

CHAPTER 1

Locating the Reader: Perspectives in Old English Poetry and Anglo-Saxon Art

The Old English poetry that predominantly represents first-person speech implicates the reader in specific kinds of interpretive problems. Several poems depicting an individual's story of personal experience¹—*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Deor*, *The Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*—are difficult to read either because the speakers cannot be identified or because the events of their narratives do not form coherent, logical patterns. The Old English riddles play with precisely these questions of determining a speaker's identity and making sense of the details of "its" narrative. Although *The Dream of the Rood* does not as obviously present these kinds of interpretive problems, it too begins with a description of a mysterious, unnamed object, which only gradually identifies itself through speaking its history.

It is not coincidental that poems representing first-person speech are the most difficult Old English poems for a present-day reader to interpret. The project of that reader includes, as one of its activities, identifying (with) the characters and events portrayed in a narrative in order to make the world of the text comprehensible. This process can be described spatially: the reader sees clearly defined characters within the context of their stories and finds a position in relation to the representation. If the project of the tenth-century reader were different from reading practices with which we are more familiar, characters and their locations would be represented differently, with the result that the tracing of a reader's perspective would be problematic. In poems focusing on the experience and identity of a character, these obstacles would be especially difficult. To imagine the identification of (and with) characters in spatial terms is to suggest an analogy between poetic and pictorial depiction of narrative. Perspective in Anglo-Saxon manuscript illumination and sculpture is as difficult to "read" as the poetic portrayal of characters; since it is more easily visualized,

perspective in graphic art will guide my interpretation of the reader's position in relation to Old English poetry.

Both the Old English poem *The Wanderer* and the illustrations of Genesis in MS Junius 11 (Oxford, Bodleian Library)² present the reader with the problem of discovering her or his position in relation to the text. Characters, actions, and scenes are described from a number of vantage points, and no authoritative voice (in the case of the poem) or pictorial code (for the drawings) explains their relationship or chronology. Reading *The Wanderer* involves, first of all, questioning the identity of the speaker(s). By identifying with a narrator or a character, the reader would be able to define a stable position from which to comprehend the text; she or he could "see" the events described from that person's point of view. The narrative voices in *The Wanderer*, though, complicate, rather than guide, the reading process. Shifts between first-person and third-person narration, changes in the tone of the speech, and two "swa cwæð" ("so spoke") clauses with ambiguous reference hinder our designation of the source of the speech and cause disorientation. Interpretations of the poem have depended upon the definition of speech boundaries (the limits of each "character's" speech), and following from this, the description of unified, believable characters; as many definitions and descriptions have been suggested as there are commentators.

The problem with this approach is that it does not allow for the possibility of letting the complications and ambiguities stand and of reading in a different way, from a shifting perspective.³ The Junius drawings call for such a method of reading. Characters in these illustrations are not depicted consistently (details of their description may change from scene to scene, or the same character may be represented twice in a single illustration), events are not arranged sequentially (several scenes are often included on one page, with no indication of their chronology), and space is fragmented so that no one viewing position is possible. The images do not define for the reader a place from which to watch the events unfold. In this chapter, the Junius drawings will serve as a model for a reading of *The Wanderer*, which considers the meanings of the poem's multiple voices and perspectives. I shall also draw on recent theories of cinematic representation that address questions similar to those posed by *The Wanderer* and the Junius drawings—questions of perspective, subject position, and identification.

MS Junius 11: Illustrations of a Shifting Perspective

While reference to "place" is metaphoric in a discussion of the relationship of reader to poetic text, it takes on a more literal meaning in the

description of the reading of a painting. In the process of interpretation the viewer, guided by codes of perspective, takes up an imaginary position in relation to the depicted scene. In order to understand the problems of perspective in the Junius drawings, I shall describe some visual codes that situate the viewer in a stable position. Renaissance perspective, a way of painting and seeing formulated in fifteenth-century Italy and dominant still, describes for the viewer a vantage point that corresponds to the former position of the painter.⁴ The viewer sees as the painter saw, and an identification between the two is established. In *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, Norman Bryson summarizes and interprets Alberti's statement of this principle (*De Pictura*, ca. 1435):

The eye of the viewer is to take up a position in relation to the scene that is identical to the position originally occupied by the painter, as though both painter and viewer looked through the same viewfinder onto a world unified spatially around the centric ray, the line running from viewpoint to vanishing point . . . unified spatially but also informationally, since all data represented by the image are to cohere around a core narrative structure.⁵

For the viewer of a painting to align her or his gaze with that of the painter is similar to the reader of a literary text identifying with the narrator; both processes involve screening out different possible ways of seeing, and understanding, the represented event, so that only one (limited) view is available. In doing so, the viewer or reader becomes riveted in a fixed location.

Roland Barthes describes Renaissance perspective as one manifestation of a relationship between geometry and theatre that determines the position of the subject:

The stage is the line which stands across the path of the optic pencil, tracing at once the point at which it is brought to a stop and, as it were, the threshold of its ramification. . . . [T]here will . . . be representation for so long as a subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) casts his gaze towards a horizon on which he cuts out the base of a triangle, his eye (or his mind) forming the apex.⁶

The subject is locked into her or his position at the apex; this structure has prevailed in and defined predominant forms of representation in Western cultures.

Cinema inherited a system of depiction dependent on codes of Renaissance perspective with all of their implications: the camera substitutes for the painter, the spectator's view is aligned with that of the camera, and camera movement is restricted to reinforce the stationary position of the

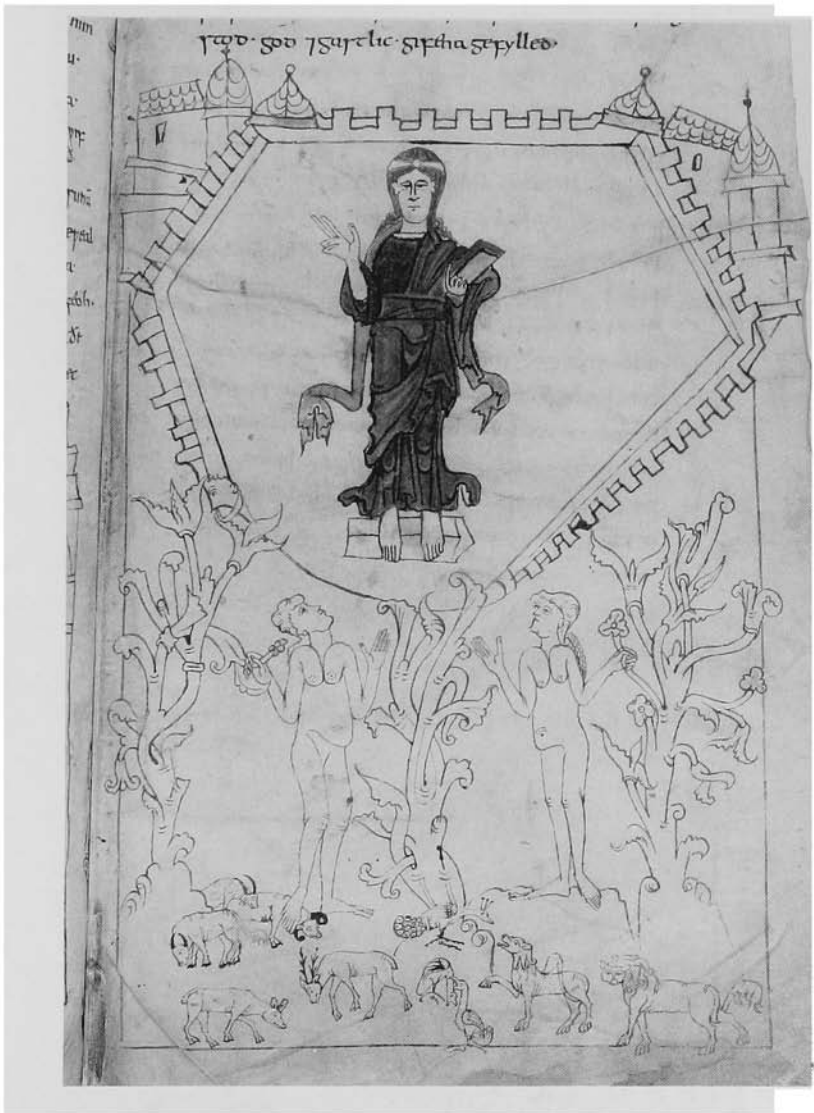
viewer. Because of the camera's potential for many kinds of movement, such constraints are significant; the camera serves to contain the spectator's "look." This theory of cinematic representation was first developed by Christian Metz and is central to Stephen Heath's work on narrative, framing, and other systems of "suture" in cinema.⁷ Heath reviews the problem in "Lessons from Brecht":

[F]rom the perfecting of the camera itself as instrument to the elaboration and codification of the rules of film making and construction . . . it is this coherence of the subject-eye in its relation to the image that is crucial . . . the camera . . . is 'perfected' towards . . . the placing of the subject in a fixed relation to a stable 'Reality' . . . Everything in the mainstream (commercial) development of the camera, movie camera, editing and continuity techniques and so on is then fashioned to this position.⁸

The reader of a painting executed according to the rules of Renaissance perspective and the reader of a conventional narrative film are held in position and presented with coherent, easily comprehended images.

This way of reading images, which has prevailed for five centuries, is only one method of seeing; there were and are others. It would be anachronistic to speak of the eleventh-century drawings of the Junius manuscript as deviating from Renaissance codes; rather, they represent another way of seeing. The depiction of space in the Junius drawings does not indicate a position in which a painter once stood.⁹ The reader is not directed by the image to align her or his view with that of the artist and to see in a particular way. Pages 11, 13, and 73 of the manuscript (figs. 1, 2, and 3) split the view of the reader so that she or he is at once above and in front of the subject matter; the viewer looks down on heaven (fig. 1) and the sea (fig. 2), while looking from a position somewhere in front of the images at the scenes of paradise, and in one illustration of the ark (fig. 3) one of its sides and the deck are seen simultaneously. Several of the illustrations (ms. p 9, fig. 4) depict more than one scene within a single frame, each scene having its own groundline; the reader cannot assume any single position in relation to this geography.

The (imagined) physical place of the viewer is at issue in a discussion of reading pictorial representation; questions of time, sequence, and narrative follow from a tracing of the reader's position(s). If Renaissance perspective implies a single viewing position and a stationary viewer, it also restricts that viewer to seeing a particular narrative moment. The illustration of God bending over Adam as he sleeps, touching Eve's hand and blessing her, and of the angels moving between heaven and paradise (fig. 4) depicts several time periods that are not arranged sequentially. The viewer's perception of time parallels her or his perception of space; neither a physical nor a temporal perspective is defined by the painting. The two



1. God in heaven, Adam and Eve in paradise. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 11.

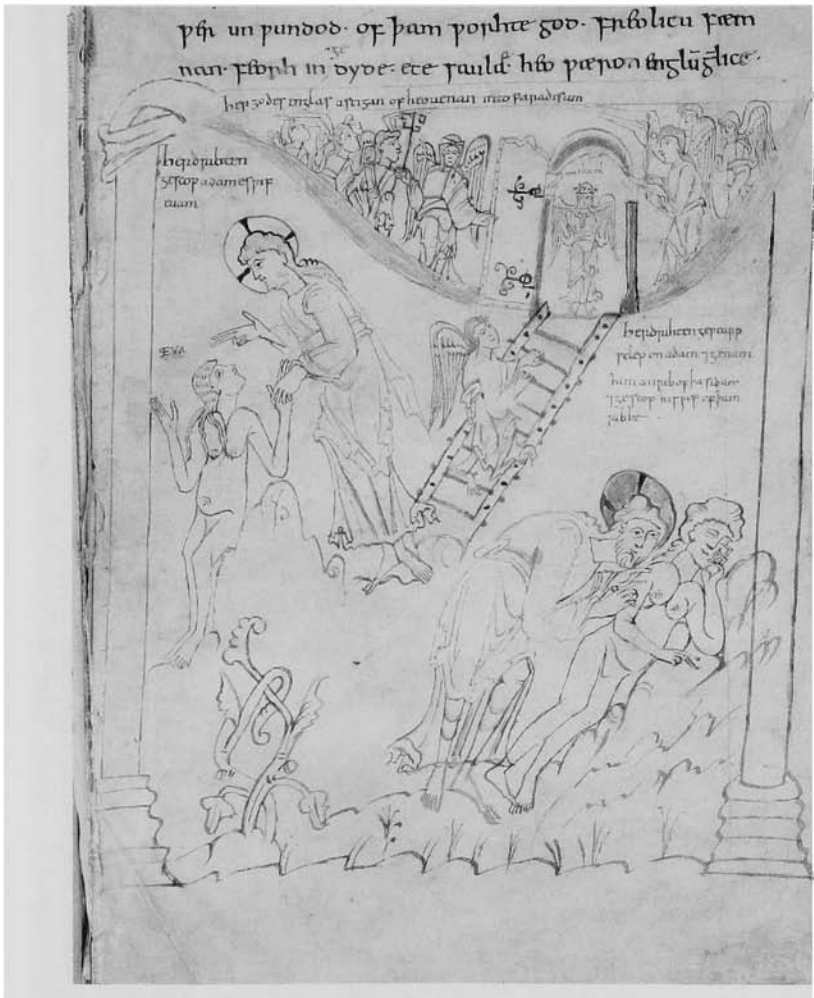
figures of God in this drawing do not present a problem of interpretation since they each belong to a different scene. In the illustration of the sentencing of Adam and Eve (ms. p 44, fig. 5), however, the double figure of God is more difficult to understand. If the reader introduces narrative sequence to the image—God sentenced Eve and then Adam—the repetition becomes comprehensible. The drawing itself, though, represents two time periods simultaneously and does not direct the reader's interpretation of them.



2. Adam and Eve in paradise. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 13.



3. Noah and family leaving ark. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 73.

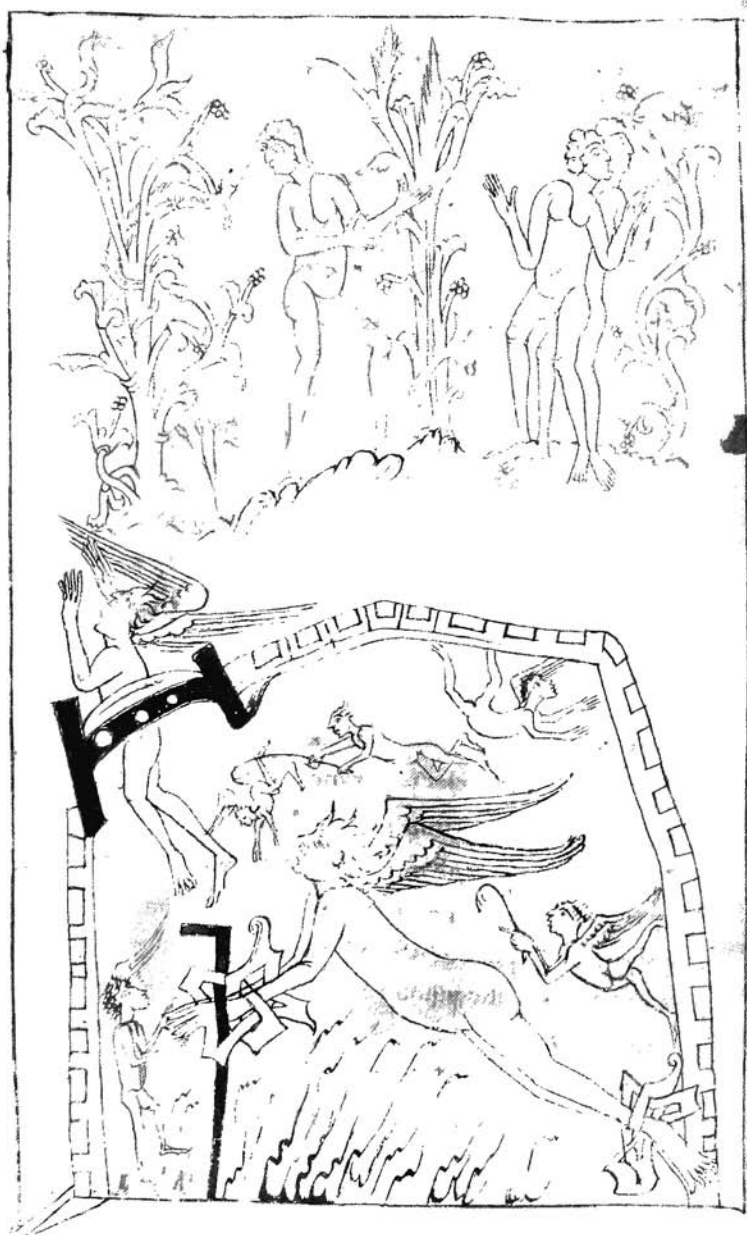


4. God putting Adam to sleep and creating Eve. Angels in heaven.
Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 9.

Narrative sequence must be brought to the drawings by the reader if the multiple scenes and repetition of characters are to be understood. No consistent reading pattern is indicated by the arrangement of the scenes on a manuscript page. Following the order of the narrative, a page can be read diagonally (from lower right to upper left, fig. 4), from left to right (fig. 5), from bottom to top (fig. 6), from top to bottom (fig. 7), or in any of several other directions. Knowledge of the story (provided by the reader), not the systematic depiction of the order of events (found in the text), shapes the reading process. Sightlines do sometimes guide the reader from scene to scene.¹⁰ In figure 6, the eye is led from the strong

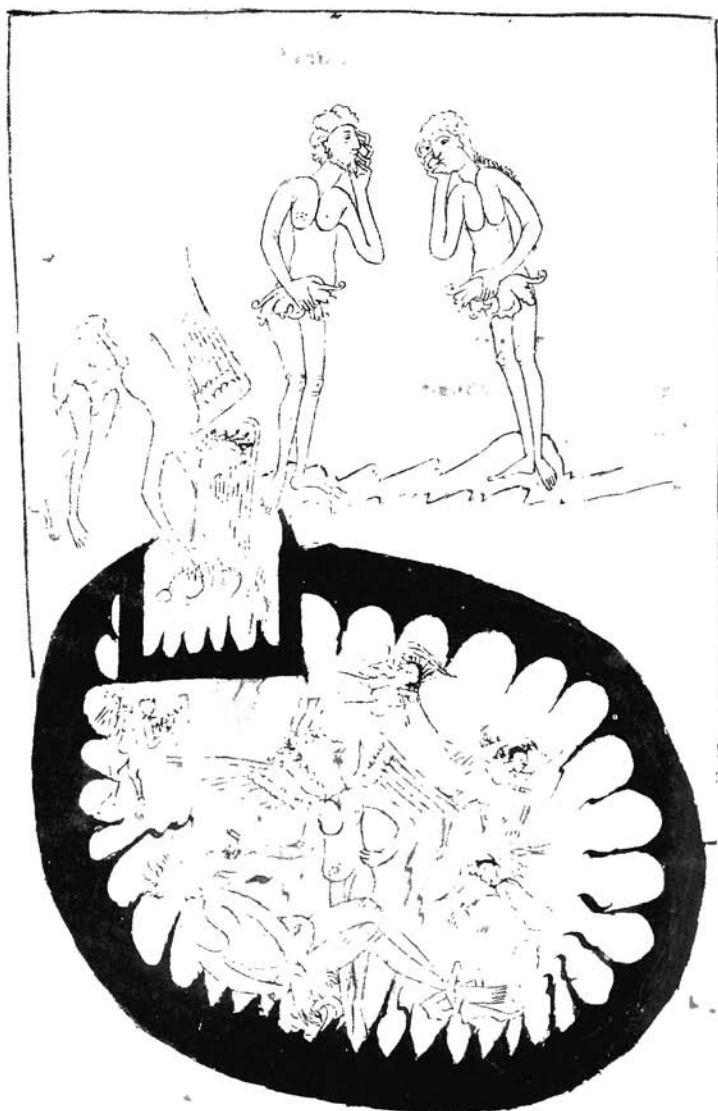


5. Sentencing of Adam and Eve. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 44.



6. Satan sending messenger who tempts Eve. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 20.

ƿeolde he ƿabradur ligan · ƿecan helle gehtro-
þen hiȝ hitaȝna laȝ.



7. The messenger returning to Satan. Oxford Bodleian MS Junius 11, p. 36.

diagonal line of Satan's body, following his gaze, to the messenger's departure through the gate of hell, and then to the tree and the serpent directly above him. The look exchanged between the serpent and Eve forms the next visual link, and Eve's gesture toward herself and Adam beside the forbidden tree completes the story. As in the illustration of the sentencing of Adam and Eve (fig. 5), a character is represented twice in what appears to be one scene. By following the sightlines and by knowing the story, the reader can interpret the depiction of Adam and Eve as representing the "direct speech" of Eve: she tells the serpent of God's previous interdiction.

Often, though, sightlines reinforce the separateness of the scenes. In figure 4, the taking of Adam's rib is not indicated as leading to the creation of Eve; God bends over Adam, the curve of his back bracketing this scene from the rest of the page. The exchanged look of God and Eve, and the diagonal movement of the angel toward a framed heaven, mark these scenes as being separate elements. The illustrations of the Junius manuscript are episodic. Gaps between narrative moments—unstated temporal relationships and other missing explanatory links—must be filled by the reader's memory of a story she or he already knows.¹¹ I have proposed a correspondence between reading from a shifting perspective and active reading, where the reader participates in the meaning of the text; the reader's role in the construction of the narrative illustrated in MS Junius 11 is an instance of this process.

The Wanderer: Questions of Voice and Identity

The Junius drawings do not describe for the viewer a precise physical (or temporal) position; instead, they allow her or him to see from many perspectives. The difficulties of reading *The Wanderer*, which are not so easily visualized, can be understood in light of this interpretive practice. Just as there is no one viewing position for the reader of the Junius drawings, there is no single narrative point of view available to the reader of *The Wanderer*. The problems begin with the interpretation of two "swa cwæð" clauses:

Swa cwæð eardstapa, earfeþa gemyndig,
wraþra wælsleahta, winemæga hryre: (6–7)

Swa cwæð snottor on mode, gesæt him sundor æt rune. (111)¹²

These lines may refer back to what has just been said, forward to the speech that follows, or both. Whether the "eardstapa" (line 6) and the "snottor" (111)

are to be understood as the same person depends upon the interpretation of "swa cwæð"; it is possible that the lines which are enclosed by these two passages, and which make up most of the poem, represent the speech of a single person. Lines 8–110, however, cannot easily be read as one unified speech; they include several changes of tone, and the speaker sometimes relates his own experiences and sometimes those of a third person. The tone of several statements attributed to the "eardstapa" / "snottor" resembles that of lines 1–5 and 112–15, passages usually placed outside quotation marks by editors; perhaps the speaker of lines 8–110, who makes generalizations and utters precepts, is also the speaker of the homiletic opening and closing lines.

If the interpretation of "swa cwæð" were the only problem in identifying the speaker(s) of *The Wanderer*, an Anglo-Saxon audience may not have found identification difficult. In the process of oral delivery, a performer would probably have used gesture and intonation to make the referents more clearly understood. Ambiguity deriving from the shifts in "a" speaker's manner of addressing the reader, and from shifts in "his" mood, complicates interpretation for any reader. Recently, critics have used our present-day problem with the interpretation of "swa cwæð" as a starting point in their attempts to resolve the poem's ambiguities by defining firm speech boundaries. Many such attempts have been made. Bernard F. Huppé's suggestion that *The Wanderer* comprises two monologues, one delivered by a wanderer and the other by a wiseman,¹³ is contested by Stanley Greenfield, who argues that lines 8–110 "are best taken as one speech uttered by an 'eardstapa' who has with the passage of time become a 'snottor.'"¹⁴ John C. Pope at first read *The Wanderer* as a dialogue: the "eardstapa" begins the colloquy by describing his personal troubles—the loss of his lord, his solitude—and speaking of others with similar misfortunes (1–5, 8–57), then the "snottor on mode" who is wiser and more philosophical in his outlook, goes on to lament death and destruction throughout the world (58–110). Although Pope later retracted this interpretation and defined *The Wanderer* as being a monologue, he still saw a clear distinction between the nature of the speech early in the poem and that after line 58; the speaker develops throughout the poem, broadening his concerns and gaining wisdom.¹⁵

T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss come to much the same conclusion as Pope; the poem is a "dramatic monologue" depicting the maturing process of the wanderer who undergoes a major "transition" at line 58.¹⁶ The Christian sentiments expressed in lines 1–5 and 112–15 are seen by Ida Masters Hollowell to distinguish those passages from the rest of the poem. She attributes lines 8–110 to a "woðbora"—a pagan seer—comparing him to the poet in *The Order of the World*; like Pope, Dunning, and Bliss, she

not only defines speech boundaries but describes a personality for the speaker.¹⁷ Rosemary Woolf does not do this; she sees lines 8–110 as being unified and coherent by virtue of their identity as a “planctus,” rather than because they originate with a psychologically described character. While she lets the ambiguities of the speech stand, she nevertheless places the reader by asking her or him to read the poem according to its similarities with other poetry of a particular genre.¹⁸

Instead of attributing the voices in *The Wanderer* to a specific character (or characters), whose personality could then be elaborated, I shall begin by describing the different kinds of speech that constitute the poem; these are tentative definitions since I shall go on to show that even here there are no firm boundaries, but one type blends into another.¹⁹ Most prevalent is a voice that makes descriptive statements about typical characters²⁰ and, on one occasion, about the fallen state of the world (lines 75–87). It always maintains some degree of distance from the object of its description (although the degree varies), it never explicitly identifies itself, and there is usually no voice beyond it, which could limit or contextualize its statements.²¹ This is a voice of experience and wisdom which cannot easily be questioned. The “swa cwæð” passages are instances of a second kind of speech, also without a stated source, but distinct from the first in that it should function to bridge sections of the narrative and create frames for discrete passages of direct speech; such informative statements should provide structure and guide the reader. In *The Wanderer*, though, the referents of the “swa cwæð” clauses are not clear, and they add little to the coherence of the poem. Identifiable voices, placed within a context, make up the remainder of the speech in *The Wanderer*. Lines 8–11a, 19–29a, and 58–62a are in the first person.

Oft ic sceolde ana	uhtna gehwylce
mine ceare cwipan.	Nis nu cwicra nan
þe ic him modsefan	minne durre
sweotule asecgan.	

(8–11a)²²

[S]wa ic modsefan	minne sceolde,
oft earmcearig,	eðle bidæled,
freomægum feor	feterum sælan,
sipþan geara iu	goldwinne minne
hrusan heolstre biwrah,	ond ic hean þonan
wod wintercearig	ofer wapeþa gebind,
sohte sele dreorig	sinces bryttan,
hwær ic feor oþþe neah	findan meahhte
þone þe in meaduhealle	min mine wisse,

opþe mec freondleasne frefran wolde,
weman mid wynnum. (19–29a)²³

Forþon ic geþencan ne mæg geond þas woruld
for hwan modsefa min ne gesweorce,
þonne ic eorla lif eal geondþence,
hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon,
modge maguþegnas. (58–62a)²⁴

This kind of speech is represented as having a specified character as its source, a person who serves, within the fiction of the narrative, as a real-life example of the situation being described. A character who speaks is portrayed as being an individual like the individual reader, and when this character says "I," she or he implies the presence of the one being addressed, the reader ("you"). The reader can then take a position in relation to the speaker; a listener's role has been defined. Lines 92–110 are also direct speech, but the speaker of this passage, the man wise in spirit ["frod in ferðe," 90a], does not explicitly refer to himself by saying "I." He does state the immediacy of his speech when he says "Now the wall stands . . ." (97–8) and in his repetition of "here is" (four times in 109–10). Such adverbs of time and place refer back to the deliverer of the speech, and situate his statement²⁵; the first passage of direct, first-person discourse in the poem is also fixed in the present by the adverb "nu" (9). The objective voice in *The Wanderer*, which makes descriptive statements, speaks of past, future, and of distant places but not of here and now.²⁶

The one exception to this classification of the use of adverbs is at line 75 when a speaker not identified as "I" begins to describe the fallen state of the world: "swa nu missenlice / geond þisne middangeard . . ." ("so now in various places throughout this world"). In the passage immediately preceding, a wise man has been introduced, his qualities described, and he has been said to understand "hu gæstlic bið / þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð" (73b–74; "how ghostly it will be when all the wealth of this world stands waste"). From a statement delivered by an unnamed speaker about a distant time, we are jolted into the present and compelled to ask who is making this comparison between a future state and the (fictional) present condition of the world. Two kinds of speech overlap here—the voice situated in the present enters unannounced into a speech by the voice free of context—so that the reader does not know by whom she or he is being addressed.

There are many places in the poem where such a merging of voices occurs. Since first-person discourse can potentially strengthen the identification of the reader with a fictional character (and thereby with the text),

the confusion of this type of speech with another causes the greatest disorientation. The shift from the "eardstapa's" description of his own sorrows and solitude (8–11, quoted above) to his comments on the prudent speech of a nobleman (11b–18) is not easily comprehended.

	Ic to soþe wat	
þæt biþ in eorle	indryhten þeaw,	
þæt he his ferðlocan	fæste binde,	
healde his hordcofan,	hycge swa he wille.	
Ne mæg werig mod	wyrde wiðstandan,	
ne se hreo hyge	helpe gefremman.	
Forðon domgeorne	dreorigne oft	
in hyra breostcofan	bindað fæste;	(11b–18) ²⁷

Although these lines are among the passages I have defined as being objective in tone, they are given a context by the speaker's introduction, "Ic to soþe wat þæt" ("I know truly that"). This passage has the effect of being first-person and third-person speech simultaneously: it is designated as the speech of the "eardstapa," but it sounds like other passages in the poem that are not attributed to a specific person and that also describe the behavior of a typical character. In particular, the resemblance in tone between lines 11b–18 and lines 1–5 causes difficulty since the introductory passage—objective, detached, and free of context—has just been read.

Oft him anhaga	are gebideð,	
metudes miltse,	þeah þe he modcearig	
geond lagulade	longe sceolde	
hreran mid hondum	hrimcealde sæ,	
wadan wræclastas.	Wyrð bið ful aræd!	(1–5) ²⁸

The identity of "I" in *The Wanderer* is drawn into question: what distinguishes his voice and where are its limits?

When the first-person speaker introduces a "fictional" third person whose experiences closely resemble his own, he divides his identity in two. After lamenting the loss of his lord and his solitary wanderings (19–29a, quoted above), the "eardstapa" invites the sympathy of the reader: "Wat se þe cunnað, / hu sliþen bið sorg to gefaran, / þam þe him lyt hafað leofra geholena" (29b–31; "The one who experiences knows how cruel sorrow is as a companion for the one who has few dear protectors"). The reader—the implied second person—is directed away from an immediate identification with the first-person narrator and asked to relate to the experience of a hypothetical third person. Within the fiction of the poem the "eard-

stapa" ("I") knows the inner thoughts of this third person ("Pinceð him on mode" [41a; "It seems to him in his mind"], "maga gemynd mod geondh-
weorfeð" [51; "his mind wanders through the memory of kinsmen"), and the third person understands the "eardstapa's" sufferings. The limits of the identities of these "two" people are not defined, and the reader is never secure in a position relative to that of the speaker. The situation becomes even more confused with the introduction of the wise man ("forþon ne mæg weorþan wis wer, ær he age / wintra dæl in woruldrice" [64–65a]; "therefore a man may not become wise before he has a share of winters in the world"); this character also shares the identity of the first-person speaker, "both" having similar visions of the world in ruins. Throughout the poem, the reader is continually shifting between closeness to the character who relates his experiences directly and distance from the (same) character described as "the one who."

The representation of place in *The Wanderer* does not help the reader to become situated. Since the first-person speaker does not locate himself in any particular setting, the reader, unable to imagine the described scenes in relation to a constant, primary location, witnesses them as a series of tableaux.²⁹ Several vivid scenes are presented as occurring through the eyes, or in the minds, of the poem's "various characters." After telling of the sadness of "one who has few dear protectors," the speaker describes that person's mental images:

Pinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten
 clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge
 honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær
 in geardagum giefstolas breac. (41–44)³⁰

The reader, in picturing the scene of a retainer kneeling before a throne and worshipping his lord, shares—by way of the voice of the "eardstapa"—the exile's dream of the past. Upon waking, this joyless man sees before him:

fealwe wegas,
 baþian brimfuglas, brædan feþra,
 hreosan hrim ond snaw, hagle gemenged. (46b–48)³¹

Again the reader experiences the perceptions of the exile as mediated through the first-person speaker's description; the bleak vision represents the exile's present reality. Dream and reality become confused in the next scene, as his mind wanders through the memory of kinsmen:

greted̃ gliwstafum,	georne geondsceawað	
secga geseldan.	Swimmað eft on weg!	
Fleotendra ferð	no þær fela bringeð	
cudra cwidegiedda.		(52–55a) ³²

To read this passage is to participate in the exile's confusion; the reader must try to picture a situation for this scene, to imagine who is swimming away—the birds or the companions, and to conceive of a "spirit of floating ones."

Two desolate landscapes are depicted in *The Wanderer*. The first is not designated as being the vision of any particular character, yet (as discussed above) it occurs within the poem's present:

	geond þisne middangeard	
winde biwaune	weallas stondaþ,	
hrime bihrorene,	hryðge þa ederas.	
Woriað þa winsalo,	waldend licgað	
dreame bidrorene,	duguþ eal gecrong,	
wlonc bi wealle.		(75b–80a) ³³

This landscape is difficult to comprehend since it is not assigned a place in the poem; neither through narrative logic nor through linking the vision to the consciousness of a character does the poem tell the reader how to understand the image. The man "wise in spirit" also sees his world in ruins:

Stondeð nu on laste	leofre duguþe	
weal wundrum heah,	wyrmlicum fah.	
Eorlas fornoman	asca þryþe,	
wæpen wælgifru,	wyrd seo mære,	
ond þas stanhleoþu	stormas cnyssað,	
hrið hreosende	hrusan bindeð,	
wintres woma,	þonne won cymeð,	
nipeð nihtscua,	norþan onsendeð	
hreo hæglfare	hæleþum on andan.	(97–105) ³⁴

In its images of death, storms, and the vestiges of a culture, this scene greatly resembles the previous vision of decay. According to the poem's representation of speakers, though, the second scene is described by a different person; the reader now shares the perspective of the wise man, who addresses the audience directly through first-person speech.

Reading *The Wanderer* involves imagining a sequence of tableaux,

some of which are “real,” some fantastic. The voice of the “eardstapa” seems to guide the reader through these landscapes, but since his relationship to the “other” characters (who sometimes are represented as the source of the visions) is ambiguous, the reader does not see the landscapes from a defined perspective. She or he has limited vision, only being able to see what is immediately present to the eyes or the mind of a particular character. The reader of *The Wanderer* is “too close” to the characters who describe their visions; the poem offers no vantage point far enough away from the scenes to allow a wider, more inclusive, view.³⁵ Like the reader of the Junius drawings, this reader must provide the narrative links, binding the separate scenes to each other and to the rest of the poem. The temporal relationships between the scenes in *The Wanderer* seem to be signaled by adverbs, but these do not always fix the scene in a context; the “nu” of the second vision of desolation refers to the time of the wise man’s speech, which itself is not clearly placed in relation to the rest of the poem. Since the first such vision also describes a present state, these two images may overlap in tense as well as subject matter, but this is not certain. As discussed above, the first description of the world’s fallen state is preceded by the lines: “Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið, / þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð, / swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard . . .” (73–75; “A wise man must understand how ghostly it will be when all the wealth of this world stands waste, just as now in various places throughout the world . . .”). If “bið” is translated as “will be” and the “gleaw hæle” is assumed to be the man “frod in ferðe” (90; i.e., the wise man through whose eyes we see the second image of desolation), this second vision would occur in the future. *The Wanderer* reflects the Junius drawings’ unspecified time frame—neither text directs the reader’s interpretation of temporal relationships between depicted scenes.

First-person discourse implies the presence of a second person; the reader assumes the role of “you” in relation to the speaker’s “I” and an identification between the two is established. Although this form of address suggests a close relationship between the reader and the character, according to *The Wanderer*’s representation of place the reader “stands beside” not the first-person speaker but a third person—either an exile or a wise man.³⁶ The descriptions of place in the poem can be understood as subjective, yet they call into question the very notion of subjectivity. While the voice we hear directly is that of the “eardstapa,” we see through the eyes of other characters; in *The Wanderer* voice and vision are split, emanating from different sources. The first-person speaker does not have a distinct identity but rather one that merges with those of the exile and the wise man; his voice does not represent a unified and unique consciousness. The poem’s scattered scenes reflect the speaker’s multifaceted iden-

tity, and the reader can neither focus upon a central character nor find a position in relation to a coherent geography. Readers of *The Wanderer* (like those of the Junius drawings) are unable to place themselves, to imagine themselves as being still.

I would like to propose that the unexpected redirection of the speaker's and the reader's focus—away from the "eardstapa" and toward the "other" characters and their visions—indicates and results from a particular orientation of identity. Rather than turning inward in his suffering, the wanderer is depicted as sharing his experience with (other) fictional characters and with the audience/reader. The wanderer is not represented as a self-contained individual, isolated within his inexpressible, unshareable sorrow. His response to sadness and isolation contrasts with that depicted in Romantic and post-Romantic literature; vestiges of this literature's construction of individualism remain in our present modes of signification and interpretation. In Romantic poetry, individual poets are represented as the source of their experience, emotion, and art. They often speak in the first person of isolation from society, but this is an inevitable solitude, an "inviolable retirement" (Wordsworth, *Recluse*). The Romantic poets' detachment from others is not only a physical one; they frequently represent themselves as lingering within subjective mental states. In contrast, the exiled wanderer is depicted as a speaker who describes the merging of his experience, thoughts, and identity with those of others. Through his speech, the wanderer recreates a community—this time a community of understanding—to replace the one he has lost; through this process he identifies himself.

The Wanderer is a product of a community-oriented culture. In Anglo-Saxon England, a person's position within the structure of a community—formed by bonds either to kin or to a lord—placed her or him within a network of rights and duties.³⁷ A place in the community provided one with a social identity; the individual was recognized if her or his family or lord was known. Recognition and identification came through others, through the community that surrounded and contained the individual. The importance of kindred and lord is explicit in the story of *The Wanderer* and has already been much discussed; what has been neglected is the way the significance of community may shape conceptions of self, and the way such ideas of self and community may in turn have an effect on the telling of a story.

The community did not only provide individuals with credentials, it also took responsibility for their actions.³⁸ This obligation for the personal marks an intersection of the community's role in the individual's social identity and its role in the shaping of her or his self identity; at the same time as the community's responsibility functions to provide the individual

with a social place, it also says that one's own actions—what one “chooses” to do and then carries out—are ultimately in the domain of responsibility of others. A different conception of self—unlike present-day ideas of individualism and self-sufficiency—is suggested by such a merging of the territories of self and others. Perhaps borders between the “two” realms were defined differently, or not defined at all.

The wanderer's process of identifying himself through others is represented as occurring around the very question of speaking. He knows that a nobleman should be prudent of speech (11b–13), and that those eager for glory should bind their sadness in their heart (17–18), so he himself should do the same (19–21). This is a moment of transition for the speaker as he moves, in mid sentence, from uttering precepts to describing personal experience:

swa ic modsefan	minne sceolde,	
oft earmcearig,	eðle bidæled,	
freomægum feor	feterum sælan,	
siþþan geara iu	goldwine minne	
hrusan heolstre biwrah . . .		(19–23a) ³⁹

Adjectival phrases describing the personal situation of the subject (“ic”) fall within the speaker's statement of proper behavior, and introduce the story of his past. “I” as someone who should act in the same way as others who are “domgeorne,” and “I” as someone with a particular history are both the grammatical subjects of the same sentence. The identification of the speaker with those eager for glory is presented as the impulse for the change of tone, the point at which his knowledge of proper codes of behavior and his memory of experience merge; the path leading to the wanderer's thoughts about himself passes first through his knowledge of the customs and behavior of others.

Representation—the process of telling a story—is caught up in a web of (concepts of) identity and social structure; it at once derives from these concepts, speaks of them, and reproduces them. Wherever questions about *The Wanderer* begin, they move on to ask about the related issues. The receiver of the text—the audience or reader—is not excluded from the design of representation; examining the place of the present-day reader and of the reader in the tenth or eleventh century is one way to begin questioning the text. If the difficulties of identification posed by *The Wanderer* are accepted (both the identification of the speaker[s] and the reader's identification with the text), questions arise concerning self-conception, the role of community, and the nature of the reading process.

By locating the present-day reader in relation, first, to a conventional,