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THE HERO, THE BEASTS, AND THE SUN: TWO GERMANIC
ORAL-FORMULAIC THEMES IN THE
SLOVO O POLKU IGOREVE

In an article published in 1955, Francis P. Magoun first identified an Anglo-Saxon oral-formulaic theme that he named "The Beasts of Battle," described it as consisting of "the mention of the wolf, eagle, and/or raven as beasts attendant on a scene of carnage," and noted that not all of these beasts appear in every instance of the theme.⁰ Five years later, David Crowne identified another such theme, that of "The Hero on the Beach," which he described as consisting of the following elements: "(1) A hero on a beach (2) with his retainers (3) in the presence of a flashing light (4) as a journey is completed (or begun)."¹ Alain Renou, Donald K. Fry, and others have since shown that this theme is present in Germanic traditions other than Anglo-Saxon and that a doorway or any other symbolic boundary between two worlds may replace the beach in Crowne's paradigm.²

More recently, Sarah L. Higley has discussed the aesthetic function of the Hero on the Beach in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*.³ In her study, Higley suggests that the term "liminal," most often used by anthropologists to describe people and situations associated with boundaries between different worlds and states of being, has a useful literary application as well as an anthropological one:

[...] Crowne's Hero on the Beach depicts a liminal situation in that it shows man standing on some kind of threshold or marginal area (such as a beach) at an important and perilous point in the drama. The ritual reference to a light shining adds the requisite ceremoniousness to what appears to be a "rite of passage," and it is conceivable that the theme of the Hero on the Beach ... may ... have its origin in Germanic myth. ... These are neutral zones which separate opposing worlds – sea and cliff, lake and woods, outside and inside, known and unknown. ... Much of *Beowulf* consists in the hero's successful crossing of these boundaries.⁴

Like *Beowulf*, Prince Igor, the hero of the East Slavic *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, is presented as spending much of his time crossing borders. Both heroes are shown as initially unpromising youths descended from disreputable ancestors.

They are thus both liminal figures in the sense that they begin their careers on the borders of their own societies. Igor was, in fact, the grandson of Oleg Svjatoslavič of Chernigov, referred to in the *Slovo* as "Oleg Gorislavič," which may be roughly translated as "Oleg, son of Woe." Oleg was best known for his involvement in destructive feuds, which plagued the society of Kievan Rus'.⁵ These feuds also plagued Anglo-Saxon society, and a speech by King Hrothgar in *Beowulf* indicates that Beowulf's father, Ecgtheow, once started a feud so deadly that he was exiled by his own people.⁶ Moreover, just as Beowulf's lord, Hygelac, initially takes a skeptical attitude towards Beowulf's expedition to the land of the Danes, so both the narrator of the *Slovo* and Grand Prince Svjatoslav of Kiev criticize Igor's campaign.⁷ Yet Beowulf is successful in his venture, and Igor's escape is glorified in spite of the defeat of his army.

In *The Singer of Tales*, Albert B. Lord suggests that the portrayal of Beowulf as an unpromising youth who leaves home in order to prove himself is an instance of a recurring pattern in oral-formulaic works. While Lord does not specify whether this pattern occurs in some or all oral traditions, he does mention Archaic Greek and South Slavic instances of it.⁸ In a similar context, he writes about a pattern of symbolic death and resurrection of the hero, pointing to Beowulf's journey to Hrothgar's kingdom and his visit to the cave of Grendel's mother as two instances of it in Beowulf.⁹ Similarly Boris Gasparov, in his *Poëtika* "*Slova o polku Igoreve*," interprets Igor's captivity as representing a journey to the world of the dead and his escape as a return to life.¹⁰ Both scholars see the patterns of death and resurrection in the works that they discuss as associated with under-lying mythical patterns in the cultures that produced these works.¹¹

Gasparov discusses at some length the importance of borders and of the motif of border-crossing in the *Slovo*, pointing out all the battles in the work are associated with rivers, as is Igor's escape. He notes the significance of beaches as borders between the worlds of land and water and argues that both rivers and beaches function in the *Slovo* as symbolic borders between the worlds of life and death.¹² He also discusses the identification of the sun with the prince in the work, showing how dusk, darkening of the sky, and the disappearance of the sun are associated with Igor's defeat and capture.¹³ Significantly, while Crowne remarks that the source of light in the Hero on the Beach is not invariably the sun, he indicates that it usually is.¹⁴ In instances of the theme in *Beowulf*, light usually proceeds either from the sun itself or from some object that reflects sunlight, such as the headgear of the Gauts when they land in Denmark (Klaeber, ll. 301-307b). A major exception, to be discussed later, is the fire in the cave of Grendel's mother.

I wish to argue, first, that the themes of the Hero on the Beach and the Beasts of Battle may be present in the *Slovo* and, second, that the association of the hero with the sun found in the *Slovo* may also be found in *Beowulf*.

The first apparent instance of the Hero on the Beach in the *Slovo* occurs in the description of Igor's decision to set out against the Polovcians:

Тогда Игорь възрѣ на свѣтлое солнце и видѣ отъ него тьмою
вся своя воя прикрыты. И рече Игорь къ дружинѣ своей: "Бра-
тие и дружино! лучше жъ бы потягу быти, неже полонену
быти, а всядемъ, братие, на свои бръзья кони да позримъ
синего Дону". Спала князю умъ похоти, и жалость ему знаме-
ние заступи искусити Дону Великаго. "Хошу бо, рече, копие
приломити конецъ поля Половецкаго, съ вами Русици, хошу
главу свою приложити, а любо испити шеломомъ Дону".

(*Bol. Bib. poëta*, 2nd ed., 44: Then Igor looked at the bright sun and saw all of his troops covered with darkness by it.¹⁵ And Igor said to his retainers, "Brothers and retainers! Better for us to be killed than to be captured, and so let us mount, brothers, on our swift steeds and behold the blue Don." The mind of the prince blazed with passion, and desire to venture the Great Don hid the omen from him. "I want," he said, "to break a lance at the edge of the Polovcian field with you, the men of Rus'. I want to lay down my head, or else to drink from the Don with my helmet.")

Here all the elements of Crowne's paradigm are present. (1): The hero desires to look at and drink from the Don, actions which could only be performed on a beach; in addition, the edge of the Polovcian field to which he refers is the boundary between his native land and the alien world of his enemies.¹⁶ (2): The retainers are mentioned repeatedly. (3): There is an inversion of the element of the flashing light in the description of the sun, which is given the epithet "bright" but radiates darkness instead of light.¹⁷ This reference to an eclipse that took place in the same year as the expedition against the Polovcians may be taken, on a poetic level, as a portent of defeat: The prince is to be as thoroughly, though as temporarily, blotted out as the sun. (4). The journey about to begin is the ill-fated expedition against the Polovcians.

Shortly after this passage there is another reference to the darkened sun:

Тогда вѣступи Игорь князь въ златъ стремянь и поѣха по чи-
стому полю. Солнце ему тьмою путь заступаше, ночь стонуши
ему грозою птичь убуди, свистъ звѣринъ вѣста ...
Игорь къ Дону вой велеть. Уже бо бѣды его пасеть птиць по
дубию, влѣцы грозу въсрожать по яругамъ, орли клеткотомъ
на кости звѣри зовутъ, лисици брешутъ на чрленныя щиты.
О Руская земле! Уже за шеломянемъ еси!

(Bol. Bib. poeta, 2nd ed., p. 46: Then Prince Igor stepped into his golden stirrup and rode off across the open field. The sun blocked his path with darkness, the night moaning to him as a thunderstorm awakened the birds, the sound of beasts sprang up. ...¹⁸ Igor leads his troop to the Don. Already birds await his misfortunes in the oak grove,¹⁹ wolves stir up a storm among the ravines, eagles call beasts to the bones with shrieks, foxes bark at the red shields. Oh land of Rus'! You are already beyond the hill!)

Again the hero, the retainers, and the journey are mentioned. While there is no specific reference to a beach, the prepositional phrase "*k Donu*" ("to the Don") does not imply that they will enter or cross the river, but that they will approach it. To do so, they must move onto a Beach. In his article, Crowne remarks that "...the theme of the Hero on the beach frequently precedes a description of (or reference to) a scene of carnage in which the theme of the Beasts of Battle is used."²⁰ Here, the wolves and eagles mentioned by Magoun, together with some foxes, are seen preparing for a carnage that is soon to take place. Donald K. Fry has noted that the beasts of battle "generally follow the winning side *before* the battle and prey on the losers afterward."²¹ In this instance, the beasts are, on a literal level, attending the losers before the battle. Yet, as Gasparov has pointed out, the mention of the eclipse before the departure of the army indicates that Igor and his forces have, on a mythological level, already undergone destruction.²² In their expectation of the defeat the beasts are already, in a sense, preying on the losers. The exclamation at the end of this passage may be taken as another indication that the men of Rus' have already crossed a symbolic boundary and entered a world of darkness and death.

The elements of the Hero on the Beach appear again in the description of the same army encamped on the battlefield:

Дремлетъ въ полѣ Ольгово хороброе гнѣздо. Далече залетѣло!
Не было оно²³ обидѣ порождено ни соколу, ни кречету, ни
тебѣ, чръныи воронѣ, поганьи Половчине! Гзакъ бѣжитъ
сърымъ вълкомъ, Кончакъ ему слѣдъ править къ Дону
Великому.

Другаго дни велми рано кровавыя зори свѣтъ повѣдають,
чръныя тучя съ моря идуть, хотятъ прикрити 4 солнца, а въ
нихъ трепещуть синии мълнии. Быти грому великому, ити
дождю стрѣлами съ Дону Великаго! Ту ся копиемъ прила-
мати, ту ся саблямъ потручати о шеломы Половецкыя, на рѣцѣ
на Каялѣ, у Дону Великаго.

О Руская земль! Уже за шеломянемъ еси!

(Bol. Bib. poeta, 2nd ed., p. 47: The valiant brood of Oleg sleeps in the field. It has flown far! It was not born to be injured by the falcon,

nor the gerfalcon, nor by you, black raven, pagan Polovcian! Gzak runs as a grey wolf, Koncak guides him on the way to the Great Don. On the next day very early bloody dawn announces light, black clouds come from the sea, desire to engulf the four suns, and within them quiver blue lightning bolts. There will be great thundering, rain shall fall like arrows from the Great Don! Here lances shall be broken, here shall sabers be struck against the helms of the Polovcians, on the river Kajala by the Great Don. Oh land of Rus! You are already beyond the hill!)

Here the men of Rus', the "brood of Oleg," have completed a journey and await battle on a beach. The four suns referred to are generally agreed to represent four princes that took part in the campaign.²⁴ Thus the hero, Igor, and his three most important retainers are likened to sources of light. Once again these objects are about to be darkened, this time by clouds moving in from over the water. The identification of the Polovcians with ravens and wolves corresponds to the association between the beasts and the victors noted by Fry.

The above three instances of Crowne's paradigm follow one another in rapid succession. All refer to the same hero, retainers, journey, and beach, and all pre-
 sage the same defeat. The source of light in each case is a sun or suns under the influence of darkness. A description of the same defeat in retrospect, the speech of the boyars to the grand prince, fulfills the paradigm yet again:

Се бо два сокола слѣтъста съ отня стола злата поискати града
 Тьмутороканя, а любо испити шеломомъ Дону. Уже соколома
 крыльца прилѣшали поганыхъ саблями а самою опутаща въ
 путины желѣзны. Темно бо бѣ въ 3 день: два солнца
 помѣркости, оба багряная стѣла погасоста, и въ морѣ по-
 грузиста, и съ нима молодая мѣсяца, Олегъ и Святѣславъ,
 тьмою ся поволокоста.

(*Bol. Bib. poëta*, 2nd ed., pp. 50-51: Behold, two falcons flew from their father's golden seat to seek the city of Tmutorokan or else to drink of the Don with their helmets. Already the falcons' wings have been clipped by the sabers of the pagans and they themselves have been tangled in iron fetters. For it was dark on the third day: two suns went dark, both pillars of fire went out and sank into the sea, and with them the young moons, Oleg and Svjatoslav, were obscured by darkness.)

The flight of the falcons serves as a reminiscence of the journey to the battlefield; the two suns represent Igor and his brother Vsevolod, who may here be taken as a pair of heroes. Gasparov argues convincingly that the two pillars of fire represent Svjatoslav Rylskij and Vladimir, Igor's nephew and elder son, who took part in the campaign, and the two moons Oleg and Svjatoslav, Igor's two

younger sons, who symbolically share in their father's defeat.²⁵ They thus serve both as luminous objects and as retainers. The presence of beaches is implied twice, once by the mention of drinking from the Don and once by the reference to the lesser lights passing into the sea.

A final possible instance of the Hero on the Beach in the *Slovo* occurs in the description of Igor's return to Rus':

Солнце свѣтитя на небесѣхъ — Игорь князь въ Руской земли.
Дѣвици поють на Дунаи — Вьются голоси чрезъ море до
Киева. Игорь ѣдет по Боричеву къ святѣи Богородици
Пирогошей. Страни ради, гради весели.

(*Bol. Bib. poëta*, 2nd ed., p. 56: The sun shines in the heavens — Prince Igor is in the land of Rus'. Maidens sing on the Danube — the voices are carried across the sea to Kiev. Igor rides along Borichev to the church of the Holy Mother of God of the Tower. The lands are happy, the cities are joyful.)

Igor's escape itself is a completed journey, and the maidens on the beach serve as retainers. For once the sun is not obscured; its brightness is restored with the hero's return.

Further evidence for the presence of the Hero on the Beach and Beasts of Battle themes in the early East Slavic tradition is to be found in the longer redaction of the *Zadonščina*, which some see as a reworking of the *Slovo* to describe another campaign and others as an original work imitated by an eighteenth-century forger in creating the *Slovo*.²⁶ The first passage of interest in this work closely resembles the first instance of the Beasts of Battle cited above, though it foreshadows not the slaughter of the Muscovites but that of their enemies, the Tatars:

А уже бѣды ихъ пасоша птицы крылати подъ облакъ лѣтятъ,
вороны часто граютъ, а галицы своєю речью говорятъ, орлы хлѣк-
чютъ, а волцы грозно воятъ, а лисицы на костѣхъ бряшутъ.²⁷

(And already winged birds fly beneath the clouds,²⁸ ravens caw often, and daws speak in their own language, eagles cry out, and wolves howl grimly, and foxes bark on the bones ...)

The elements of this passage may well have been borrowed from the *Slovo*; yet it is interesting to note that ravens, the third beast of Magoun's paradigm, are not mentioned in the corresponding passage from that work.

The first possible instance of the Hero on the Beach in the *Zadonščina* resembles the description of Igor's departure, also cited above:

Тогда князь великий Дмитрий Иванович воступив во златое свое стремя, взял свой меч в правую руку и помолился богу и пречистой его матери. Солнце ему на восток сияет и путь повѣдает, А Борисъ и Глебъ молитву воздают за сродники своя.

Что шумит и что гремят рано перед зорями? Князь Владимиръ Андреевич полки пребирает и ведет к великому Дону.

(Dmitrieva: Undol'skij, p. 537: Then Grand Prince Dimitri Ivanovič stepped into his golden stirrup, taking his sword in his right hand and praying to God and to His Most Pure Mother. The sun shines on him in the east and shows him the way, and Boris and Gleb give prayer for their relatives.

What sounds and what thunders early before the dawn? Prince Vladimir Andreevič arranges his regiments and leads them to the swift Don.)

Of the two heroes of the *Zadonščina*, Grand Prince Dimitri is shone upon by the sun. His brother, Prince Vladimir, leads a group of retainers towards a body of water. The elements of Crowne's paradigm are thus divided between them. Crowne has said of the Hero on the Beach that "the time of his action is usually dawn; however the temporal reference is sometimes omitted."²⁹ In this case, the location of the sun in the east indicates an early time of day. Because the work tells of a victory rather than of a defeat, the sun is not darkened.

Another possible instance of the Hero on the Beach in the *Zadonščina* is the following:

Того же дни в субботу на рождество святых богородицы исекша христиани поганые полки на полѣ Куликове на речке Напрядѣ.

И нюкнув князь великий Владимиръ Андреевичъ гораздо и скакаше во полцехъ поганыхъ в татарскихъ, а злеченымъ шоломомъ посвѣтливаетъ, а скакаше со всемъ своимъ войскомъ.

(Dmitrieva: Undol'skij, p. 539: On the same day, on Saturday, on the nativity of the Holy Mother of God, Christians cut to pieces the pagan regiments on the field of Kulikovo by the stream Naprjada.

And prince Vladimir Andreevič cried out mightily and galloped amidst the pagan, Tatar, forces and flashed [lit.: "flashes"] with his gilded helmet and galloped with all his troop.)³⁰

Again we see a hero, a beach, retainers, and a flashing object; the last in this case is not the sun, but the hero's helmet. A journey is mentioned shortly thereafter:

И тогда аки соколы борзо полѣтели. И поскакивает князь великий Дмитрий Иванович с своими полки и со всею силою.

(Dmitrieva: Undol'skij, p. 539: And then like falcons they swiftly flew off. And Grand Prince Dimitri Ivanovič gallops with his regiments and with all his force.)

As predatory birds, the falcons resemble the eagles and ravens of Magoun's paradigm. In two corresponding passages in other surviving texts of the *Zadonščina*, eagles are mentioned instead of falcons, which indicates the closeness of the symbolic significance of these two types of birds to the early East Slavic poetic consciousness.³¹ Just as, in the third passage from the *Slovo* cited above, the Polovcians are compared to wolves and ravens, so here the men of Rus' are compared to falcons (or eagles) hastening to a slaughter. It is significant that both of these instances of the theme of the Beasts of Battle involve the identification of the beasts with human beings. The construction, "*zlačenym šelomom posvēl'čivæet*" ("flashes with his gilded helmet") is noteworthy because it implies that the hero himself is the flashing object, while the helmet is merely the instrument whereby he flashes. The identification of Vladimir with the source of brightness corresponds to that of Igor with the sun in the *Slovo*. If one accepts that both works contain elements derived from an East Slavic oral tradition and agrees that the Hero on the Beach and Beasts of Battle themes are presented in both, one may be led to conclude that East Slavic variants of the former theme are usually distinguished by a close association of the hero with the shining object and that this object is usually the sun. Analogously, instances of the latter theme are often characterized by the identification of the beasts with human beings.

Beowulf contains fewer references to the sun than does the *Slovo* and lacks the explicit equation of hero and sun found in the Russian work. Nevertheless, references to the sun often coincide with Beowulf's successful crossings of the border between water and land, providing some of the instances of the Hero on the Beach found in the poem. One such instance occurs at the end of Beowulf's description of his swimming-match with breca:

Næs hīe ðære fylle gefēan hæfdon,
mānfordæddan, þæt hīe mē þegon,
symbel ymbsæton sǣgrunde nēah;
ac on mergenne mēcum wunde
be ýðlāfe uppe lāgon,
sweo[r]dum āswefede, þæt syðþan nā
ymb brontne ford brimlīðende
lāde ne letton. Lēoht ēastan cōm,
beorht bēacen Godes ...

(Klaeber, ll. 562–570a: They did not have any joy of their feast, the evil-doers, that they should devour me, sit around a banquet by the sea-bottom; but rather in the morning, wounded by the sword, they lay up by the beach, put to sleep by the sword, so that since then never, amidst the high sea, did they hinder the voyages of sea-travellers. Light came from the east, bright beacon of God...)

Crowne points out that the sea-monsters here fill the place of the retainers of the paradigm and takes the reference to voyages with which the monsters once interfered as fulfilling the requirement that there be a reference to a journey.³² While this interpretation is reasonable, it should be noted that the arrival of the dead monsters on the beach may itself be taken as the termination of a journey. In addition, the description of this scene is provided by Beowulf, whose swim is certainly a journey and who presumably reaches the beach together with the corpses. The rise of the hero from the depths coincides with that of the sun from the east and with a victory over the hostile creatures. Just as Igor escapes from foreign captivity to his native soil, so Beowulf escapes from water, where the monsters have detained him, to land, where his fellow human beings live.

Donald K. Fry has pointed out that the passage describing Beowulf's dive into Grendel's pond, his struggle with its inhabitants, and his entry into the underwater cave (Klaeber, ll.1 494b–1517) constitutes an implementation of the theme of the Hero on the Beach.³³ Similarities between this episode and the one involving Breca include the swim and the presence of monsters, who are again substituted for the retainers of Crowne's paradigm. The source of light which serves to complete the paradigm is not the sun but a fire. Yet the light changes once the most powerful of the monsters, Grendel's mother, is slain:

[...] bil eal ðurhwōd
fægne flæschoman; – hēo on flet gecrong,
sweord wæs swātig; – secg weorce gefeh.

Lixte se lēoma, – lēoht inne stōð,
efne swā of hefene – hādre scīneð
rodores candel.

(Klaeber, ll. 1567b–72a: ... the blade went completely through the doomed flesh-house; she fell to the floor. The sword was bloody; the man rejoiced in his deed. The light gleamed, the brightness stood within, even as from heaven the candle of the sky shines clearly.)

Grendel's mother falls to the floor just as the dead monsters in the earlier passage "lie up" on the beach. The light in the cave suddenly increases and is compared to that of the sun. In fact, the true source of this light is not mentioned at all in this passage. The half-line, "Lixte se lēoma" ("The light gleamed") may as well refer to the light reflected from the bloody sword of the previous line as to the fire

itself.³⁴ In this instance, as in the Breca episode, a reference to the sun is associated with the completion of the hero's struggle.

Grendel, his mother, and the dragon are all creatures of the night. They make their attacks upon human beings while the sun is absent. Beowulf's ability to defeat such creatures is related to his ability to pass over or through water, a place where many monsters dwell. In a continuation of the speech containing the Breca episode, Beowulf speaks of the outcome of his approaching battle with Grendel:

[...] Gāþ eft sē þe mōt
tō medo mōdig, – siþþan morgenlēoht
ofer ylða bearn – oþres dōgores,
sunne sweglwered – sūpan scīneð!

(Klaeber, ll. 603b–606: He who may shall go cheerfully back to the mead after the morning light of the next day, the brightly-clothed sun, shines from the south over the children of men.)

The victor of the battle will be the one who lives to see the sun on the next day. Here the sun is associated with the human world, to which the hero returns after his battle is done.

An instance of the Hero on the Beach which Crowne has called, "perhaps the simplest and clearest occurrence of this theme in the poetry that has survived,"³⁵ occurs just after Beowulf's return to Gautland:

Gewāt him ðā se hearda – mid his hondscole
sylf æfter sande – sǣwong tredan,
wīde waroðas. – Woruldcandel scān,
sigel sūðan fūs. – Hī sīð drugon ...

(Klaeber, ll. 1963–66: Then the strong one went with his small troop, he himself walking alone the sand, the sea-plain, the wide beaches; the world-candle shone, the sun hastening to the south. They endured the journey ...)

The sun shines on the hero as he returns to his native land with honor and treasures. The description of the sun as "sūðan fūs" ("hastening to the south") indicates that it, like Beowulf, is a traveller. As in the description of Igor's return to Russia, sun and hero are linked.

If it be acknowledged that the similarities between *Beowulf* and the two Russian works discussed above may be more than coincidental, it remains to explain the source of these similarities. Direct influence, either of *Beowulf* on early East Slavic literature or of a hypothetical pre-Christian East Slavic oral tradition on an Anglo-Saxon tradition that produced *Beowulf*, seems unlikely.³⁶ A more likely explanation, at least for the presence of the Anglo-Saxon themes in

the East Slavic works, would be Scandinavian influence on the East Slavic tradition, since the themes of the Hero on the Beach and the Beasts of Battle are both found in the Old Norse tradition.³⁷ However, there are indications favoring another possibility.

In a recent article, Alain Renoir has pointed to evidence for the occurrence of the Hero on the Beach in the Homeric tradition and has suggested that the theme may possibly be of Indo-European origin.³⁸ The presence of the theme in the *Slovo* might be taken as lending support to his hypothesis. It is true that a case might conceivably be made that the theme was somehow transmitted from Archaic Greek texts through the Byzantine literary tradition to the *Slovo*. Indeed, Clarence A. Manning has pointed to similarities between certain passages in the *Iliad* and the *Slovo* and has suggested that the similarities point to a literary influence of the Greek work on the East Slavic one.³⁹ Yet Robert Mann, in a study that emphasizes the role of oral tradition in the composition of the *Slovo*, has responded by arguing that certain elements of the Russian folk-tradition provide closer parallels to the passages in the *Slovo* than do the passages in the *Iliad*.⁴⁰

Interestingly, one of the passages from the *Iliad* cited by Manning is the reference in the opening (Il. 4-5) to "the delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds" on the bodies of the heroes, which he compares to the sentence in the *Slovo*, "Дружину твою, княже, птиц крылы приодд, а звдри кровь полизаша" (Bol. Bib. poëta, 2nd ed., p. 53: "The wings of birds, O Prince, have covered your retainers, and beasts have licked up the blood").⁴¹ In his argument against Manning's hypothesis of literary transmission, Mann remarks that "... the motif in which birds and beasts converge over dead bodies is more closely paralleled by Russian folk songs." He then cites two such folk songs, one of which describes wolves hastening to a fresh corpse in order to lick up blood and the other of which refers to beasts and birds tearing at a human body.⁴² Although neither the passage from the *Iliad* nor the one from the *Slovo* cited by Manning fits perfectly with Magoun's formulation of the theme of the Beasts of Battle, the references in these passages to dogs, wolves, and predatory birds, all attendant upon scenes of carnage, are at least suggestive of that theme. The same thing is true of the passages in the two folk songs. In fact, a variant of one of these folk songs approximates Magoun's theme very closely, referring to "vorony" ("ravens") where the variant cited by Mann refers to *pticy* ("birds").⁴³ Taken in conjunction with the apparent occurrences of variations on the theme of the Beasts of Battle in the *Slovo* and *Zadonščina*, discussed above, the content of these passages points to the possibility that this theme, as well as that of the Hero on the Beach, could be of Indo-European origin.

If these hypotheses regarding the origins of the themes of the Beasts of Battle and the Hero on the Beach have any validity, it seems reasonable to suspect that other themes or patterns of imagery having Indo-European origin might be pre-

sent in both the Germanic and the Slavic traditions. I should like to suggest that one such pattern might involve the linkage of the hero with the sun that occurs in various forms in the *Slovo*, the *Zadonščina*, and *Beowulf*. Further evidence for all of these hypotheses might be unearthed through further comparisons of the roles of the sun and other bright lights, of beaches and other boundaries, and of imagery associated with beasts in the works discussed in this paper and in other Slavic and Germanic sources.

Yet, beyond a certain point, mere cataloging of common themes and patterns in different traditions is likely to become a tedious process. For this reason, investigators may also wish to attend to the different ways in which these themes and patterns manifest themselves in these traditions. To give one example, I have suggested in this paper that occurrences of the themes of the Hero on the Beach and the Beasts of Battle in the *Slovo* and *Zadonščina* frequently entail the identification of the hero with the shining object and of a human being or beings with a beast or beasts. The linkage of the hero and the sun that seems to occur in *Beowulf* might be viewed as an attenuated Anglo-Saxon equivalent to this phenomenon, but it is still distinctly different in form from the metaphorical representation of Igor and other heroes of the *Slovo* as suns. An investigation of the question why this sort of linkage seems to take such a strong form frequently in the East Slavic tradition and less often (if at all) in the Anglo-Saxon tradition might lead to a better understanding of both traditions and of the cultures that produced them.⁴⁴

Notes

- 1 Francis P. Magoun, "The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 56 (1955), 83-90. Related Studies include Gustav Neckel, "Die kriegerische Kultur der heidnischen Germanen," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 7 (1915-1919) 17-44; Adrien Bonjour, "Beowulf and The Beasts of Battle," *PMLA*, 72 (1957), 563-573; and Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir, *The Function of the Beasts of Battle in Old English Poetry*, Ph.D. dissertation, SUNY - Stony Brook, 1976. For reasons of convenience, I follow Magoun's usage in referring to the Beasts of Battle as a "theme," although it does not precisely fit the definition proposed by Donald K. Fry, "Old English Formulaic Themes and Type-Scenes," *Neophilologus*, 52 (1968), 53, of a theme as "a recurring concatenation of details and ideas, not restricted to a specific event, verbatim repetition, or certain formulas, which forms an underlying structure for an act or description." A revised formulation of the Beasts of Battle might resolve this inconsistency but lies outside the scope of this paper.

- 2 David Crowne, "The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 61 (1960), 368.
- 3 See Alain Renoir, "Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival: a Possible Instance in the 'Nibelungenlied,'" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 65 (1964), 70–75, and *A Key to Old Poems: The Oral-Formulaic Approach to the Interpretation of West-Germanic Verse* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1988), esp. 96–100; Donald K. Fry, "The Hero on the Beach in *Finnsburgh*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 67 (1966), 27–31, and "The Heroine on the Beach in *Judith*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 68 (1967), 168–84; Carol Jean Wolf, "Christ as Hero on the Beach in *The Dream of the Rood*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71 (1970), 202–210; Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, "Guthlac on the Beach," *Neophilologus*, 64 (1980), 290–296; James D. Johnson, "A Note on the Substitution of 'Door' for 'Beach' in a Formulaic Theme," *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983) 596–598; and Michael D. Cherniss, "King Harald on the Beach: An Oral-Formulaic theme in Old Norse Prose and Its Implications," *Res Publica Litterarium*, 9 (1986), 89–100. Cf. Tamaz V. Gamkrelidze and Vjačeslav V. Ivanov, *Indoevropskij jazyk i indoevropejcy: Rekonstrukcija i istoriko-tipologičeskij analiz prajazyka i protokul'tury*. (Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo Tblisskogo Universiteta, 1984) 2, 743 and 825–826, on the significance of doors and of water in early Indo-European culture.
- 4 Sarah Lynn Higley, "'Aldor on Ofre,' or The Reluctant Hart: A Study of Liminality in 'Beowulf,'" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 87 (1986), 342–353.
- 5 Higley, 346.
- 6 See *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, introd. and ed. D.S. Lixačev et al., 2nd ed., Biblioteka poëta, Bol'saja serija (Leningrad: Sovetskij pisatel', 1967), 48. This edition is hereafter cited in the text and notes as "Bol. Bib. poëta, 2nd ed." All translations from this work are mine.
- 7 *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. Fr. Klaeber, 3rd ed. with 1st and 2nd supplements (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1950), 11, 459–462. This edition is hereafter cited in the text and notes as "Klaeber."
- 8 Klaeber, ll. 1990–98; Bol. Bib. poëta, 2nd ed., 49–51.
- 9 Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), 161–163.
- 10 Lord, 201–202.
- 11 Boris Gasparov, *Poëtika "Slova o polku Igoreve"*, (Wien: Wiener Slawistischer Almanach Sonderband 12, 1984), 20–26 and passim.

- ¹² Gasparov, 20–22 and notes; Lord, 186–187 and 201–202.
- ¹³ Gasparov, 129–138, esp. 129–131.
- ¹⁴ Gasparov, 88–105.
- ¹⁵ Crowne, 368–369.
- ¹⁶ See Gasparov, 130.
- ¹⁷ Two other possible translations: (1) "... saw all of his troops hidden from him by darkness." (2) "... saw all of his troops hidden from it [the sun] by darkness." On the sun as a source of darkness in the *Slovo*, see A.N. Robinson, "Solnečnaja simbolika v *Slove o polku Igoreve*," in *Slovo o polku Igoreve: Pamjatniki literatury i iskusstva XI–XVII vekov*, ed. O.V. Deržavina (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 41–42 and 48–49; and D.S. Lichačev, *Slovo o polku Igoreve i kul'tura ego vremeni*, 2nd. ed., expanded (Leningrad: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1985), 262–263.
- ¹⁸ See the preceding note.
- ¹⁹ For an alternate word-division and translation of this clause, see Roman Jakobson, "La Geste du Prince Igor," in *Slavic Epic Studies* (hereafter *SES*), vol. 4 of his *Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 135 and 167.
- ²⁰ The reading of this clause is highly conjectural. For other suggestions, see Gasparov, 120; and Jakobson, "La Geste," 135, 151, and 169.
- ²¹ Crowne, 372.
- ²² Donald K. Fry, "Themes and Type-Scenes in *Elene* 1–113," *Speculum*, 44 (1969), 41. Bodvarsdottir, 202–204, points to ll. 103b–107 of the Old English *Battle of Maldon* as an apparent exception to this pattern. It is worth noting that the mention of an eagle and a raven in these lines is immediately preceded by a reference to doomed men and that the hero Beorhtnoth, like Igor, has just made a decision that will result in his army's defeat.
- ²³ Gasparov, 96. See also the preceding note.
- ²⁴ Edition cited reads "on", which it indicates (47, n. 50) is a correction for "n". The modern Russian translation in the same edition (59) reads "ono", which agrees grammatically with "gnězdo."
- ²⁵ See, among others, Bol. Bib. poëta, 2nd ed., 486–487; Robinson, 48; and Gasparov, 89.

- ²⁶ Gasparov, 90–93. See also 145–146 regarding the text and interpretation of this passage.
- ²⁷ For a summary of the controversy, see John Fennell and Antony Stokes, *Early Russian Literature* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), 191–206.
- ²⁸ "Spisok GBL, sobr. Undol'skogo No. 632," published by R.P. Dmitrieva in *Slovo o polku Igoreve i pamjatniki kulikovskogo cikla: K voprosu o vremeni napisanija "Slova,"* ed. D.S. Lichačev and L.Ā. Dmitriev (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 537; this published version hereafter cited in text as "Dmitrieva: Undol'skij." I have omitted throughout brackets and italics indicating expansion of titles and restoration of damaged text. All translations from this work are mine
- ²⁹ The grammatical place of the words "bēdy ix pasoša" in this context is unclear; the incoherence of the passage may well be the result of a textual corruption. On this point and on the variations of this text in the various redactions of the *Zadonščina* and in the *Slovo*, see O.V. Tvorogov, "Slovo o polku Igoreve i Zadonščina," in *Slovo o polku Igoreve i pamjatniki*, 323–324. See also n. 20 above.
- ³⁰ Crowne, 368.
- ³¹ A corresponding passage in the *Slovo* (Bol. Bib. poēta, 2nd ed., 47) contains no reference to a beach.
- ³² See the other variants to the text of the *Zadonščina* published by R.P. Dmitrieva, *Slovo o polku Igoreve i pamjatniki*, 544, 547, and 545. On the difficulty of establishing the priority of these alternate readings, see R.P. Dmitrieva, "Vzaimootnošenie zapiskov *Zadonščiny* i tekst *Slova o polku Igoreve*," *Slovo o polku Igoreve i pamjatniki*, 204. On the related significance of eagles and falcons in the *Slovo*, see Gasparov, 180 and 191.
- ³³ Crowne, 370.
- ³⁴ Fry, "The Heroine on the Beach in Judith," 174–76.
- ³⁵ The word "leoma" ("light") is used to form compounds that denote swords in Klaeber, ll. 1143 and 1523; l. 2492 contains a reference to a bright sword, (léohtan sweorde").
- ³⁶ Crowne, 368.
- ³⁷ On early literary relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the East Slavs, see M.P. Alekseev, "Anglo-saksonskaja parallel' k poučeniju Vladimira Monomaxa," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 2 (1935) 39–80; for further references, see M.P. Alekseev, *Russko-anglijskie literaturnye svjazi (XVIII*

vek – *pervaja polovina XIX veka*), Literaturnoe Nasledstvo 91 (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 89–90, n. 1.

- 38 Neckel, 26–30; Cherniss, *passim*. Bodvarsdottir, esp. 12–16, 137–143 and 238–240, discusses and elaborates upon Neckel's remarks. George John Perejda, "*Beowulf* and *Slovo o polku Igoreve*: A Study of Parallels, and Relations in Structure, Themes and Imagery," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Detroit, 1976, argues that similarities between *Beowulf* and the *Slovo* "... can be explained in part by a reference to a common Scandinavian heritage and tradition ..." (5). While Perejda makes some interesting comparisons between the two works, I find his arguments in support of this general thesis and, in particular, his efforts to identify the bard Boyan of the *Slovo* with Harald Hardraada Sigurdson of Norway (44–50 and 242), unconvincing. For other discussions, with further references, of possible connections between Scandinavian literary or oral traditions and the *Slovo*, see Margaret Schlauch, "Scandinavian Influence on the *Slovo*?" in *Russian Epic Studies*, Memoirs of the American Folklore Society 42 (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1949), 99–124; George Krugovoy, "A Norman Legal Formula in Russian Chronicles and *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 11 (1969), 497–514; and D.M. Šarypkin, "Bojan v Slove o polku Igoreve i poezija skal'dov," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 31 (1976), 14–22.
- 39 Alain Renoir, "The Hero on the Beach: Germanic Theme and Indo-European Origin," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 90 (1989), 111–16. See also n. 3 above.
- 40 Clarence A. Manning, "Classical Influence in the *Slovo*," in *Russian Epic Studies*, Memoirs of the American Folklore Society 42 (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1949), 87–97. Other studies that discuss possible connections between the *Slovo* and the literatures of Byzantium and Greek antiquity include I.P. Eremin, "*Zanrovaja priroda Slova o polku Igoreve*" (1949), rpt. in his *Literatura drevnej Rusi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 144–163; Justina Besharov, *Imagery of the Igor' Tale in the Light of Byzantino-Slavic Poetic Theory* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1956); Jakobson, "La Geste," 238–252 and "The Puzzles of the Igor Tale on the 150th Anniversary of its First Edition," in *SES*, 380–410, esp. 404–08.
- 41 Robert Mann, *Lances Sing: A Study of the Igor Tale* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1990), 120–22.
- 42 Manning, 89; English text of *The Iliad* cited here is from *The Iliad of Homer*, transl. and introd. by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961) 59.
- 43 Mann, 122; for the full texts of the songs, see P.V. Kireevskij, *Pesni, sobrannye P.V. Kireevskim: Novaja serija* 2: 2 (Moscow: Obščestvo Ljubitelej Rossijskoj Slovesnosti pri Moskovskom Universitete, n.d.), 32 (no. 1292); and A.M. Astaxova, *Byliny severa*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1951), 528–530.

⁴⁴ Compare Kireevskij, 24 (no. 1263) and 32 (no. 1292).

⁴⁵ For a comparison of the *Slovo* and *Beowulf* that deals, to some extent, with the metaphorical nature of the *Slovo* vs. the nonmetaphorical nature of *Beowulf*, see Adele Marie Barker, "Sea and Steppe Imagery in Old English and Old Russian Epic," Ph.D. dissertation, New York Univ., 1976. For another comparison of the two works, see Perejda.