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Lytle werede: an Old English Literary Motif?

The object of enquiry in the present paper is the Old English phrase *lytle werede*, and the discussion of its function will necessarily involve at least one other phrase of similar meaning, one showing variation in the adjective. *Lytle werede* is both an instrumental and dative singular construction found, with or without the preposition *mid*, in both poetry and prose. Its use is not especially widespread, although the attested occurrences are sufficiently numerous and their various contexts sufficiently interesting (or, in some cases, puzzling) to justify the question which forms my title.

Of the adjective, little need be said save that it is the variable element in the collocation: phrases of the type **lytel here*, **lytel fyrd* or **lytle truman* are not, as far as I know, employed by Old English writers with anything like the regularity accorded to *lytel werod*, if at all.¹ Of the noun *werod* (which I take to be the stable element in the collocation), I make two preliminary observations. Firstly, it belongs, for the most part, to the language of the battlefield in Old English: along with *preat* and *folc*, it translates *cohors* (a cohort) in the eleventh-century translation of the gospels (Mark, 15:16)² and, although the word can stand for the notion of "multitude",

1. I note, in passing, the presence of the phrase *mid lytle fultume* in the Old English *Orosius*. See Janet Bately (ed.), *The Old English Orosius*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (Early English Text Society [EETS] SS 6), 1980, p. 68/10, cited below.
2. Roy Liuzza (ed.), *The Old English Version of the Gospels: Volume One, Text & Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (EETS 304), 1994, p. 94.

"company", its military function is uppermost. Secondly, it is as much a part of the vocabulary of poetry as it is of prose. In both, its use is literal as well as metaphorical. When Ælfric, for example, invokes the *engla werod*,³ the host of angels, he is availing himself of a literary construct which enjoyed considerable popularity among earlier poets and which, of course, has its roots, as far as the European literary sensibility is concerned, in the Old Testament.

At first glance, the phrase *lytle werede* would seem to merit no special comment or explication. Indeed, it occurs (though not exclusively) in precisely those contexts where one would expect to find it. Perhaps its most famous occurrence (famous because the passage in which it is found has been a regular anthology piece ever since Sweet published his *Anglo-Saxon Reader* in 1876) is in the account in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (s.a. 755) of the feud between Cynewulf, King of the West Saxons, and Cyneheard, brother of a certain Sigebyht, whose attempt to win back the throne in a *coup d'état* ends in banishment and, finally, murder. In the story, which is likely to be a written version of what had previously circulated in oral form,⁴ Cynewulf journeys *lytle werede* to meet an unnamed lady at a place called Merton where he is trapped by his adversary. Bent on revenge for the death of his brother, Sigebyht surrounds the king and his modest body-guard and, in the ensuing fight, all the warriors on both sides meet their deaths. Only a Welsh hostage survives, and he is badly wounded. The climax of this part of the story, as preserved in MS D of the *Chronicle*, reads as follows:⁵

Cyneheard [Sigebyht's broðer] geahsode he þone cyning
[Cynewulf] lytle werede on wifcyðpe on Mærantune, 7 hine þær

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3. In John C. Pope (ed.), *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols, London: Oxford University Press (EETS 259, 260), 1967-1968, homily XI. 290, p. 430. This example was chosen at random.
 4. See Charles E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1939.
 5. Geoffrey P. Cubbins (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 6, MS D, Cambridge: Brewer, 1996, p. 13.

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berad, 7 þone bur utan beedon, ær hine þa men onfunden þe mid þam cyninge wæron. 7 þa ongeat se cyning þæt, 7 he on þa duru eode, 7 þa unheanlice hine wærede oð he on þone æþeling locade, 7 þa ut rædde on hine 7 hyne myclum gewundode, 7 hy ealle on þone cyning feohtende wæron oð þæt heo hine ofslægenne hæfdon.

The *Chronicle* provides three other instances of the collocation, all occurring in the context of Ælfred's wars with the Danes in the early years of his reign. Thus, in the year 871, the year of Ælfred's accession to the West-Saxon throne, we are plausibly told that *þæs ymb ænne monað* (that is, one month after the accession made necessary by the death of Æþelred) *gefeahrt Ælfred cyning wið ealne þone here lytle werede æt Wiltune 7 hine long on dæg geflymde*.⁶ A few years later, in 878, he is pushed back onto the defensive and *lytle wærede unyðelice æfter wudum for 7 on morfæstenum*; and, at Easter of the same year we are told that *Ælfred worhte [...] lytle wærede geweorc æt Æthelungaige*, presumably on or near the site of the monastery he later founded.

A later occurrence, in Ælfric, also appears to be above suspicion since its source, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, is followed faithfully; I refer to the manner in which Oswald, King of the Northumbrians, is said to have affronted the pagan Cædwalla:⁷

Oswold him com to and him cenlice wiðfeahrt
mid lytlum werede, ac his geleafa hine getrymde
and Crist him gefylste to his feonda slege

Superueniente cum paruo exercitu, sed fide Christi munito, infandus
Brettonum dux cum immensis illis copii.⁸

6. *Idem*, p. 25.

7. Walter W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, London: Kegan Paul (EETS OS 76, 82, 94, 114), 1881-1900, repr. in 2 volumes by the EETS in 1966; vol. 2, p. 12.

8. Charles Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, bk. III, ch. 1; vol. 1, p. 128.

These references to the doughty exploits of West-Saxon and Northumbrian warriors (all with their backs to the wall, one notices) against formidable enemies appear not to have aroused much interest, and there is no obvious reason why their veracity should be called into question. Both Asser and the chronicle attributed to Florence of Worcester confirm what the English texts say of Ælfred and his armies, although since both Latin texts depend on a (now lost) version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, their value as independent witnesses may reasonably be questioned.⁹ However, the details surrounding Cynewulf's amorous escapade in the earlier annal for 755 have attracted the attention of one critic, Tom Shippey, who argues (I think convincingly) that "at one point" in the passage the narrator "surely cannot be telling the truth," and that point is when the king recognises his adversary, manfully defending himself *oð he on þone æpeling* (Sigebyrht) *locude*, and then rushing out to attack. The really suspicious part of this account is, according to Shippey, the implied statement about Cynewulf's emotions: enraged by the sight of his adversary, he throws safety to the wind and fights in the doorway, *unheanlice* — manfully — we are told.¹⁰ The problem with the *Chronicle* story is that such an assessment could not have been transmitted to any audience with an appetite for stirring heroic tales since, as the text makes very clear, all of the potential witnesses (or storytellers) were dead. Who, therefore, provided the story-teller, or the chronicler, with such details for his stirring tale? The story (or

9. Compare William H. Stevenson (ed.), *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904, ch. 42, and Florence of Worcester "[...] he [Alfred] with a small and very unequal force fought fiercely against the whole army of the Pagans at a hill called Wilton [...]", taken from the translation by Joseph Stephenson, *Florence of Worcester, A History of the Kings of England*, repr. Lampeter: Llanerch Enterprises, n.d., p. 57.

10. Tom A. Shippey, "Boar and Badger: an Old English Heroic Antithesis?" in: Marie Collins, Jocelyn Price and Andrew Hamer (eds), *Sources and Relations: Studies in Honour of J.E. Cross*, *Leeds Studies in English*, ns 16 (1985), 220-39.

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this part of it, at least) is a plausible invention designed to enhance the heroic worth of the West-Saxon king whose praises are sung throughout the annal. Seen in this light, his body-guard — *lytle werede* — would contribute significantly to the portrait of a heroic warrior, up against the odds, rashly risking life and limb to preserve his honour. The *Beowulf* poet would certainly have approved of both the action and the sentiment underlying it, as this gnomic utterance makes clear:

Swa sceal man don
þonne he æt guðe gegan þenceð
longsumne lof; na ymb his lif cearað. (1534-36) ¹¹

Perhaps I should say at this point that my argument does not depend necessarily on calling into question the statement that Cynewulf visited his lady friend at Merton *lytle werede*. It is not as a piece of neutral description that the phrase invites scrutiny; rather, it is in its power to evoke both physical and moral strength in desperate situations experienced by men of worth and valour.

Other instances of the phrase reinforce the idea that its function is not principally descriptive. Although they may be seen to respond in a general way to a cue in the source the writers were presumably following, the consistency with which *lytle werede* is evoked, in a range of genres, suggests that it belongs more to the literary imagination than to the historical.

I make reference first to Ælfric's free paraphrase of parts of the books of the Machabees, in which Judas Machabeus is constantly portrayed as the bold, fearless scourge of the heathens, *þa hæðenan* as Ælfric has it.¹² There is much detail in the biblical account which Ælfric decides to pass over, and it seems reasonable therefore to

11. Friedrich Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd edition with supplements, Boston: Heath, 1950.

12. Skeat, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 88, line 358.

suppose that those details retained and elaborated in the English text reflect his literary intentions in the work of adaptation. It may not be entirely fortuitous that of the words spoken by Judas, Ælfric selects the following two:

Accingimini, et stote filii potentes [...] quoniam melius est nos mori
in bello quam videre mala gentus nostrae, et sanctorum (1 Macc. 3:
58-59)

and translates thus:

beoð ymb-gyrde stranglice to þysum stiðan gewinne
forðan þe us is selre þæt we [sweltan] on gefeohte
þonne þas yrmðe geseon on urum cynne ðus
and on urum halig dome (Skeat, *ed. cit.* II. 88)

The sentiment reflected in these words, spoken by Judas on the banks of the Euphrates, was to be expressed, somewhat later and in slightly different terms, by one Leofsunu on the banks of the Blackwater.¹³ Thereafter, Ælfric relates that Machabeus rallied his troops in bold, defiant fashion before engaging in battle, and routed the enemy.

'Uton clypian to heofonum þæt God ure helpe
and tobryte þisne here þæt þa hæðenan tocnawan
þæt nis nan oðer God þe Israhel alyse.'

Machabeus þa genealæhte mid lytlum werode
þæt wæron ðreo þusend... (Skeat, *loc. cit.*)

Although it is perfectly clear from the the biblical account, read *in toto*, that Judas heads a numerically inferior force, there is no precise verbal parallel anywhere to the Old English phrase. In paraphrasing, Ælfric drew upon a convenient and available formulation.

The evidence from the translation of Orosius's *Historiarum* cannot be left aside in this discussion, since the English version

13. See Donald Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon*, Manchester: University Press, 1981, II. 246-53.

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furnishes three instances of the phrase. These instances, together with the Latin that lies behind them, are as follows:

a) Leoniða [...] hæfde iiii þusend monna þa he angean Xersis for on anum nearwan londfæstenne 7 him þær mid gefeohte wiðstod. Xersis þæt oþer folc swa swiðe forseah, þæt he ascade hwæt sceolde æt swa *lytlum weorode* mara fultum buton þa ane þe him þær ær abolgen wæs on ðæm ærran gefeohte [...] (Bately, *ed. cit.* 46/23)

Xerxes autem contemptu *paucitatis obiectae* iniri pugnam, conseri manum imperat. (OH 3.9.iv)¹⁴

b) Nat ic, cwæð Orosius, hwæðer mare wundor wæs, þe þæt he swa *mid lytle fultume* þone mæstan dæl þisses middangeardes gegan mehte, þe þæt he *mid swa lytle weorode* swa micel anginnan dorste (Bately, *ed. cit.* 68/10).

[...] hac tum *parua manu* uniuersum terrarum orbem utrum admirabilius sit quia uicerit an quia adgredi ausus fuerit incertum est. (OH 3.16.iii).

c) Æfter þæm Antonius 7 Cleopatro hæfdon gegaderod sciphere on þæm Readan Sæ. Ac þa him mon sæde þæt Octauianus þiderweard wæs, þa gecierde eall þæt folc to Octauianuse, 7 hie selfe oþflugon to anum tune *lytle werode* (Bately, *ed. cit.* 130/6).

[...] *trepidus se cum paucis* recepit in regiam. (OH 6.19.vi).

In the first passage, Xerxes is contemptuous of the small force which opposes his massive army, to which may be compared the evident delight expressed by the *Brunnanburh* poet as Æthelstan, king of the English, reduces to a remnant the combined forces of the Norwegians and Scots (at this unlocated place), who are chased back *to lides stefne lytle weorode*.¹⁵ In the second extract, our phrase acts as a variant to the earlier *lytle fultume*, throwing into relief the

14. The standard edition of Orosius for many years was that of Carl Zangemeister, *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri VII*, CSEL 5, Vienna, 1882. See now Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet (ed.), *Orose: Histoires (contre les païens)*, 3 vols, Paris: les Belles Lettres, 1990-1991.

15. Alistair Campbell (ed.), *The Battle of Brunnanburh*, London: Heinemann, 1938, line 34.

magnitude of Alexander's military achievement. The final instance recounts the last moments of Marcus Antonius who, before falling on his sword in the honourable Roman manner, takes refuge *lytle werede* in the royal palace.

The most striking characteristic common to all three of these passages is that the phrase *lytle weorode* is selected by the translator in response to phrases where the sense of smallness or fewness is conveyed by the adjectives *paucus* and *paruus*. There is no attempt at translation *word be worde*; rather the procedure is *andgit of andgiete*, as Ælfred himself (who obviously took an interest in the Englishing of this text) has it.¹⁶ And the repetition of the phrase on three separate and unrelated occasions suggests to me that the translator worked, at times at least, from a stock of literary idioms, and that this was one of them.

The remaining examples to be examined do nothing to undermine this assertion. Consider this most unusual gloss to a verse from Luke's gospel, written into the Lindisfarne Gospels by the priest Aldréd in the mid-tenth century:

Ait autem illi quidam: Domine, si pauci sunt, qui salvantur?¹⁷

cuoeð ða him sum mon, 'Drihten, gif *huon* sint, *vel lytle worado* aron, ða ðe gihæled biðon?'... (Luke 13: 23)

Luke reports that an unnamed man asked Jesus this rather startling question: "are they few who are to be saved?" The sense of *pauci* is conveyed adequately in the English by *huon* (*hwon*) which is itself subject to some form of translation, announced by the Latin *vel*, in the form of *lytle worado*. Although the meaning of "troop" or "small

16. Taken from the so-called Preface to the Old English *Cura Pastoralis*, conveniently available in Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 15th ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. 4-7; the phrases are on p. 7.

17. Taken from Walter W. Skeat (ed.), *The Holy Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian and Mercian Versions*, Cambridge: University Press, 1871-1887.

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force of men" is probably not uppermost in Aldred's mind here (*werod* may signify "company"), there is apparently nothing in the gospel narrative which would warrant its presence. Aldred would seem to be availing himself of a ready-made collocation. Indeed, he may have been guided by the implications of Christ's answer to the man: *Contendite intrare per angustam portam*. It is a question of (spiritual) life and death, and the seeker thereafter finds himself in a narrow, confined place (*angustam portam*). At bottom, the predicament is not all that different from Cynewulf's at Merton.

Without wishing to press this analogy any further, I will pass to my final few examples. If the presence of *lytle worado* in the Lindisfarne gloss seems incongruous, its use by Ælfric in his *Grammar* is, if unexpected, at least explicable. Ælfric at one point comments on Latin nouns ending in *-ors*:

IN ORS on ors geendiað þas naman: hic Mauors agen nama, huius Mauortis; GENERIS FEMININI: *haec choors ðes ðreat, þæt is, lytel wered*, huius choortis; haec sors þis hlyt oððe hlot, huius sortis; haec mors þes deað huius mortis; TRIVM GENERVM: hic et haec et hoc concors geðwære, huius concordis; hic et haec et hoc discors ungeðwære, huius discordis; hic et haec et hoc consors efenhlytta.¹⁸

The sequence appears to be clear: *choors* is chosen as an example of a feminine noun of this category, for which Ælfric supplies a translation, *ðreat* (a usage paralleled in the West-Saxon gospels), and a variation on that translation, *lytle werod*. A *ðreat*, therefore, is synonymous with a *lytel werod*. Isidore, in his *Etymologiae*, defines a cohort: *cohors quingentes milites habet*.¹⁹ a cohort is made

18. Julius Zupitza (ed.), *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, Berlin: Weidmann, 1880, repr. with a preface by Helmut Gneuss, Berlin: Weidmann, 1966, p. 64.10.

19. William M. Lindsay (ed.), *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911, IX. III. 51. It is interesting to observe that the translator of the *Orosius* associates another Old English term, *truma*, to the Latin *cohors*. In commenting on the armies assembled by Pompeius, he states that the latter *hæfde eahta ond eahtatig coortana, þæt we nu truman hatað [...]* (Batley, ed. cit., 127/13).

up of five hundred men. Even if Ælfric did not have Isidore to hand, he would probably have been conversant with this standard medieval definition. It is the only example I have come across in which the concept *lytle werede* is quantified, and if Isidore's definition is accepted, great strain is placed on the conviction that Old English writers were thinking in terms of five hundred men every time they availed themselves of the phrase. It may, of course, be a convenient approximation, a suitably rounded figure indicative of size only in the impressionistic, essentially non-numeric sense. Nevertheless, the overriding characteristic of Old English *werod* in the phrase *lytle werode* is its smallness.

The equation *choors: lytle werede* is an approximation, then. Or rather, it is a piece of literary short-hand. At least one other writer, this time a poet, matches *werod* with *cohors*: the anonymous poet of *Genesis A*. In chapter 14 of the book of Genesis we learn, among other things, that Abraham rallied his troops in order to save his brother Lot, captured in battle. Most students of the poem are of the opinion that the poet supplemented his biblical text with material drawn from the patristic commentary tradition; one recent overview accords some importance to Bede's *In Genesim* as a likely source.²⁰ The relevant passages from the poem and Bede's commentary are these:

[Gen. 14.14] Quod cum audisset Abram captum uidelicet Loth fratrem suum, numerauit expeditos uernaculos suos trecentos decem et octo...

Loth wæs ahreded,
 eorl mid æhtum, idesa hwurfon,
 wif on willan. Wide gesawon
 freora feorhbanan fuglas slitan
 on ecgwale. Abraham ferede
 sūðmonna eft sinc and bryda,
 æðelinga bearn, oðle nior,

20. Michael J. Swanton, *English Literature before Chaucer*, London: Longman, 1987, p. 82.

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mægeð heora magum. Næfre mon ealra
 lifigendra her *lytle werede*
 þon wurðlicor wigsid̄ ateah,
 þara þe wið swa miclum mægne geræse. (2085b-95) ²¹

Bede, *In Genesim* III. on *Gen.* XIV.14:

Miraculum quidem est diuinæ potentiae permaximum, quod *cum cohorte tam modica* tantam hostium stragem fecerit Abram; sed altius sacramentum fidei [...] ²²

Again, it would appear that, on the basis of the presence in the Latin of *cum cohorte tam modica*, the poet, alive to the requirements of his alliterative scheme, has appropriated a stock phrase.

To sum up at this point: despite the apparent appropriateness of the phrase *lytle werede* in supposedly objective descriptions of military engagements in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and similar texts, evidence about its use and function in other contexts suggests that it carried a weightier significance than the straightforwardly descriptive one. The fact that it is invoked in a wide variety of these contexts suggests that we are dealing with a set-phrase, one favoured because it carried extra-literal associations.

There is, to my mind, one final piece of evidence which, if my interpretation be allowed, would confirm the thrust of my argument. I refer to the two-fold occurrence of the phrase *mæte werede* (unique in Old English) in *The Dream of the Rood*. Earlier, I laid stress on the fact that the combination of *lytel* and *werod* indicated that it was perceived as a fixed sense unit — so it appears in the prose and in *Genesis A*. But fixed phrase units in Old English poetry are subject to variation, one of the concepts which lie at the heart of what came to be known as the Oral-Formulaic Theory in the 1960s and 1970s.

21. Alger N. Doane (ed.), *Genesis A: A New Edition*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1978.

22. Charles W. Jones (ed.), *Bede: In Genesim*, Turnhout: Brepols (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, CXVIII), 1967, p. 187.

Mæte werede in *The Dream of the Rood* is such a variation (here poignant rather than ironic, as Michael Swanton has suggested)²³ of the formulaic *weorod unmæte* which similarly originated in the poetry, and which is found quite frequently in prose writings, especially the Alfredian translations.

In both occurrences, *mæte* in the phrase *mæte werede* in *The Dream of the Rood* carries alliterative responsibility. It refers first to Christ (69) and then to the dreamer (124), and the pointed repetition serves to underline the dependence, from the spiritual point of view, of the latter on the former, itself made explicit by the vision of the cross.

These phrases have their place in this discussion because, in the first instance, the poet did not intend them to function in any literal way at all. The first occurrence is probably, and the second certainly, an example of Old English understatement (*litotes*): Christ, then the dreamer, are alone. In none of the gospel accounts of the Passion is there any explicit reference, or indeed even hint, that Christ remained alone after his death: on the contrary, the spectacle is public until Joseph of Arimathea seeks permission to take charge of Christ's body.²⁴ As with the equally historical but more mundane West-Saxon king, Cynewulf, *mæte werede* (like *lytle werede*) is a convenient fiction, one which provides an imaginative dimension to an otherwise mute historical reality.

In the larger context of Christ's Passion, as elaborated in *The Dream of the Rood*, *mæte werede* contributes to the significant overlay of heroic vocabulary and sentiment which pervade the poem and which constitute one of its major artistic successes. *Werede*, it

23. See Michael J. Swanton (ed.), *The Dream of the Rood*, Manchester: University Press, 1970, p. 125. All quotations are taken from this edition.

24. As Swanton points out, *op. cit.* p. 124, some critics have searched the biblical texts for evidence of the presence of a "small company" of onlookers, thus seeking to interpret *mæte werede* in a straightforward literal sense.

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seems to me, belongs to the same register as *sigebeam* (13), *geong hæleð* (39), *modig* (41), *ymbclypte* (42), ²⁵ *hilderinc* (61, 72) and *ellen* (34, 60, 123). Indeed, the last occurrence of *ellen* — a word evoking a value which animates the world of *Beowulf* — is particularly revealing. After the cross has finished its salutary discourse, the dreamer resumes his narrative in the first person:

Gebæd ic me þa to þan beame bliðe mode
 elne mycle, þær ic ana wæs
 mæte werede (122-24)

where the heroic associations of *ellen* fuse effortlessly with those of *werod*.

Chronologically, *The Dream of the Rood* is early in date. Though scholars are unable to assign accurate dates to Old English poems,²⁶ all are agreed that the poetry precedes the prose, and that observation must carry weight in the present discussion. The imaginative use of the phrase *mæte werede*, itself a variation on phrases of the type *weorode unmæte* (common to both poetry and prose), indicates that it constitutes what may be termed a literary device exploiting the associations inherent in the term *werod*. These associations in the poem are firmly heroic. Furthermore, poets and later prose writers alike betray a liking for the variant collocation

25. The poet says that Christ "embraced" the cross. The word is clearly open to various interpretations. For one critic, Faith H. Patten, the word would seem to evoke the possibility that Christ "approaches the cross with eagerness, as though it were his Bride." See her article "Structure and Meaning in *The Dream of the Rood*," *English Studies*, 49 (1968), 385-401, at 388. But this allegorical interpretation seems at odds with the main thrust of the poet's method. I would more readily associate his *ymbclypte* with the phrase *clyppe and cysse* in *The Wanderer* where its presence calls to mind the lord-retainer relationship in a ceremony of feudal (or pre-feudal) allegiance. See the explanatory note to line 42 of the poem in Roy. F. Leslie (ed.), *The Wanderer*, Manchester: University Press, 1966, p. 74.

26. The most recent extended discussion is Ashley C. Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1980.

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lytle werede which, as has been seen, does not operate descriptively. It must therefore share some of the imaginative, emotive power generated by *mæte werede* and other phrases of that type.

On the basis of this evidence, then, I argue that Old English *lytle werede* is essentially a literary construct, one whose function is not confined to bringing heroic connotations to bear on the contexts in which it is found, but one which fulfils that function on a number of significant occasions.

ADDENDUM

A check-list of the occurrences of *lytle werede* in Old English, as ascertained from a search of the *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, compiled by Antonette di Paolo Healey and Richard Venezky (Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies, 1980).

1. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, sub anno 755*
2. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, sub anno 871*
- 3 and 4. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, sub anno 878*
5. Old English *Orosius* II. v
6. Old English *Orosius* III. viiii
7. Old English *Orosius* V. xiii
8. Ælfric, *Natale Sancti Oswaldi* (ed. Skeat, vol. II, p. 12)
9. Ælfric, *Passio Machabeorum* (from the *Lives of Saints*) (ed. Skeat, vol. II, p. 88)
10. Wulfstan, *Be Godcundre Warnunge* in Dorothy Bethurum, ed., *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 253
11. *Genesis A*, line 2093
12. Ælfric, *Grammar*, 64.10
13. Lindisfarne gloss to Luke 13: 23