A closer look at the opening of the narrative proper, however, reveals Igor 'arming' himself in a metaphorical sense, sharpening and girding his heart and mind, rather than the usual weapons and swords (44, ll. 9–11).

The author is similarly sparing in his descriptions of advancing armies and the actual combat, again unlike the French poet, who dwells on the rich and ornate accoutrements of both armies (ll. 710–13; 1031–43; 1808–11; 3306–10), and delights in lengthy descriptions of swords (particularly French swords) cleaving helmets, heads and horses, and hacking through shields and chain mail (lisses 93–108; 114–127).161 By stressing the noise and chaos issuing from the weapons, the author of the Slovo creates a more aural, than visual, image. This phenomenon is also encountered in the chronicles and military tales in their attempts to elevate certain battles beyond the mundane.162 The most recurring image, apart from the breaking of lances, is that of (Russian) swords striking against (Polovtsian or Lithuanian) helmets:

Ту ся копиємь припамати, ту ся саблямь потручяти о шеломы Половец-кыя...Ярм Туре Всеволоды!...премещации о шеломы мечи харалужными...тамо лежать поганя головы Половецкяя. Поскепая саблямь каленым шеломы Оварьскяя от тебя...гримьют сабли о шеломы, трещают копии хар-алужным...[Изяславъ] позвои своиоы острыми мечи о шеломы Литовсскяя.

(47, ll. 15–16, 26–30; 48, ll. 1, 24–5; 53, ll. 10–11)

As might be expected, this is a popular image in epic descriptions of battle in most heroic traditions.163

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160 See Likhachev, 'Ustnye istoki...', 168–70.
161 The Maldon poet also takes pleasure in describing arms and armour (ll. 108–11; 130–45a.; 162–68a.).
163 See Alt., st. 49; Nibel., st. 2209, 2219–20.
The role of weapons and armour in the *Slovo*, together with their social and artistic connotations, share a certain amount of common ground with other European works of a similar genre. Their constant presence throughout the work, and their metaphorical manifestations in much of the imagery, convey a sense of the inseparability of the heroic ideal from other aspects of life. While possessing no magical properties, as they sometimes do in other traditions, swords in particular appear to hold a special place.

Turning to the *Zadonshchina* and the *Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem*, it is striking how much the role of military accoutrements has declined. That they exist in these works at all appears to be only because the nature of the narrative demands it. Rather, they take second place to the lofty speeches and exhortations which predominate in these works. In the *Povest'*, weapons scarcely receive any mention, except in the Evpatii episode, where the hero fights so furiously his sword becomes blunt and he is forced to appropriate one of the Tatars' swords (*PRRB*, 13). As with the natural imagery, the *Zadonshchina* has adopted some of the more outstanding sections of the *Slovo* containing references to battle-gear, and thoroughly domesticated them. The powerful introduction to Igor girding and sharpening his mind and heart is transformed into a conventional prayer and mental preparation before battle:164

[Dмитреи и Владимеръ]...помолись б(о)гу и пречисти его м(е)т(e)ри, исте-завше ум свои крьпкой крепостью и поостриша с(е)рдца свои мужеством и наполнися ратного духа...

(Und., 536)

In a bid to emphasise the martial qualities of princes Andrei and Dmitrii, sons of Olgerd, the author has lifted the description of the men of Kursk from the *Slovo*, but forfeited its impact:

Ты бо бище сторожевья полкы, на щтцев рожены, под трубами пооють, под шеломы възделёаны, конец копия вскормлены...

(KB, 549)

This is the most faithful borrowing of the passage; elsewhere it has suffered badly in the transmission (*Und.*, 536; *Hist. 1*, 542; *Syn.*, 552).

Two examples suffice to demonstrate what has happened to once powerful images in the *Slovo*. Other motifs are dragged in as tired conventions (such as stepping into the stirrup, drinking with one's helmet from the Don, etc.). The dramatic difference in this respect between the *Slovo* and its closest Russian counterparts strengthens further the notion that the spirit of the *Slovo* cleaves more to the older heroic age.165

e. Feasts

When a literary hero is neither accruing renown on the battlefield, nor engaging in hunting, the recreation most suited to the warrior's temperament, he is likely to be found, not at his domestic hearth, but feasting and drinking in the banquet hall in the company of his comrades-at-arms. Such scenes are a regular feature of heroic literature, retaining their popularity and developing as a motif well into romance literature, and, in the case of Russia, the *byling*. Apart from

164 See also *Hist. 1*, 541; *KB*, 548 (no prayer here, but also very little weapon imagery, apart from *poostriha*); *Syn.*, 551.

165 *cf.* the view of Anthony Stokes, that the combat formulae employed in the so-called military tales has been borrowed from an oral heroic tradition and did not always do well in the translation ('What is a воинская повесть?', 44ff.).
providing poets with the opportunity to indulge in sumptuous description, feasts act primarily as narrative vehicles for a variety of ‘heroic’ activities not otherwise easily accommodated on the field of battle. Here, heroic boasts may be made, oaths sworn, gifts of arms exchanged and tales of old heroes sung.\textsuperscript{166} Nothing which does not concern battle and the heroes’ glory is considered of any literary consequence.

Since most of the narrative in the \textit{Slovo} is taken up with battles past and present, and their immediate impact, there is no scene especially devoted to feasting. Like the metaphorical ‘arming scene’ near the beginning, the feast is expressed indirectly in a negative metaphorical comparison with battle. This type of negative comparison of two diametrically opposed things was encountered earlier in this chapter, in images associated with agriculture which, like feasts, represents the prosperity and well-being of the peaceful life. The feast image in the \textit{Slovo} comes at the very moment in the narrative, when it becomes evident that all is lost for the Russians:

Ту ся брата разлучица на брезь быстрои Каялы; ту кроваваго вина не доста, ту пиръ докончаша храбри Русичи: сваты попойша, а сами пологоша за землю Русскую.

\textit{(49, ll. 2-5)}

The image of the ‘battle-feast’ appears to be a common-place in old Russian literature, with roots in oral tradition. It is found in the \textit{Novgorod Chronicle} as early as the eleventh century,\textsuperscript{167} in the Russian translation (though significantly not in the original Greek) of the \textit{History of the Jewish Wars} (437, 457), the \textit{Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem} and the \textit{Povest’ o Nikole Zaruskom}, as well as in the \textit{Zadonschichina}.\textsuperscript{168} In the \textit{Slovo}, the image is specifically associated with the wedding feast, in which the Polovtsy are called \textit{svaty} (‘in-laws’, lit. ‘matchmakers’). This alludes to the subsequent marriage, plotted towards the end by the Polovtsian khans, between Igor’s son, Vladimir, and Konchak’s daughter, thus making Konchak Igor’s \textit{svat} (56, ll. 6–13). In this passage the Polovtsy are said to be drinking ‘wine’ (blood) provided by the Russians, which subsequently runs out; the Russians then ‘end the feast’ by ‘retiring’ (‘lying down’ or, more explicitly, dying).\textsuperscript{169}

To ‘fill the cup’, or to ‘serve wine’ means to slay the enemy; to ‘drink the cup’ (\textit{ispiti chashu (smertnuiu)}) means to die in battle, as is amply illustrated in the \textit{Povest’ o razorenii Riazani Batyem} (11 (2x), 12 (2x), 13, 15–16, 16). The Russians in the \textit{Slovo}, then, were able to deal out death to the Polovtsy until ‘the wine’ (or rather, their luck) ran out.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{166} Literary feasts, of course, also reflect actuality to a great extent, in that holding feasts was one of the most important ways a prince could reward his retainers (see \textit{Germania}, 14).

\textsuperscript{167} See \textit{NPL} for 1016, 175 (\textit{medu malo vareno, a druzhiny mnogo}).

\textsuperscript{168} See Adrianova-Peretts, ‘\textit{SP}’ i pamiatiiski russkoi literature XI-XIII vv., L., 1968, 110–11; G. Krugovoy, ‘Evolution of a metaphor in OR literature’, Canadian Slavonic Papers, 14, 1972, 57–75. For the \textit{Povest’ o Nikole Zaruskom}, see Likhachev in \textit{TODRL}, 7, 1949, 293–4. The ‘battle-feast’ is not, as Krugovoy maintains, entirely absent from the \textit{Zad}. There are in fact four allusions to ‘drinking the cup’ and ‘becoming drunk [with blood]’ on the battlefield (Und., 539, 540; Hist. 1, 545; Hist. 2, 547. This image is also found in folklore (see no. 16 of the \textit{lisicheskie pesni} in D. P. Costello & I. P. Foote, eds., \textit{Russian Folk Literature}, Oxford, 1967, 57).

\textsuperscript{169} See Mann, \textit{Lances Sing}, 38ff.; Gasparov, op. cit., 23–4, 48ff.

\textsuperscript{170} The image of ‘drinking from the cup’ easily lends itself to religious interpretation, since it recalls especially the ‘bitter cup’ referred to by Jesus at Gethsemane and upon his arrest (\textit{Matt.} 26:39, 42; \textit{Mark} 14:36; \textit{Luke} 22:42; \textit{John} 18:11). In the case of the \textit{PRRB} in particular, where personal honour and glory is not the dominant motive in the Russians’ encounter with the Tatars, this image means not simply to die an heroic death, but to suffer martyrdom (Krugovoy, op. cit., 65–9). In his article, ‘Blood and wounds in the \textit{Nibelungenlied}’, H. B. Willson argues that in this work the blood from the warriors’ wounds has mystical and, taken together with wine, even eucharistic connotations.
Although the image of the battle-feast does not appear with any regularity as a motif in other European heroic traditions, there are, nevertheless, isolated instances where images associated with feasting, such as drinking, singing, rejoicing, and so on, have penetrated into images of battle. Earlier, in the section on weaponry, it was seen how images of joy and singing are applied in Beowulf and the Edda to weapons wielded in battle. Elsewhere, in describing Hygelac's death in Friesland, the Beowulf-poet says he died of 'sword-drinks' \( (\text{hiorodryncum—with l. 2358}) \); in another passage he compares the inevitability of death to sleep following the feast (l. 1004–7). This last image finds its parallel in the passage from the Slovo quoted above, in which the Russians are said to 'lie down' once the 'feast' is over (49, l. 5). In Maldon, it is said of one of the English warriors that he never weakened in 'battle-play' \( (\text{wigplegan—with l. 268}) \).

Just as the author of the Slovo uses the image of the feast to sharpen and drive home the image of death, by inserting it at the most critical moment in the battle, the Beowulf-poet and his Icelandic colleagues also juxtapose the joyful image of feasting with images of death and decay for sobering dramatic effect. This sort of contrast is used to particularly good effect in Beowulf. In the earlier discussion of laments, it was noted how the poet heightens the tragedy of loss in the 'Father's Lament' (l. 2455–9) and the 'Elegy of the Lone Survivor' (l. 2249–55; 2262–5) by juxtaposing scenes of present desolation and decay with images of erstwhile joy in the mead-hall. In the latter instance, weapons and armour are also used to achieve the same effect, with the survivor lamenting the absence of a sword-bearer, and the crumbling of once bright and solid armour (l. 2253–62). Later, among the treasures of the dragon's hoard may be found, not only crumbling weapons and armour, but also plates and cups (l. 3047–50). A more grisly twist to the image of the feast, not unlike that involving the beasts of battle later in the work, may be found in the Breca episode, where Beowulf relates how he triumphed over the sea monsters:

\[
\text{"Naes his Bære fylle } \text{ gefean hæfdon,} \\
\text{manfordædlan, } \text{øæt hi me } \text{ þegon,} \\
\text{symbel } \text{ymbætton } \text{ sægrunde neah..."}
\]

['By no means did they have joy of feasting, those evil-doers, where they should partake of me, sitting around the banquet at the bottom of the sea.]

(l. 562–4)

At other times poets may achieve similar effects by setting a tragic scene, or hinting at tragedy, during or immediately following a feast. Grendel's attack, for instance, comes after the warriors have retired following an extremely pleasurable feast: 'Then after the feasting, a great weeping arose' \( (\text{Dæ was after wiste wop up ahafen—with l. 128}) \). During the second feast in Beowulf, the poet repeatedly punctuates his lavish description of the banquet with hints of disaster to come—both the impending attack by Grendel's dam (l. 1232b.–37) and the more distant dynastic struggle (l. 1017–19; 1162–5; 1180–7). In Atlakviða and Atlamáli, the normal image of a glad feast is reversed for Atli when Guðrun informs him that he has been gorging himself on his own children \( (\text{Akv., st. 35–7; Atm., st. 72ff.}) \). In Atlakviða she completes

\[\text{Although blood and wounds are an essential ingredient in heroic poetry, such elaborate and concentrated emphasis as they receive in the Nibel. cannot be considered genuinely 'heroic'. 'Unheroic' elements such as these are, of course, to be expected in such a late huchepos as this (MLR, 55, 1960, 40–5).}\]

\[171\text{ See also Krugovoy, op. cit., 59–60.}\]

\[172\text{ This passage from the Messenger's speech, in which he declares that Beowulf's death has put an end to play, pleasure and harp-melody, leaving the feasting to the beasts of battle, was discussed supra, 186.}\]

\[173\text{ For more on the theme of 'death in the midst of joy', see Georgianna, op. cit., 835.}\]
the feast by '[giving] the bedding blood to drink' (st. 42/1-2). When Hamðir and Sørlí arrive at Æðmunrekkr's hall, they find his warriors 'happy with ale' (st. 18). Soon, however: 'Tumult rose in the hall, /ale-cups bounded, /warriors lay in blood—' (st. 23).

The hall in which hearth-companions swear oaths to one another may also become the setting for treachery, as noted above in the Beowulf-poet's hints to his audience. The serious nature of such treachery is underlined by Hroðgar in his tale of Heremod, the destroyer of hearth-companions (Beo., I. 1713), and by the author of Judith, who describes how the comrades of Holofernes, who accepted cups filled from tankards at the feast, were doomed to die (II. 15-21a.).

Despite the scarcity of literary feasts in surviving texts of old Russian literature, that they must have been considered, like weaponry, an essential part of the lives of the warring noble classes is borne out by their proliferation in the byliny. These banquets not only demonstrate Vladimir's wealth, power and munificence, but they are also occasions for boasting and oath-making, and act as starting points for heroic adventures. In several respects, then, they function in much the same way as their European literary counterparts. Where they differ, is in their often 'un-heroic' character, as well as the frivolous or mundane nature of much of the boasting which takes place and the sometimes almost ludicrous figure of Vladimir. The Kievan court here has a moribund quality, the jollity untempered by the kind of dignity and solemnity which characterises, say, Beowulf. The feasts in the byliny resemble to some extent the banquets encountered in full-blown European romance, where description is concentrated on the trappings, the games, the ladies and the extravagant dishes, with revelry replacing ritual in importance. In English romance in particular their function has shifted from a true representation of the heroic life and ideal, to a catalyst for some kind of external challenge aimed at ascertaining which of the knights present still understands the true meaning of courtoisie, and which are beguiled by its trappings.

f. Heroic speech

Epic heroes are endowed with speech that, for the most part, reflects favourably on their courage and valour, seldom engaging in mundane discourse, or uttering sentiments not allied to their heroic natures. Like the lament, heroic speech has its roots in oral tradition, and is therefore governed by certain forms and conventions. Unlike lament, however, it belongs in narrative that reflects higher sentiments and occasions. The influence of this kind of direct speech is most evident in the chronicles of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, where it serves a number of practical purposes; besides injecting a note of documentary realism into the work, it is used to express princely devotion to retainers, or to reflect a prince's sense of honour and military acumen. These functions are more or less carried over into literary works such as the Slovo.

174 cf. Princess Ol'ga's feast, to which she invites the Drevliany, gets them drunk, then has them massacred. What started out as a funeral feast for Igor ended up as a 'funeral feast' for his enemies (PVL, 56, II. 3-17).

175 The following are some of the byliny that open with a feast at Vladimir's court: Ivan Godinovich (Gil'ferding, II, 188); O zheni' te kniazia (Danilov, 10); Mikhailo Danilovich (Miller, 43); Sukhman (Rybnikov, II, 148); Mikhailo Potykh (Gil'ferding, I, 6); Dunas (Gil'ferding, II, 102); Danilo Lovchanii (P. V. Kireevskii, ed., Pesni, sobrananye P. V. Kireevskim, III, M., 1860-74, pp. 32-8 [hereafter (Kireevskii))]; Ivan Gostinyi syn (Danilov, 7); Staver Godinovich (A. M. Astakhov, Byliny severa, II, M-L, 1936, 136); Alesha Popovich i sestra Petrovichi (Grigor'ev, I, 82); Uchurila i kniaz' (Gil'ferding, III, 223); Khoten (Kireevskii, IV, pp. 72-7).

176 See the opening feast and subsequent challenge by the Green Knight in SGGK, Fitt I.

177 Likhachev, 'Ustnye istoki . . .', 150-6.
The most common types of heroic speech are oaths, exhortations, challenges and boasts. Distinctions between these types of speech are often blurred, with the result that they may overlap with one another.

Such is the case with the two instances of heroic speech encountered in the Slovo, which combine exhortations with oaths and, to a lesser degree in the second instance, with boasting. The narrative proper opens with the hero upholding his proper duty by exhorting his companions and, having become hardened in his resolve in the face of an ill omen, setting an example to them by giving the lead in courage:

«Братья и друзья! луце жь бы потяту быти, неже пополену быти, а всьдемь, братье, на свон брзы комони да прозрять синего Дону....Хошу, бо...копие приломити конец полк Половецкаго, съ вами, Русцы, хочу главу приложити, а любо испити шеломом Дону».

(44, ll. 15-21)

Incorporated into an otherwise fairly standard exhortation is an oath of the type regularly encountered in both early Russian literature and other European heroic traditions: that the outcome must be victory or death, since it is preferable to die than to be dishonoured (which, in this case, is what capture would amount to).

The most notable European examples in which the motif of 'victory or death' occurs are Beowulf, the Chanson de Roland and The Battle of Maldon. In each instance similar notions of glory, honour and disgrace come into play. It should be noted that these works contain a multitude of oaths and exhortations—too many to warrant citing them all. Attention, therefore, is focused on those passages closest in tone and sentiment to Igor's speech:

'Ic þæt hogode,  
sebæt gesæt  
þæt ic anunga  
willan geworhte,  
feondgrapum fæst.  
Ic gefremman seal  
þæt ic on holm gestah,  
mid minra sega gedriht,  
æowa leoda  
opðe on wæl crunge  
ic ongeorht.

178 Both oaths of fealty and vows to die in battle or avenge wrongs. These latter are sometimes couched in laments or replace them altogether. As seen in Ch. 1 supra, 24-5, the vow to die rather than suffer defeat is a topos reflecting heroic attitudes in the early chronicles.

179 In 'literary epic', boasts must be handled in such a way so as not to make the heroes appear unduly immodest. Cruder forms of boasting are more readily encountered in less 'aristocratic' genres such as folk epic and romance. According to Harkins ( 'La millanteria nelle byline russe'), boasting prior to battle in the byliny is normally assigned to the enemy, an action which, in both literary epics and the byliny, ensures their doom. In earlier epics and sagas, boasting was considered socially acceptable, and was not necessarily condemned. Boasts spurred a hero to action, or acted as vehicles for vows, pledges, declarations of fealty or, in more ancient songs, for spells. They also gave heroes opportunities to recount past and future exploits. However, increasing Christian influences rendered boasts unethical, an expression of pride and arrogance which must result in a fall. Aesthetically, they would have come to be regarded as immodest, representing false heroism (44, n.1; 48—55). The distinction between legitimate heroic speech and boasts is made fairly explicit in the Cid. Here, boasting is reserved for the likes of the craven and contemptible Infantes of Carrión (ll. 2753-61). In the literary epics presently under discussion, boasts may be discerned, but they have taken on the more refined aspect of oaths and vows. Unlike their more unpolished counterparts in the byliny, for instance, literary heroes confine their boasts strictly to military matters, not their ability to drink each other under the table or to woo women (see Diuk Stepanovich in A. M. Astakhova, et l., eds, Byliny Pechory i Zimnego Berega, M-L, 1961, 84). It may be concluded that while boasts exist in both literary and folk epic, they differ in kind and degree.

180 See Prochazka, Military Prose Narratives in ORL, 239 on this theme in the Russian military tales.

181 The oaths from Beowulf are all uttered by the hero himself.
[This I resolved when I set out to sea,
sat in the sea-boat with my troop of warriors,
that I should assuredly accomplish the will of your people,
or else die on the battlefield, fast in the enemy's grip.
I shall perform manly valour, or else suffer the end
of my days in the mead-hall!]

...'I with Hrunting shall win my glory,
or death shall take me!'

...'I by valour shall win the gold,
or else war shall take your king,
terrible deadly evil!' [Beo. ll. 632–8/1490b–91/2535b–37]

[Oliver warns Roland that the Saracen army is
huge while their own company is small]
Respunt Roland: 'Mis talenz en est graigne.
Ne placet Damnedeu ne ses angles
Que ja pur mei perdet sa valur France!
Meiz vocell murir que hantige me venget.]

[Roland replies: 'My determination is greater because of it.
May it not please the Lord God nor his angels
That France lose its worth on my account!
I'd rather die than be disgraced.'][CdR, ll. 1088–91]

[Leofsunu spoke, he raised his linden-shield aloft...
'I promise this, that I will not from here flee one foot's space,
but rather will go forward, avenge my lord and patron in the throng.
No cause shall steadfast men of Sturmere have to blame me
with their words now that my prince lies dead,
that I shall lordless travel home, turn from the fight.
Rather shall weapons take me, spear-point and blade'.]

(Maldon, ll. 246–53a.)

As has been shown to be the case with many types of images and motifs, such heroic
oaths and exhortations more or less fall out of usage in later Russian military accounts. Their
absence in the Povest' o razorenii Riazani Batyem is not altogether surprising since personal
honour here is subordinated to the concept of Christian martyrdom. With the exception of the
Evpatii episode, it is a work given over more to lament and panegyric than heroic high spirits.
Moving on to the Zadonskhchina, it may be observed that, while it is Christian in character, it
also contains much that may be categorised as heroic speech: mutual exhortations expressing
eagerness for battle, as well as many oaths entailing honour, glory, victory and, at times, the
laying down of one's life for the Christian faith. In numbers they surpass the Slovo, although they tend to be repetitive. Only once in each of the redactions does the motif of 'victory or death' appear. Significantly, it is expressed, not by one of the princes, but by the monk Peresvet: ‘Lutchi by nam potiatym byt', nezheli polonenym ot poganykh tatar’.

While retaining the same structure and vocabulary as Igor's oath, this passage forfeits a large measure of the latter's heroic impact with the appended clause—'ot poganykh tatar'—although this reflects the general Christian tone of the work, with its prayers and direct references to martyrdom. Where Igor's speech, coupled with his defiance of the solar eclipse, appears to be motivated solely by a sense of personal honour, its counterpart in the Zadonskchina reflects the sort of broader Christian ideal that dominates the Povest, of which personal honour is a by-product. In yet another respect, then, the Zadonskchina manifests a break with the heroic conventions observed in the Slovo.

The second exhortation in the Slovo also occurs just prior to the battle:

Although primarily an exhortation, this passage also incorporates an oath and a certain amount of boasting (the extraordinary martial qualities ascribed by Vsevolod to his warriors are no mean reflection on himself). More important, however, is the vassal's oath implicit in Vsevolod’s apparent loyalty and readiness to support Igor in battle. Western heroic literature abounds in scenes of warriors (usually at the feast) swearing loyalty to their princes. Such oaths lie at the heart of the Germanic concept of the comitatus. A similar military grouping also existed in early Russian society: the druzhina. However, only a few traces of the theme of undying loyalty to one's prince, a theme so recurrent in Western literature, may be found in early Russian literature. As already explained in Chapter One, this particular lack is probably the result of the different complexities of the old Russian and European vassalage systems.

In this particular passage, Vsevolod expresses the correct sentiment due to both and elder brother and a senior prince; he greets Igor with affection, stressing their relationship and pedigree, then proffers the services of his warriors, who 'seek honour for themselves and glory for their prince'. Which 'prince' he is referring to here is not clear. Ideally it should be Sviatoslav of Kiev, whom the author regards as the primate of all Russian princes. On the other hand he could be referring to himself, since the men of Kursk owed direct allegiance to him. Given the maverick nature of this campaign, it is unlikely to be Sviatoslav to whom he is referring, nor is Vsevolod likely to be referring to himself, as he is only the junior partner in the expedition. The most likely candidate appears to be Igor, since he instigated the campaign in the first place. This is further reinforced by Vsevolod's implicit oath to him.

Heroic oaths in both the Slovo and its Western counterparts act as the principal source of action in the narratives; it is from them that the action springs and takes shape. Because a hero's duty may lie in several quarters at the same time, however, they may also be the source of tensions and contradictions which ultimately bring about the hero's downfall.

182 In the CdR abp. Turpin also utters a 'victory or death' oath, lending the battle an even more crusading aspect (ll. 1518-20).
183 See Germania, 13-14.
184 Supra, Ch. 1a. 29-30.
Alain Renoir has demonstrated satisfactorily how the heroic oath occasions the destruction of the most virtuous characters in *Beowulf* (*Beowulf*), the *Chanson de Roland* (*Roland*), and the *Nibelungenlied* (*Rüdiger*).\(^{185}\) Beowulf's death is a direct consequence of his unwavering adherence to his implicit oath to his people. His duty as sole guardian of his people and seasoned monster-slayer lies, as far as he understands it, in facing the dragon alone (II. 2345–7a.; 2532b.–35a.). In this respect he obeys the demands of Germanic heroic law to the letter. His action in turn presents his retainers with two binding but mutually exclusive duties. On the one hand, according to the rule of the *comitatus*, they are obliged to fight to the death at their lord's side whenever he faces danger; on the other hand, the same rule demands obedience on their part, and so they are forced to obey Beowulf's order to stay out of the fight. As for the audience's point of view, Renoir sums it up thus: 'From our position outside the poem, we further perceive that his every action somehow contributes to his own destruction, and we are fully aware that his sacrifice is not only unnecessary, even according to the strictest requirements of his own society, but will in fact prove the undoing of the very society he wishes to protect'.\(^{186}\) In his determination to uphold his oath to Charlemagne, Roland neglects his duty to protect his warriors. By refusing to summon help, and standing his ground against unreasonable odds, he brings about his own destruction and the deaths of twenty thousand men, a loss that could hardly be counted as being of service to the Emperor. His sworn duties thus contradicting one another, he dies failing both Charlemagne and his men. Renoir concludes that Roland, incapable of coming to grips with the complexities of his own society and the fact that his obligations may change according to the situation, reflects more the thinking prevalent in the age of *Beowulf*, rather than in the *Chanson de Roland*.\(^{187}\) A conflict of loyalties also results in the death of Rüdiger in the *Nibelungenlied*. Although not the main hero of the poem, he is the only one with no serious character flaw, and whose death is universally lamented. His oath to Kriemhild earlier in the poem, promising to avenge any wrong done to her (st. 1258), backfires during the battle in Etzel's hall, when she demands, on the strength of his oath, that he enter the battle in which he subsequently dies fighting his friends (st. 2149ff). While the circumstances under which the oaths are carried out in these works differ, the oaths, nevertheless, fulfill similar functions in that they lead to the hero's fall. Closely bound to their contradicting loyalties, is the heroes' concern for their honour and good name. Such tensions also manifest themselves, if only implicitly, in the heroic speeches of the *Slovo*. In Igor's case, the conflict lies in his duties to both Sviatoslav of Kiev, his 'senior', and his own honour. This is further compounded by his obligation to his warriors. While he invokes his close relationship with his *druzhina* by expressing his desire to fight and even to die with them side by side, he, like Roland, also fails in his duty towards them by leading them into the battle against formidable odds in his own quest for personal honour.

As seen earlier, Vsevolod is in a similar moral dilemma, caught between conflicting interests, for his duty lies both with the Kievan throne, and with his elder brother. Nevertheless, the fact that his motives are perhaps less personal than Igor's, that his part in the campaign may be seen as an expression of fraternal loyalty (here the author indulges in a little artistic license), seems to exonerate him somewhat in the eyes of the author, thus allowing him to portray him in positive heroic terms on the battlefield.

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\(^{185}\) "The heroic oath in *Beo.*, *CdR* and the *Nībel*.," 239ff.

\(^{186}\) *ibid.*, 249.

\(^{187}\) *ibid.*, 252-3.
This survey of images, themes and motifs in the Slovo, which also recur in Western European heroic literature, provides a clearer picture not only of the work's close parallels with other literary traditions of the same genre, but of its own uniqueness in the use of certain conventions. While some features, such as dreams, for example, do not necessarily correspond exactly with respect to detail, a closer analysis shows that the literary purpose, at any rate, is the same. Where the Slovo may be weak, compared with other works, in its exploitation of some motifs such as dreams, feasts and heroic speech, its wealth of natural imagery surpasses that of other heroic epics, betraying its still close ties with its oral folkloric roots. Even here, certain features such as the beasts of battle and the role of the cosmos in the heroic world find strong echoes in Old English and Old Norse poetry.

A closer comparison of the Slovo's imagery and motifs with their counterparts in the Zadonshchina also yields some interesting results. Despite the latter's apparent similarities and even verbatim borrowings, it soon becomes clear that the images which, in the Slovo, are so charged with meaning, have lost their way in the Zadonshchina, as if the author no longer understood their true meanings and their relationships to other themes and images. Such results enable us to place the Slovo more confidently within the heroic genre.
Conclusion

This detailed study of the Slovo in all its parts has revealed a great many instances where, in its literary interpretation of the heroic ethos, the Slovo shares common ground with some or most of the early heroic literature of Western Europe.

First, it was demonstrated that the Slovo reflected an earlier native heroic tradition on the basis of fairly conclusive (if scanty) evidence in the Povest’ vremennykh let, in which traces of an heroic song tradition occasionally surface in combat scenes, and the Pouchenie of Vladimir Monomakh, in which the prince gives his readers an insight into the life and ideals of the ruling warrior class. Although the Slovo is short on the kind of direct speech through which the heroic nature usually finds expression, enough may be gleaned from Igor’s exhortation of his troops and from Sviatoslav’s allusions to his impetuosity in the Zlato slovo to conclude that he possesses the essential qualities that characterise the hero of early literary (and, by implication, pre-literary) epic: namely, courage, self-reliance, and a thirst for glory in combat. This combination of qualities, however, is precisely what brings him and his Western European counterparts to a bad end. Some manner of flaw or heroic excess unleashes the inevitable calamity that appears to lie at the heart of the majority of early heroic literary epics. The type of heroism that Igor is made to personify sets him apart from the heroes of the chronicles and military tales of the Tatar period. In the latter, the protagonists play down the idea of personal glory, viewing their struggle in the light of a ‘higher’ cause: the Russian land and/or the Christian faith. Where disaster occurs, this is attributed to divine agency and not to some heroic flaw or excess. Likewise, they lack the fatalism inherent in the Edda, in Beowulf (although there is still some ambiguity here), and to a lesser degree in the Slovo. The flaw to which writers ascribe the Tatar invasions (‘our sins’) belongs to the sphere of the spiritual rather than the heroic.

Next, the heroic world view, as it is realised in literary epic, was explored in greater depth. Again it became clear that, despite a handful of nebulous references to God and to churches, the Slovo was concerned primarily with secular ideals, and did not share the ‘crusading’ spirit of the chronicles and the military tales, nor their predilection for divine intervention or control over men’s destinies. In this, and in its treatment of the pagan enemy, the Slovo conforms more closely to the heroic literature of Western Europe, even the Chanson de Roland, which, despite its ideological hostility towards the Saracens, nevertheless confers on them a certain amount of dignity. In this respect these works probably mirror historical reality more than official zeal.

The pagan gods in the Slovo cease to pose any problems concerning its authenticity and heroic nature once they are understood in euhemeristic terms. Where traces of pagan deities may be discerned in the Edda and Beowulf, either through oblique references or cryptic allusions, they also invariably serve an euhemeristic function—nowhere are they afforded a determining role in the action. In both the Slovo and Beowulf, they are primarily identified with ‘culture heroes’ (Dazhbog and Veles; Scyld, Sceaf and Beowulf). The invocations of Dazhbog and the line of Scyld, who at one time enjoyed divine status and were associated with fertility and prosperity, as archetypes for the hero-princes, shows in what terms the authors of the Slovo and Beowulf conceived the duties of princes. Both also clearly demonstrate that the demands of heroism do not always overlap with the criteria for good kingship. The military tales, on the other hand, are untroubled by contradictions of this kind. There the princes fight for the common good (‘for the Russian land’), as model princes might be expected to, setting aside all considerations of personal glory.

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If the Slovo betrays any kind of 'religious' proclivity, it is towards an older, less tangible and largely unstructured body of beliefs. This is expressed in the close-knit relationship between men and the cosmos which they inhabit and frequently oppose, and in the shamanistic figures of Boian, Vseslav and Iaroslavna. But, while the cosmos may be daunting and everpresent, it merely reflects what takes place in the world of men and exercises no control there. The Slovo is not entirely unique in its cosmic and chthonic insights, however. Beowulf also portrays the world of mortals as a colony within a larger and largely hostile cosmos, while its descriptions of natural places stress only their alien, threatening, and 'otherworldly' aspects. An obscure kind of fatalism also characterises both works (the Slovo to a lesser degree), but it is clear that this is not something necessarily shared by the authors.

A closer examination of the roles of ancestors and the cosmos revealed that, in its handling of the concepts of time, space and history, the Slovo once again stands apart from the rest of heroic literature, not to mention the military tales. One of the common themes to emerge from this part of the study, however, is that of the 'hero's journey', which is reminiscent of some respects of the journey from this world, the familiar place, to the Other World, an alien and hostile place. The concept of temporal continuity between the past and the present in the Slovo is only indirectly reflected in the Niflung cycle of the Edda, but finds more concrete parallels in Beowulf and its treatment of historical digressions. The same applies to its use of historical exempla. Although in Beowulf these are not of the ancestral kind, they nevertheless perform the same function as the ancestral exempla in the Slovo: through them and their opposites the authors convey the sense that historical, present and future time comprise a continuum, and that all too often events are doomed to repeat themselves. Not surprisingly, the military tales do not concern themselves with such things.

An examination of the auxiliary characters in the Slovo showed that they conform to similar types in other heroic works and perform much the same functions. Apart from the women, these conventional figures act as foils to the central hero, setting off his qualities to good advantage. The junior partner, despite possessing heroic qualities in his own right, submits to the hero's decisions and follows his lead; the 'wise' and venerable royal 'patriarch' bears heavy responsibilities, and thus can no longer give vent to heroic impetuosity and take risks; the enemy, by means of great numbers and ferocity, must constitute a challenge worthy of the hero. The women play a more detached role; as those who probably suffer most from the fruits of heroism, they, with their prophetic insight, become its ultimate judges. With the hero's attention absorbed by his heroic destiny, and his affections reserved for those with whom he shares a common purpose, the women of early epic are not as yet the objects of a love interest.

Finally, it was shown that many of the themes, images and motifs inherent in heroic literature also find expression in the Slovo. Sviatoslav's secular somnium, a feature otherwise practically non-existent in old Russian literature, bears a close relationship to the dreams of Charlemagne, if not in its imagery, then certainly in its function. Dreams, with their blend of fatalism and the belief that man shapes his own destiny, appear to be a slightly later feature in early heroic literature, and are not found in Beowulf or in the earlier heroic Edda. The laments in the Slovo present no surprises, since the death or capture of heroes are bound to elicit similar responses and concerns. Despite their obvious folkloric character, they share many characteristics in common with both early Russian secular laments and other early literary traditions. In its rich and varied treatment of natural imagery, the Slovo again stands on its own. Nowhere else are the characters so closely associated with animals, or nature so responsive to man's calamities. It is the theme of the beasts of battle, which appears three times in the Slovo, that finds countless analogues in Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon poetry, whereas only traces of this theme have survived in later Russian works. This situation is also reflected in the frequency and handling of weapon imagery and combat formulae. Where the Slovo makes varied and imaginative use of images pertaining to the instruments of war, the chronicles and
military tales tend to rely on stock combat formulae which they adopt more or less wholesale. The feast motif, which characterises so much Northern European literature, is only implicit in the Slovo, but as an image it ultimately serves the same dramatic purpose as other literary feasts—to provide, through contrast, a setting against which the catastrophe looms even larger. The Slovo is also sparing in its use of heroic speech, but enough is provided to disclose the fact that Igor and Vsevolod understand the demands of heroism and are prepared to try and live up to them.

Having firmly established the Slovo in a heroic tradition, some more general conclusions may be drawn from this survey in regard to the Slovo's place within the broader sphere of the European heroic tradition, its own uniqueness among literary works both Russian and Western European which have war as their main theme, and the authors themselves.

That the Slovo does not essentially belong in the same class as any of the military tales has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout the preceding chapters. While it is obvious, from their extensive use of combat formulae, that the military tales, and to some extent also the chronicles, were borrowing from some kind of Russian heroic song tradition, the works themselves cannot really be said to qualify as heroic lays. Combat formulae have been borrowed to endow battles with a particular significance and to intensify the heroic aspect of the narrative, but they tend to be adapted to serve a particular author's ends; be it to celebrate the greatness of Russia and her princes (Zadonshchina), or to honour a great warrior-saint (Zhitei Aleksandra Nevskogo), or to lament the fall of Rus' and her brave warrior-martyrs (Povest' o razoreni Riazani Batyem). While these works may still reflect something of the old heroic spirit, they lack any insight into its true nature. They also lack any concept of personal glory as an end, objectivity (in the sense of independence from divine influence or religious bias), the continuity of history and ancestry (in these works, in fact, there is no looking back), the themes of the hero's journey and the beasts of battle, and ominous portents, either in dreams or in nature.

In all these respects and more, the Slovo finds parallels with the main body of Western European heroic literature. For all that, it is every bit as unique as the majority of its European fellows. Its singularity lies in its mystical quality, in its intimacy with nature and the cosmos (albeit on hostile terms), in its evocation of the chthonic world of ancestors, shamans and certain cosmic forces. More than any other work, its folkloric roots run deep.

Visible folkloric elements in the heroic literature of Western Europe vary considerably, from practically none at all in the Chanson de Roland, to a handful of incidental motifs in the Nibelungenlied, to a greater abundance in the heroic literature of England and Scandinavia. One of the more unexpected discoveries to emerge from this study is the extent of common ground that the Slovo shares with Beowulf, surprising, because they stand at opposite poles of the time-span occupied by the works under discussion here, because one work celebrates great men of the Heroic Age, while the other treats contemporary events, and because the hero of Beowulf spends all his time in more than three thousand lines fighting monsters. What they do share, however, are their close links with folklore (from which the monsters in fact derive), which may at least partly explain the number of parallels between the two works. Apart from the literary paraphernalia which they share in common, such as heroic speech, the beasts of battle and other combat imagery, both works, despite some Christian colouring, express an heroic world view that is by and large independent of divine or supernatural assistance and intervention. The responsibility for success or failure rests with the heroes. Any sense of external forces operating outside the man-centred world is confined to a vague notion of fate and the concept of man continuing his struggle hemmed in by an all-encompassing, often hostile cosmos. These works, alone among the rest, invest their narratives with a sense of historical

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1 See Stokes, 'What is a voinskaiia povest?', 41ff.
presence and continuity to the extent that we scarcely ever feel quite involved in the present. Events take place within a much larger temporal and spatial framework. Ever present and relentless is the anticipation of calamity that pervades the works from start to finish, from past to present.

This brings us to the most significant aspect the Slovo and Beowulf share—their authors' ambivalence towards the heroic society and ideals which they, on the other hand, also celebrate. To varying degrees the authors of the Chanson de Roland, Maldon, the Nibelungenlied and the Waltharius also stress the limits of heroism, for, in all but the latter, the conflicting demands which the heroic ideal regularly imposes on heroes results in their downfall. It is in the Slovo and in Beowulf, however, that this dilemma is expressed most poignantly.

While describing his heroes' bold words and spirits, the author of the Slovo is able to maintain a certain amount of objectivity. It is in the Zlato slovo that the author, using what probably constituted conventional heroic exhortation, points to the inherent flaw in heroic thinking. A sensible prince would never leave his 'nest' unprotected, but the heroes have personal ambitions to fulfill: "N' rekoste: 'muzhaimesia sami: predniiu slavu sami pokhitim", a zadniiu sia sami podelim" (51, ll. 22-4). The author confirms through the mouth of his wise and prudent prince that there is no longer any place in society for this kind of behaviour, admirable though it may be. The time has come for youthful heroes to grow up into princes and meet their responsibilities.

The duties of kings are also constantly restated in Beowulf. As in the Slovo, the concept of ideal kingship is reinforced by agricultural associations, if not exactly images. The inevitable conflict between the duties of a hero and those of a king, as it is expressed in Beowulf, has been the focus of a number of scholarly investigations. Like the author of the Slovo, the Beowulf-poet admires his hero and, in the first part, is able to define quite clearly the hero's duties. It is in the second part, devoted to Beowulf the king, that the poet loses confidence. 'In the dragon episode of part two...the closer Beowulf moves toward performing a heroic feat, the more confusion and ambiguity the poet infuses into the narrative, diverting our attention from the dragon fight and toward a more distant and critical view of the heroic world within which Beowulf so confidently and so splendidly operates'. As the dragon fight draws close, the poet keeps drawing his audience into the past. Through Beowulf's speech he invites us to reflect on the tragedy of his beloved guardian HreSel who, unable to avenge the death of one son at the hands of another (whether this came about by accident or design has been left vague), and thus also unable to act according to the values of his society (which centred on kin loyalty and vengeance), dies of grief and despair (ll. 2430-71). To underline this point, Beowulf compares HreSel's position to that of the father who loses his son to the gallows, and is thus deprived of the hero's only response to sorrow and despair—heroic action. The passage which tells of the father's contemplation of his son's dwelling-place—one alive with music and pleasures, now forlorn and windswept (ll. 2455-9)—has been quite reasonably described as portraying the passing not only of one man, but of a whole way of life, summed up in the lost joys of the hall. The same sentiment is also expressed in the Elegy of the Lone Survivor. The HreSel episode, together with the relentless fighting his death sparks off, culminating in the battle at Ravenswood, points up the hopelessness of the heroic cycle of battle and vengeance.

3 Carrying its parody of the heroic ideal to even greater heights, the Waltharius concludes with Walter and Hagen, following an inconclusive fight from which they emerge minus a hand and an eye respectively, renewing their pact of friendship and advising each other on how to cope with and make the best of their injuries, while the craven king Gunther, who has lost a leg in the fray, becomes the butt of their jokes (ll. 1401ff.).

4 See Leyerle, op. cit.; Berger & Leicester, op. cit.; Georgianna, op. cit.

5 Georgianna, op. cit., 841.

6 ibid., 839.

7 ibid., 846.
If the authors of the *Slovo* and *Beowulf* appear to waver at times on some kind of ideological threshold, it is because they are portraying societies in which the transition from the heroic age to the Christian age is as yet incomplete.

In stressing the shortsightedness and limitations of heroic society, the authors appear to do so more with regret and nostalgia than condemnation. Rather than indulge in moralisation, they invite their audiences to pause and consider, on the basis of events as they have been presented to them. In this respect the authors retain the objectivity in heroic narrative upon which Bowra insists.\(^8\) It is only in his appeal to the Russian princes that the author of the *Slovo* betrays a certain tendentiousness. In a way, his political message may be seen as a by-product of his regret for the passing of an age which inspired men to test the limits of their strength and courage, but whose values are too flawed or inadequate to solve the problems that faced contemporary Russian society.

\(^8\) op. cit., 30, 48.
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