IN DEFENCE OF THE TEXTUAL INTEGRITY OF THE OLD ENGLISH *RESIGNATION*

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ABSTRACT

Bliss & Frantzen's (1976) paper against the previously assumed textual integrity of *Resignation* has been a watershed in research upon the poem. Nearly all subsequent studies and editions have followed their theory, the sole dissenting view being expressed by Klinck (1987, 1992). The present paper offers fresh evidence for the textual unity of the poem. First examined are codicological issues, whether the state of the manuscript suggests that a folio might be missing. Next analysed are the spellings of *Resignation* and its phonology, here the paper discusses peculiarities which both differentiate *Resignation* from its manuscript context and connect the two hypothetical parts of the text. Then the paper looks at the assumed cut-off point at l.69 to see if it may provide any evidence for textual discontinuity. Finally the whole *Resignation*, seen as a coherent poem, is placed in the history of Old English literature, with special attention being paid to the traditions of devotional texts and the Old English elegies.

Keywords: *Resignation*, *Exeter Book*, Old English language and literature, textual studies, manuscript studies

1. Introduction

Resignation is preserved on fols. 117v–119v of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501 (the *Exeter Book*), which dates back to the 2nd half of the 10th c. (cf. Ker 1957: 153).[1] Since its first edition by Thorpe (1842), textual study of *Resignation* has inspired much research, culminating with the widely influential paper of Bliss &

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[1] I would like to express my gratitude to both anonymous reviewers for their insightful remarks, which helped me to improve the paper. All remaining inaccuracies remain solely my responsibility.

Frantzen (1976). There *Resignation* was for the first time argued to consist of fragments of two unrelated poems, with l. 69 – the last one on fol. 118v – forming the boundary between them. This theory was widely adopted by editors, such as Muir (1994) or Malmberg (1979), the latter also providing the first single-text edition of *Resignation*, and still the only one, according to my knowledge. A major dissenting view appears to have been expressed solely by Klinck in her paper (1987) and, especially, her 1992 edition of the Old English elegies.

The purpose of the present article is to re-examine *Resignation* for all possible evidence for its textual integrity. Klinck's research shall not be repeated here but added to, also through a different methodological approach. However, my disagreement with Bliss and Frantzen's conclusions could not prevent me from deep admiration of their work. Especially laudable is the inderdisciplinarity of their approach, achieved thanks to their broad knowledge and scholarly experience, together with the ingenuity of their ideas and their indubitable courage in advancing it. Throughout my own few years' research of *Resignation* I have tried to follow in their footsteps.

2. Codicological evidence

The text of *Resignation* is split between two gatherings, occupying the last two folios in gathering XV and the first of gathering XVI. Bliss and Frantzen argue for the loss of a folio between these gatherings, pointing to their irregular arrangement. As described by Förster (1933: 59), gathering XV (fols. 112–118) begins in a single sheet, which lacks a fold and hence is pasted to the fold of fol. 118, also a singleton. Gathering XVI (fols. 119–125) begins in two single sheets with folds pointing towards the right, and contains another singleton (fol. 124), whose fold appears after fol. 121 (see Fig. 1).
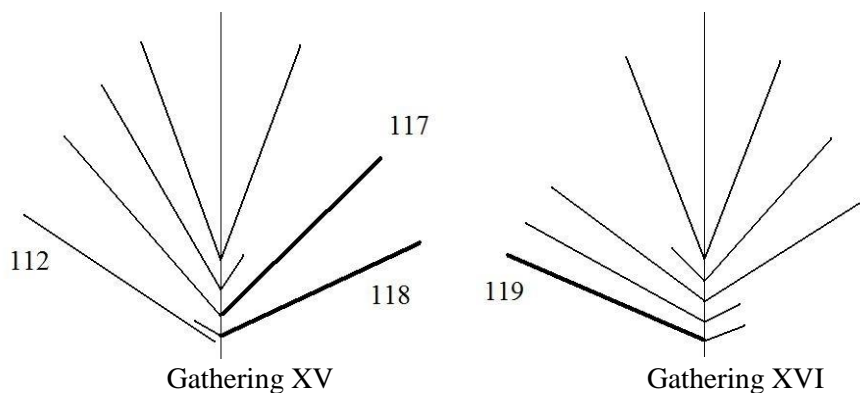

Figure 1. Diagrams of gatherings XV and XVI, based on Pickwoad (2006); the three *Resignation* folios (117–119) are marked with a thicker line.

As Bliss & Frantzen (1976: 387) observe, such an arrangement is both irregular and vulnerable, and hence would not have been intended originally. Hence they argue that fol. 112 is only the remaining half of a bifolium whose other half, now lost, used to occupy the place between the present fols. 118 and 119. This solution assumes for gathering XV the regular arrangement of singletons enclosed in protecting bifolia, analogous to that of gatherings II and VI.

However, the irregularity of gathering XV can be explained otherwise. The final of the 17 gatherings comprising the *Exeter Book* show progressing asymmetry due to damage and also to the high cost of vellum. Gathering XVII consists of five separate half-sheets pasted together, four of which originally formed two bifolia (after Förster 1933: 59; for a description of gathering XVI see above). Therefore other disruption patterns in this part of the manuscript may prove more plausible. Bliss and Frantzen disagree with an earlier solution, offered by Förster, who sees fol. 112 as the remnant right-hand half of an original bifolium inserted between gatherings XIV and XV. This hypothesis finds twofold support. First, Förster notes that since textual discontinuity confirms the loss of one folio – the last one in gathering XIV – possible is also the loss of yet another folio in the same place, i.e. the initial one of the hypothetical bifolium prefixed to gathering XV.[2] And second, as observed by Coveney (1958), the original plan of the *Exeter Book* was for every gathering to begin in the hair side of the vellum sheet, but 112r is the flesh side. If it had been part of an inserted bifolium, the terminal pages of the gatherings would have comprised only hair sides, because 112v, 113r and 118v are hair, as established by Muir (1989: 288). As has been shown, the condition of the manuscript does not offer positive evidence for any loss.

3. Linguistic evidence

The phonology and spelling of *Resignation* result from the combination of the *Exeter Book* scribe's native competence in Old English, influenced by his training, and the language of the poem's original composition. The number of presumable intermediate copies cannot be estimated, but these would also have transformed the text.

The spelling of *Resignation* conforms to most tendencies present in the manuscript. Nonetheless, two spelling features differentiate *Resignation* from its MS context. First, in the whole *Exeter Book* the only instance of the non-Late West Saxon form *hio* 'they' occurs at *Resignation* l. 48, while elsewhere the scribe writes *hi*/*hy* (also four times in *Resignation*: ll. 54, 55, and twice at l. 57).[3] And second,

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[2]   No study seems to report any dating examination of the glue affixing fol. 112 to gathering XV.

[3]   For evidence that *Resignation* l. 48 *hio* represents the plural pronoun instead of the feminine

Resignation ll. 24 and 70 provide two instances of *wylle* 'want' (pres. subj. sing.), whilst practically everywhere else in the MS the stem vowel character is <i> (twice so in *Resignation*: ll. 12, 104).[4] As observed by Klinck (1992: 23), this characteristic not only differentiates the text from its MS context, but also unifies Bliss and Frantzen's *Resignation A* (i.e. ll. 1–69) with *Resignation B* (ll. 70–118). Both the 3rd p. pl. pronoun and the verb discussed above are high frequency words, which additionally strengthens the spelling evidence they provide.

Another spelling peculiarity of *Resignation* occurs in the two occurrences of *sprecan* 'speak' (also a relatively frequent word) at ll. 83b *Forþon ic þas word spræce* 'Therefore I speak these words', and 97b *ond ymb siþ spræce* 'and (I) speak about (my) journey'. As a strong verb, *sprecan* forms its preterite through ablaut: *ic sprece* 'I speak' vs. *ic spræc* 'I spoke', a distinction preserved elsewhere in the *Exeter Book*. For both occurrences of <spræce> the context indicates unambiguously that the intended meaning is the present verb *(ic) sprece* 'I speak' and not the noun *spræce* 'speech'. The spelling idiosyncrasy, though, most probably constitutes an example of the typically Northumbrian incorporation of the preterite vowel into the present form, described by Campbell (1959: §§ 327, 743).

Klinck (1992: 18) suggested that yet another reflex of Northumbrian influence on *Resignation* may be found in the hypothetical loss of the final [n] in l. 21 *cume* (for *cuman* 'come', inf.) and l. 39 *stonde* (for *stonden* 'stand', pres. subj. pl.). If this loss was the result of a regularity in the phonological system of the scribe or his exemplar, we may expect to find other reflexes of this hypothetical regularity. As regards the stability of the final [n] in the whole *Exeter Book*, Muir (1994: 35) states that he abstains from emendation in all cases of (hypothetical) loss of a final nasal and provides two relevant examples, only one of them well-motivated, *ChristA* l. 206 *tirfruma*[*n*] '(the) Author of glory, God' (acc. sing.). Nine more examples are offered by Malone (1930: 113–114), four of which are compelling: *Seafarer* l. 75 *fremman* for *fremme* 'perform' (pres. subj. sing.), *OrW* l. 42 *halge* for *halgan* 'holy' (masc. acc. sing.), *Wanderer* l. 102 *hruse* for *hrusan* 'ground' (acc. sing.), *Rid 6* l. 10 *betan* for *bete* 'make better' (1st p. sing. pres. ind.). The available data is still too scant to prove an obligatory process of final [n] loss, or to provide a compelling argument for a Northumbrian influence upon the endings.

Nonetheless, the instability of final nasals could not be excluded if the scribe wrote <-n> and <-m> interchangeably, because such a tendency would indicate a loss of specification for the place of articulation. This loss constitutes part of

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singular see below. The scribe also uses the form *hie* for 'they' in *Christ* ll. 146 and 455. The text of *Resignation* follows Klinck (1992), while all other *Exeter Book* poems are quoted after Muir (1994).

[4]　　The third and last instance of *wylle* in the *Exeter Book* is *Guthlac* l. 593.

the levelling of endings, a weakening process which began to affect final, unstressed syllables of Late Old English and continued throughout the Middle English period. In unstressed syllables the vowel was reduced, while the final nasal lost its place specification and was deleted at a later stage, cf. Mitchell (1985: §§ 14–5), Quirk & Wrenn (1955: § 13). Hogg (1992: § 7.102) notices only the change of the final [m] > [n] in adjectives in the dative, whence he infers that at work is only the analogical spreading of the weak inflection -*an*, not phonological levelling. However, the *Exeter Book* data contradict this interpretation. Even though *Riddle 60* l. 15 contains an example concurrent with Hogg's analysis in *twan* for *twam* 'two' (dat.) in *for unc anum twan ærendspræce* 'one message for the two of us', the MS provides two other instances for which Hogg does not account: *freodon* instead of *freodom* 'freedom' in *The Lord's Prayer I* l. 10a *ac þu us freodon gief* 'but give us freedom', and *cyþam* for *cyþan* 'make known' in *Judgement Day I* l. 103b *Soþ þæt wile cyþam* 'Whoever may want to make known the truth'. Since the unetymological nasals occur word-finally, the spellings may result from levelling processes.

The beginning of the levelling of inflectional endings in the scribe's phonological system is further evidenced by his use of unetymological vowel letters in the unstressed, final syllables, e.g. *Christ* l. 56 *firina* for *firena* 'sin' (gen.pl.). Muir (1994: 32–35) states that similar instances occur throughout the MS, albeit sparsely, for the scribe normalised his spelling to a great extent. Another argument for an active weakening process is the fact (observed by Klinck 1992: 14) that the majority of instances of *swa þeah* 'nevertheless' in the *Exeter Book*, as also all three in *Resignation* (ll. 29, 49, and 52), have been recorded in the form *seþeah*, preserved in no other MS.[5] Since this adverb/conjunction always bears the stress on the second syllable, the form *seþeah* documents the reduction of the first, unstressed syllable.

The discussion of the weakening processes in the MS sheds some light on the relevant editorial problems of *Resignation*. As noted above, Klinck (1992: 191) argues for reading *Resignation* l. 39 *stonde* as a levelled form of *stonden* 'stand' (pres. subj. pl.): *Gesette minne hyht on þec, / forhte foreþoncas, þæt hio fæstlice / stonde gestaðelad* (ll. 37b–39a) 'Set my expectation upon You, (my) fearful forethoughts, so that they would stand firmly established'. The subject of *stonde*, i.e. l. 38 *hio*, cannot be the fem. sing. pronoun 'she' because the only sing. noun it might refer to would be l. 37 *hyht* 'expectation', which is always masc., and here modified by the unambiguously masc. acc. sing. *minne* 'my', cf. Klinck (1992: 191) and Bosworth & Toller (1898).[6] Therefore l. 38 *hio* can only be a 3rd p. pl. pronoun

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5   *Seþeah* occurs 13 times in the whole MS, while the unreduced and otherwise frequent *swa þeah* – 8 times.
6   Bosworth & Toller (1898) place in square brackets a reference to *PPs 77* v. 53, where *on*

which refers to l. 38 *forhte foreþoncas* 'fearful forethoughts', and must take a plural verb. Since the context unambiguously refers to the future time, the verb *stondan* 'to stand' must be pres. pl., either the ind. *stondað* or the subj. *stonden* – both solutions assume the omission of a final letter, either <ð>/<þ> or <n>. As there was no process of final [θ] deletion, while a weakening in the final nasals seems plausible according to the discussion above, the loss of <-n> is decidedly more probable than that of <-ð>/<-þ>. Moreover, Mitchell (1985: § 2829) reports the subjunctive to be preferred over the indicative in clauses expressing a hypothetical result, and such is the case in the passage under consideration. Klinck (1992: 18, 191) suggests that the lack of a final -*n* may also result from Northumbrian influence, a hypothesis additionally strengthened by the two occurrences of *spræce* for *sprece* 'speak' (1st p. sing. pres. ind.) in *Resignation* ll. 83 and 97, discussed above.

However, no persuasive motivation may be found for the other hypothetical omission of -*n* suggested by Klinck (1992: 18, 189–190), *Resignation* l. 21 *cume* for *cuman* 'to come'. Klinck reads *Ic þa bote gemon,* / *cyninga wuldor, cuman to, gif ic mot* (ll. 20–1) 'I bear in mind the amendment, / oh Glory of kings (i.e. God), if I may come to it'. This interpretation assumes not only a levelled ending in *cuman* <cume>, which in itself would be possible phonologically. It also assumes that the speaker supposedly wants to base his knowledge of the amendment in the afterlife upon the condition that he could reach this afterlife, which seems unlikely. Indeed, the unemended MS *cume* can plausibly be read as subjunctive: *Ic þa bote gemon, … cume to, gif ic mot* 'I bear in mind the amendment, … I should come to it if I am able'.[7]

To conclude, *Resignation* has been shown to contain evidence of non-Late West Saxon influence in *hio* 'they' (nom.) at l. 48 (Bliss and Frantzen's *Resignation A*). The influence may be further specified as Northumbrian due to the two instances of *æ* for *e* in *spræce* 'speak' (1st p. sing. pres. ind.) at ll. 83 and 97, both in *Resignation B*. Another spelling characteristic of *Resignation* consists in the two instances of *wylle* 'want' (pres. subj. sing.) spelled with <y> at ll. 24 (*Resignation A*) and 70 (*Resignation B*), which additionally differentiates the poem from its MS context. Thus dialectal and spelling features establish a linguistic connection be-

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hihte 'in [the] hope' directly precedes *holdre* 'noble' (fem. dat. sing.). If *holdre* modified *hihte* 'hope' (dat. sing.) then *hihte* need also be fem. Yet this interpretation is rendered implausible by another occurrence of *hiht* at v. 9 of the same psalm, this time modified by the unambiguously masc. acc. *gleawne* 'wise'. Both Bosworth & Toller (1898) and Toller (1921) provide numerous other examples of *hyht/hiht* in prose and verse, thus indicating that the word was in common use, but none rouses doubt as to the noun's masc. gender. Hence, double gender specification is implausible in this case, though it characterised some other Old English nouns, cf. Mitchell (1985: § 62 ff).

7   Another possibility would be to read *cume* as 1st p. pres. sing. ind. 'I bear in mind the amendment, … I (will) come to it when I am able'.

tween *Resignation A* and *Resignation B*, which constitutes one of the factors confirming the textual unity of *Resignation*.

4. The cut-off point at l. 69

As has been said, Bliss and Frantzen would divide *Resignation* at the end of l. 69. The editorial tradition prior to their paper presented ll. 67b–69 as follows:

> Þe sie ealles þonc,
> meorda ond miltsa   þara þu me sealdest.
> No ðæs earninga   ænige wæron mid. (67b–69)

> [Thank You for all the gifts and favours which You have given me. For these there was no merit (in me).]

Bliss & Frantzen (1976: 389–390), however, object to such an arrangement on lexical and metrical grounds. They argue that l. 69 *mid* could not be used adverbially, as is assumed by traditional readings and in the translation above, because then it would have to be interpreted as 'with him, with it, with them, etc.', which they find unfit for the context. Hence, Bliss and Frantzen would place *mid* at the beginning of a new, incomplete line and posit an immediately following large gap in the text. However, Bosworth & Toller (1898) and Toller (1921) quote many instances of adverbial *mid*, some of which parallel *Resignation* l. 69b, e.g. *Orosius* p. 116 ll. 26–27 in Sweet's (1883) edition: *he his heres þriddan dæl gehydde, ond him self mid wæs* 'he hid the third part of his army, and himself was with (them)'. Furthermore, since the l. 69 *no … earninga* 'no … merits' (nom.) can only belong to the speaker – the other possibility, God, is ruled out because He has all merits – the adverbial *mid* 'therewith' does fit the context, as in Thorpe's (1842) word for word translation 'for this not merits any were in me'.

Bliss & Frantzen (1976: 390) offer also a metrical objection against the adverbial *mid* at the end of l. 69b. The only regular scansion of the half-line requires that *wæron* 'were' (pl.) be unaccented, which, however, violates Kuhn's law of sentence particles. The law states that unstressed elements such as finite verbs may be placed only before the second stress of the clause (a condition which is not fulfilled by the present context), otherwise they receive stress. Yet the whole poem contains numerous metrical irregularities; what is more, Mitchell (1985: § 3947) refutes the exceptionless applicability of Kuhn's law on syntactical grounds. Finally, Klinck (1992: 29) finds persuasive formulaic parallels between *Resignation A* and *Resignation B*, such as the *X ealles þonc* '[to someone] thanks for all' type of verse, occurring at l. 67 (*Resignation A*) and l. 86 (*Resignation B*).

Thus, *Resignation* l. 69 *mid* has been shown to fit both lexically and metrically without the need to posit any textual discontinuity at this point.

5. Literary analysis of *Resignation* as a coherent text

The foregoing discussion has provided codicological and linguistic evidence for the integrity of *Resignation*. What remains to be shown is that, taken as a coherent text, the poem can be analysed without forcing any unnatural interpretation upon it. The discussion concentrates on two textual traditions which have been most often referred to in critical analyses of the poem: the so-called Old English elegies and the domain of prayer and devotion. A similarly directed attempt is to be found in Klinck's 1987 paper '*Resignation*: exile's lament or penitent's prayer?', yet her methodology differs from that adopted in the following discussion. Klinck tries to deduce the poem's genre from a critical analysis of literary motifs present in *Resignation* and shared with other Old English elegies. Moreover, the critic largely disregards the Anglo-Saxon tradition of prayer, despite the adopted title. The following analysis, by contrast, concentrates rather on the structure of *Resignation*.

   At this point a brief summary of the content of *Resignation* may prove helpful. The poem begins with an elaborate invocation to God, combined with pleas for His help, the gift of understanding, and steadfastness on the way to life eternal. Here, as also throughout the whole text, the speaker repeatedly admits his sinfulness and asks for remission. At ll. 41ff the speaker declares that his death is near and so prays that afterwards he may be taken to heaven by angels rather than to hell by devils. Afterwards, starting at l. 70 (the beginning of *Resignation B*), the general note changes from contrition to joyful hope and trust in God. This change, however, is short-lived, for at ll. 77ff the speaker returns to the topic of his sinfulness, which he follows next (from about l. 83b on) with the description of his sufferings, such as exile, poverty and dejection. The poem ends (ll. 117–118) with a maxim-like statement that one ought to bear one's fate well if it cannot be altered.

5.1. Prayers

Critics such as Noronha (1971) or Bliss & Frantzen (1976) classify *Resignation*, especially its first part, among prayers. The prayer mode may be said to falter at ll. 70–76, where the speaker declares his hope and steadfastness right after yet another assertion of his unworthiness and sinfulness. The change of tone formed one of the major arguments for Bliss and Frantzen to regard ll. 70–118 as part of a separate text. This latter part of *Resignation* has major 'elegiac' features, discussed below. Here it ought to be stressed that the Old English elegies were by no means purely 'secular' works; very few medieval texts could be so described. On the contrary, the Old English elegies, most specifically *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, meditate on the Christian attitude to hardships.

   The multitude and diversity of devotional texts enriched Anglo-Saxon Christianity. The monks most of all had continual contact with the Bible – most

notably the Book of Psalms – and the canonical prayers, which together formed the core of their beliefs and guided all religious thought. These texts were repeatedly translated, whole or in parts, into the vernacular and paraphrased into Latin and vernacular verse. The Bible and the liturgy also inspired the composition of many devotional texts in both languages, among them private prayers and various meditations, which could incorporate apparently secular topics into a main structure that was more overtly religious. At times, specimens of the latter group attain high artistic value, and so they constitute an apt background for the discussion of *Resignation*.

First and foremost it ought to be emphasised that the whole of Old English literature was copied by monks, and at least part of the extant poetry was also most probably composed by monks, because of its highly literate character, which would be unattainable without sound education. At that time all English monasteries adhered to the Rule of St. Benedict, extant are its numerous Anglo-Saxon copies, some of them glossed in Old English. Æthelwold, one of the chief proponents of the Benedictine revival in the latter half of the 10th c., is credited with translating the Rule into Old English. Chapters VIII–XIX of the Rule describe the precise shape in which monks were to perform the Divine Office. Both the Latin and the Old English version of the Rule agree that, except for Nocturns (the only night-time office, said between midnight and daybreak) and festal days, every canonical hour had to begin with Ps 70 [69]: 2 *Deus, in adiutorium meum intende; / Domine, ad adiuvandum me festina* 'God, come forward to my rescue; Lord, hasten to help me'. Such is the beginning of prayers said seven times daily by monks, and *Resignation* commences with strikingly similar words: *Age mec se ælmihta god! / Helpe min se halga dryhten!* 'Let the almighty God hold me in His keeping! Let the holy Lord help me!'.[8] Admittedly, this is no direct translation of the Psalm versicle. Yet the fact that a double plea for God's help begins a text, calling God first as *god* 'God' (cf. *Deus* in the Latin) and then as *dryhten* 'Lord' (cf. *Domine*), points to a clear and most probably intentional connection between *Resignation* and the Divine Office.

Secondly, the canonical prayers constituted the core of Christian devotion. The Lord's Prayer and the Creeds played a major role in Anglo-Saxon Christianity, as they have done so to this day. Bede, Ælfric and Wulfstan repeatedly exhorted priests to teach these texts to the laity and explain them often, as expositions of the fundamental tenets of faith with the authority of God the Son and His Apostles.

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8   The first word of *Resignation*, *Age*, poses difficulties as to its meaning. Literally *Age mec* means something like 'let … own me, let … possess me', clearly not the sense intended in the present context. A satisfactory reading for *Resignation* l. 1 has been offered in Cameron, Amos & Healey (2003), under *āgan*, I.A.9.a, 'of a protector or patron: to hold (someone) in one's keeping'. This reading additionally corroborates the textual link with the Divine Office argued for in the present paper.

They also translated the prayers into vernacular for the benefit of the laity and un-educated clergy; extant translations were composed for instance by Ælfric and Wulfstan. The Lord's Prayer and the Creed, as well as other liturgical texts, were also paraphrased in Old English verse.[9]

Echoes of two canonical prayers may be discerned in the text of *Resignation*: the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Thematic parallels with the *Pater noster* occur at ll. 19–20a *Forgif me to lisse, lifgende god, / bitre bealodæde* 'mercifully forgive me, living God, (my) bitter and wicked deeds', expressing a plea similar to *Et dimitte nobis debita nostra* 'And forgive us our trespasses'. Similarly, ll. 26b–28 *Feorma mec, hwæþre, / meotod, for þinre miltse, þeah þe ic ma fremede / grimra gylta þonne me god lyfde* 'Yet receive (or: sustain) me, Measurer, for Your mercy, even though I have committed more crimes than God allowed me to' are reminis-cent of *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie: Et dimitte nobis debita nostra* 'Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive our trespasses'.

Furthermore, the opening words of *Resignation* resemble not only parts of the Divine Office, but also of the Apostles' Creed, which begins with *Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae* 'I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth'. In the characteristics attributed to God this statement is reminiscent of the two initial lines of *Resignation*: *Age mec se ælmihta god! / Helpe min se halga dryhten! Þu gesceope heofon ond eorþan* 'Let the almighty God hold me in His keeping! Let the holy Lord help me! You have created heaven and earth'. Lexical similarity becomes more clearly visible once the *Resignation* lines are compared to Ælfric's translation of the Apostles' Creed: *Ic gelyfe on God, Fæder Ælmihtigne, Scyppend heofonan and eorðan*, which chooses the same words as the *Resignation* poet (the quotation from Ælfric follows Thorpe 1846, 596). In both *Resignation* and the *Creed* God is declared *ælmihtig* 'almighty' (though, again, *Resignation* has *ælmihta god* 'almighty God' which the *Creed* expands to *God, Fæder Ælmihtig* 'God, almighty Father'), He has created (*gesceope*, *Resignation*) or is the Creator (*Scyppend* – a noun with the same stem as *gesceppan* 'to create', *Creed*) heaven and earth (*heofon ond eorðan*, both texts).

Let us now turn to the poetic paraphrases of the canonical prayers. Bliss and Frantzen would classify *Resignation A* with the Old English verse paraphrases of liturgical prayers, such as the *Lord's Prayer I*, *II* and *III*, *Gloria I* and *II* or the metrical Psalms. These cannot bear any structural similarity to *Resignation* since the latter does not paraphrase any specific liturgical prayer (or prayers). Admit-tedly, some similarity may be found in vocabulary, especially the great variety of

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[9]   *LPr I* is printed in Muir (1994); the *Paris Psalter* in Krapp (1932); and all the others in Dobbie (1942). Except for the Psalms, the texts referred to in the present note have been newly edited in Keefer (2010), but all quotations in the present paper follow the older editions, because Keefer renumerates lines so as to count in Latin prose, which was not the practice of standard editions and hinders any clear reference.

often complex and metaphorical expressions for God.[10] The stock of the vernacular *nomina sacra* had resulted from the centuries-long development of the Anglo-Saxon Christian culture, which had infused the Germanic culture with the Christianity of Rome and its learning, at the same time striving to express it all in the native language and its literary tradition. A few of the most common titles which also occur in *Resignation*, for instance *god* 'God', *dryhten* 'Lord', *meotud* 'Measurer' or *frea* 'Lord', appear throughout the corpus of Old English verse. Certain other, more complex names are used in more than one poem, e.g. *Resignation* l. 19 and *LPr II* l. 101 *lifgende god* 'living God', *Resignation* l. 63 and *Glor I* ll. 17, 22 *ece god* 'eternal God', *Resignation* ll. 41, 62 and *LPr III* l. 1 *fæder moncynnes* 'Father of mankind'. *Resignation* l. 1 *ælmihta god* 'almighty God' constitutes a variant of the commonly used title *ælmihtig god*.

Of all extant Old English verse paraphrases of liturgical prayers the *Kentish Psalm 50* shares with *Resignation* the most epithets for God, though still few in number. It contains not only the generally frequent *ælmehtig god* (ll. 33, 85), *mæhtig dryhten* 'mighty Lord' (l. 62, cf. *Resignation* l. 61 *mihtig dryhten* 'mighty Lord'), *fæder mancynnes* 'Father of mankind' (l. 110, *Resignation* ll. 41, 62) or *god lifigende* 'living God' (ll. 112, 134, cf. *Resignation* l. 19 *lifgende god*); but also the rarer *liohtes hiorde* 'Shepherd of light' (l. 101, cf. *Resignation* l. 8 *leohtes hyrde* 'Shepherd of light'). Moreover, from among the Old English liturgical verse only *KtPs 50* and *A Prayer* surpass *Resignation* in the diversity and ingenuousness of *nomina sacra*.[11] The large number of invocations of God's name might have led Klinck (1992: 56) to criticise the first part of *Resignation* for its presumable repetitiveness. However, this may have resulted from the critic's rather strict elegiac classification of *Resignation*. While constant repetition of prayerful invocation of God's name may constitute a fault in an elegy, it need not be one in a religious poem which addresses God.

The great profusion of various *nomina sacra* in *A Prayer* forms elaborate rhetorical patterns, which are generally absent from *Resignation*, cf. Keefer (1998: 30–43). Nevertheless, the two poems resemble each other to a certain degree, as in both of them confessional elements constitute major topics. *A Prayer* begins with three similarly constructed verse paragraphs, which first invoke God and then ask for mercy and divine grace: l. 2 *geara me* 'have mercy upon me', ll. 9–10 *gemiltsa þyn mod me to gode*, / *sile þyne are þinum earminge* 'make mild Your heart for my benefit, give Your grace to Your miser', ll. 22–24 *getiþa me … ece are* 'grant me eternal grace'.[12] Other typically confessional motifs present both in *Resignation*

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[10]   For a comprehensive study of *nomina sacra* in *Resignation A* cf. Gretsch (2008: 105–9).

[11]   The text of *A Prayer* follows Keefer (2010).

[12]   Keefer (2010: 226) interprets l. 2 *geara* as imp. sing. of *gearwian* 'make ready', but the regular imp. sing. form of this verb is *gearwa*. On the other hand, *geara* constitutes the regular imp. sing. of *gearian* 'to honour; to have mercy'. The latter verb fits the context better than

and in *A Prayer* are repeated acknowledgements of the speaker's sinfulness, plea for help in doing God's will (*Pr* ll. 71–2 *gefylste me … þæt ic þinne willan gewyrcean mæge* 'help me so that I may do Your will') and for eternal joy in heaven.

The prayerful passages of *Resignation* display also other, more pronounced confessional features, clearly visible when the poem is compared to the *Confiteor*. The most conspicuous textual link between the two consists in the fact that both texts enumerate 'thoughts, words and works'. This parallel remains valid even though the list plays different roles in the two texts: while in the *Confiteor* a penitent confesses: *peccavi nimis cogitatione, verbo et opere* 'I have greatly sinned in my thoughts, words and works', the *Resignation* speaker offers these to God:

> Ic þe, mære god,
> mine sawle bebeode   ond mines sylfes lic,
> ond min word ond min weorc,   witig dryhten,
> ond eal min leoþo,   leohtes hyrde,
> ond þa manigfealdan   mine geþohtas. (5b–9)

> [I offer to You, great God, my soul and my own body, and my words and my works, wise Lord, and all my limbs, Shepherd of light, and my manifold thoughts.]

The second major confessional characteristic of *Resignation* is that the speaker repeatedly admits his sinfulness and appeals to God's mercy – a motif which additionally connects the poem's two parts posited in Bliss and Frantzen. Thus, the following instances occur in *Resignation A*: ll. 16–18 *þeah þe ic scyppendum … waccor hyrde ... þonne min ræd wære* 'although I have been more weakly hearkening to the Creator than I should have', ll. 26b–28 (above), ll. 51b–52a *þeah ðe ic mana fela / æfter dogrum dyde* 'even though I have committed many crimes during (my) days', ll. 64b-65a *Min is nu þa / sefa synnum fah* 'now my mind is guilty of sins'. *Resignation B* furnishes more examples: ll. 78b–79a *Gode ic hæbbe / abolgen, brego moncynnes* 'I have angered God, the Ruler of mankind', or ll. 108–110 *Eala, dryhten min … þæt ic eom mode* [*s*]*eoc, bittre abolgen* 'Oh, my Lord, bitterly angered because I am sick at soul (i.e. sinful)'.[13]

Generally speaking, prayer themes dominate *Resignation*; hence it has been compared to various Latin and Old English prayers and hymns. Accordingly, Bestul (1977) places the poem among private confessional prayers found in insu-

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the former, for it allows for the triple plea for grace described above, which is expressed each time by words built on the stem *ar* 'honour; mercy, grace', present in *ge<u>ar</u>ian*, and ll. 10, 22 <u>*are*</u> 'grace' (acc. sing.). This stem is absent from *gearwian* 'make ready', a verb built on the stem *gearu* 'ready'.

[13]   For the latter meaning cf. Bosworth & Toller (1898), *seoc*, adj. II.

lar manuscripts dating back to the 8th–10th c., for several such texts contain thematic similarities to *Resignation*. An especially apt Latin example may be found in prayer 10, entitled *Alma confessio* 'Nourishing confession' (first singled out for comparison with *Resignation* in Stanley 1955: 451), from the *Book of Cerne*, i.e. Cambridge, University Library MS Ll.1.10, a prayerbook dating back to the 1st half of the 9th c.[14] Kuypers (1902: xxiv–xxv) notes that *Alma confessio* is most probably of Irish origin and belongs to a type of confessional prayer which provide an extremely wide catalogue of sins whose purpose was for everyone to feel included together with their specific sins and also to arouse repentance.[15] The prayer begins by calling God 'almighty': *Deus deus meus omnipotens* 'God, my almighty God' – a prayerful element shared by *Resignation* l. 1 *Age mec se ælmihta god* 'Let the almighty God hold me in His keeping'. Then it asks for forgiveness of sins and emphasises their immense number: *Ego te peto remisionem omnium peccatorum … Multiplicata sunt debita mea super me quia peccata mea numerum non habent* 'I ask You for forgiveness of all sins … My sins have been multiplied against me, because my sins are innumerable'. The motifs appear in *Resignation* for instance in ll. 19–20a (above), ll. 25b–26a *Nu þu const on mec / firendæda fela* 'Now You know in me many wicked deeds', or ll. 76b–78a *Huru me frea witeð / sume þara synna þe ic me sylf ne conn / ongietan gleawlice* 'However, the Lord knows in me some sins which I myself cannot perceive clearly', which possibly implies their immense number. Lastly, *Alma confessio* asks God: *doce me quid debeam agere* 'teach me what I ought to do', and a plea to the same result occurs in *Resignation* ll. 10–12:

> Getacna me,   tungla hyrde,
> þær selast sy   sawle minre
> to gemearcenne   meotudes willan. (10–12)

> [Show me, Shepherd of stars, where it would be best for my soul to observe the Measurer's will.]

Since all of the themes mentioned in connection with the Latin prayer are typical for confessions, their presence in *Resignation* points to the poem's confessional character.

Bestul (1977: 21) and Noronha (1971: 30) agree that closer parallels may be found among Old English confessional prayers. One of these provides passages remarkably reminiscent of *Resignation*; it is preserved on fols. 104r–105v of the British Museum MS Cotton Galba A. xiv, which dates back to the 1st half of the 11th c. and contains prayers, recipes and a book of private devotions, mainly in

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[14] For dating of the *Book of Cerne* cf. Kuypers (1902: xi–xiii), and Brown (1996: 162–164).
[15] Text of *Alma confessio* printed after Kuypers (1902: 95–99).

Latin.[16] Banks (1968: 526–529) describes this prayer as a free elaboration of li-
turgical material, opened and closed by liturgical formulae, and regularly em-
ploying alliteration and rhythm. A passage especially closely resembling the be-
ginning of *Resignation* occurs at the beginning of the prayer:[17]

> In naman þ[ære hal]gan þrynesse,
> þæt is fæder, and [sunu and] se halga gast,
> god ælmihtig. Þam ic eo[m and]etta
> ec[ne], ælmihtigne god a wesendne,
> and a wuniendne to widan feore.
> Þam ic bebiode minre sawle gehealdnesse
> and mines lichoman, min word and weorc
> and mine geþohtas, mine heortan and
> minne hyge, min leomu and mine lio-
> ðu. (1–10)

> [In the name of the Holy Trinity, that is the Father and the Son and the Holy
> Spirit, almighty God. To Him I acknowledge an eternal, almighty God,
> always existing, and always everlasting. To Him I offer the custody of my
> soul and of my body, my words and my works, and my thoughts, my heart
> and my mind, my limbs and my joints.]

Apart from the designation of God as *god ælmihtig* 'God almighty', which occurs
here twice, in ll. 3 and 4, the following dedication to Him (ll. 6–10) of the
speaker's soul, body, words, works, thoughts and limbs corresponds almost ex-
actly to ll. 5–9 of *Resignation* (quoted above). The dedication employs nearly the
same vocabulary as in *Resignation*: *ic bebiode* 'I offer' (cf. *Resignation* l. 5–6 *ic
bebeode*), *minre sawle* 'my soul' (gen., *Resignation* l. 6 *mine sawle*, acc. sing.),
mines lichoman 'my body' (gen., *Resignation* l. 6 *mines sylfes lic* 'my own body',
acc.), *min word and weorc* 'my words and works' (acc., *Resignation* l. 7 *min word
ond min weorc* 'my words and my works', acc.), *mine geþohtas* 'my thoughts'
(acc., *Resignation* l. 9 *þa manigfealdan mine geþohtas* 'my manifold thoughts',
acc.), *min leomu and mine lioðu* 'my limbs and my joints' (acc., *Resignation* l. 8
eal min leoþo 'all my limbs'). The Cotton Galba prayer continues the enumera-
tion of offered items, yet the beginning of the list, quoted above, is identical to
that in *Resignation*.

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16   Cf. Ker (1957: 198), and Braekman (1965: 271).
17   This prayer has been tabulated among many others for comparison with *Resignation* in No-
      ronha (1971: 31–33), but without noticing the outstanding character of its similarity to the
      poem. Bestul (1977: 21) mentions the MS, yet only with regard to its Latin contents. The
      prayer's text and layout follows Braekman (1965: 272–273), who preserves the MS layout,
      but the punctuation has been changed into the Modern English system (the editor preserves
      the MS punctuation).

The prayer provides one more, minor similarity to *Resignation*, which occurs towards the end of fol. 104v: *and þurh his þæt halige godspell and eal þa wundor þe þær on syn* 'and through His holy Gospel and all the wonders which are therein'. The second part of the passage closely parallels *Resignation* ll. 2b–4a *Þu gesceope heofon ond eorþan*, *ond wundor eall … þær on sindon* 'You have created heaven and earth, and all wonders … (which) are therein'. The textual parallels between *Resignation* and the Cotton Galba prayer are of an almost verbatim nature, although they consist of frequently used formulas. More importantly, however, common major topics occurring both in *Resignation* and in certain prayers form a strong argument for the prayerful character of the poem.

Summing up, *Resignation* contains pronounced structural, thematic and linguistic parallels to the various prayers discussed above. Typologically the poem most closely resembles penitential prayers, especially the one from the Cotton Galba MS, as well as *A Prayer*. Indeed, *Resignation* could have been regarded as a prayer in the vein of *A Prayer* but for its elegiac passage and the final maxim, which prescribes endurance without an explicit reference to God.

5.2. Elegies

Rather surprisingly in the context of the above, prevailing scholarly opinion classifies *Resignation* among the so-called elegies, a group of nine *Exeter Book* poems: *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Riming Poem*, *Deor*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*, *Resignation*, *The Husband's Message*, and *The Ruin*. The fact that they have been gathered in a single manuscript may suggest generic affinities between the poems although they are interspersed with various other material. Thus, *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* are separated by two wisdom poems in catalogue form, *The Gifts of Men* and *Precepts*, while *Riddles* directly follow and precede the more obscure *Wulf*, *Wife* and *Husband*. Moreover, the MS layout of *Husband* suggests three separate texts rather than one – possibly a mistake caused by the poem's enigmatic character and the presence of runes at its end. Some of the nine Old English poems first began to be called 'elegies' in the early 19th c., although none of them approaches to the classical elegiac metre or laments the dead.[18] Yet another meaning of the term 'elegy' was introduced during the Romantic period: sentimental, meditative and personal poetry on any subject. The modern word fitting such a definition would be 'lyric', and this is how Schlauch (1956: 65–9) chooses to classify the poems, adding that they share their elegiac themes with *Beowulf* ll. 2247–66 ('Lament of the last survivor') and 2444–62 ('Lament of the father'). Dissent from classifying the Old English texts as elegies was also ex-

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[18] For the history of modern research on Old English elegies cf. Mora (1995).

pressed by Bloomfield (1970: 77–80), who subsumes them into the larger category of wisdom literature.

Nevertheless, certain basic similarities in language, content and structure do exist between these nine texts, *Resignation* included, though most definitions of the Old English elegy are imprecise. Possibly the most coherent definition was offered by Greenfield (1966: 214), who recognises three major characteristics: 'a contrast between past and present conditions', 'some awareness of the transitory nature of earthly splendour, joy, and security', and 'a pattern of loss and consolation'. This description is so broad as to fit, for instance, a saint's life or a psalm paraphrase, though it does capture important generalisations. Nearly all of the elegiac characteristics of *Resignation* are to be found in the poem's final part, beginning at about l. 83.

The foremost reason for considering *Resignation* as an elegy lies in the poem's repeated mention of a fearful journey, hardships and exile. The 'elegiac' readings of *Resignation* emphasise especially ll. 89b–91a:

> Forþon ic afysed eom
> earm of minum eþle.   Ne mæg þæs anhoga,
> leodwynna leas,   leng drohtian,
> wineleas wræcca. (89b–91a)

> [Therefore I am ready to depart, poor, away from my home. Because of that
> the solitary one, without social joys, cannot live long, the friendless exile.]

Here the typically elegiac motif of exile is expressed vocabulary which frequently occurs in the elegies, though is not confined to them. The most common element of the motif is *wræcca* 'person in exile, wretched person', also in the phrase *wineleas wrecca* 'friendless exile', which describes the speaker of *Wife* in l. 10 and Cain, an outcast from God, in *Genesis* l. 1051, cf. Klinck (1992: 228). Wretchedness and spiritual exile can also take other forms, such as the sufferings of the fallen angels in *Resignation* l. 58 *wræce* (fem. acc. sing. or pl.), or the laming and captivity of Weland in *Deor* l. 1 *wræces* (neut. gen. sing.) and l. 4 *wræce* (fem. acc. sing. or pl.). The course of misery may be the Wanderer's and the Seafarer's *wræclastas* 'paths of exile' (*Wanderer* ll. 5, 32; *Seafarer* ll. 15, 57), the *wræcfæc* 'time of misery' in *Riming Poem* l. 64, or the *wræcsiþas* 'times/places of exile/misery' lamented by the speaker in *Wife* (ll. 5, 38).[19]

Despite hardships, the *Resignation* speaker longs for his journey, thus resembling the Seafarer. This longing is expressed by *ic afysed eom* 'I am ready to

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19   The lexical morpheme *-siþ/-sið* in compounds such as *wræcsiþ* has two basic meanings, 'journey' and 'time', with precise differentiation impossible at times. Hence here and below lexical glosses give both readings whenever the precise meaning cannot be established beyond doubt.

depart' in *Resignation* l. 89 (above) and again at ll. 97b–98: *ond ymb siþ spræce, / longunge fus, ond on lagu þence* 'and (I) speak about the journey, / eager with longing, and think about the sea'. The latter bears close thematic and lexical similarity to *Seafarer* l. 47: *ac a hafað longunge se þe on lagu fundað* 'but he always has longing who hastens towards the sea'; both speakers are *fus* 'ready/eager to depart': *Resignation* l. 84 *fus on ferþe* 'with a soul eager to depart', *Resignation* l. 98 (above), and *Seafarer* l. 50–52:[20]

> ealle þa gemoniað   modes fusne
> sefan to siþe,   þam þe swa þenceð
> on flodwegas   feor gewitan. (50–52)

> [all these remind the spirit with a mind eager to depart upon a journey, one who thus intends to set out far away towards the sea.]

Longing is a recurrent theme in the elegies, especially prominent in *Wife*, where the speaker's painful yearning for her husband constitutes the main topic; an apparently similar longing for her beloved Wulf is expressed at some length by the speaker of *Wulf*. *Resignation* also mentions other kinds of hardship which it shares with some elegies. Thus, friendlessness, noted above for l. 91, reappears at l. 102, where it combines with poverty and hinders his journey:

> 　　　　　Nah ic fela goldes,
> ne huru þæs freondes   þe me gefylste
> to þam siðfate,   nu ic me sylf ne mæg
> fore minum wonæhtum   willan adreogan. (101b–104)

> [I do not have much gold, nor even a friend who would help me go on the journey, by myself now I cannot perform the will because of my scanty possessions.]

Poverty does not impede the speaker's appointed journey in any other elegy. Thus, in *Ruin* and *Wanderer* absent riches serve as a means of bitter contrast between past splendour and present desolation. On the other hand, *Seafarer* invokes the problem of present wealth in ll. 66b–67 and 97–102, which discuss the uselessness of earthly riches for attaining eternal life.[21] The two different ways of

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[20]　It ought to be noted that the motifs of journey and exile frequently play a major role in literary treatments of the theme of pilgrimage. At that time 'pilgrimage' meant not only travelling to holy places, but also travelling to foreign lands, far away from home – an ascetic practice helping one in the search for God (Whitelock 1950). The latter practice was characteristic of the early Irish Church, whence it came to Anglo-Saxon England together with numerous other Christian traditions.

[21]　Sisam (1945) argues convincingly that *Seafarer* ll. 97–102 were inspired by Ps 49 [48]: 7–9, 12, 18.

introducing the theme of wealth in *Seafarer* and *Resignation* in relation to journeys undertaken most probably for religious reasons complement each other. If *Seafarer* argues for renouncing one's possessions in the spirit of *peregrinatio pro amore Dei* 'pilgrimage for the love of God', *Resignation* may be seen to advocate absolute reliance on Divine Providence when performing God's will.[22]

Another widely recognised feature of the elegies is the 1st person singular introduction to a speech. It is to be found for instance in *Wanderer* ll. 8–9a *Oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce / mine ceare cwiþan* 'Often alone I had to tell my sorrows before each dawn'. *Seafarer* ll. 1–2a offer another instance: *Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan, / siþas secgan* 'May I make about myself a true song, tell about journeys/times'. To the latter *Wife* ll. 1–3a bear close lexical similarity:

> Ic þis giedd wrece   bi me ful geomorre,
> minre sylfre sið.   Ic þæt secgan mæg,
> hwæt ic yrmþa gebad (1–3a)

> [I make this song about myself, very sad, about my own time. I can tell which miseries I have experienced]

In *Resignation* such a construction is used twice, at ll. 83b–85a: *Forþon ic þas word spræce, / fus on ferþe, swa me on frymðe gelomp / yrmþu ofer eorþan* 'Therefore I speak these words, with a soul eager to depart, about how at the beginning happened to me misery on earth', and ll. 96b–98a: *Ic bi me tylgust / secge þis sarspel, ond ymb siþ spræce, / longunge fus* 'I say this lament about myself most strongly, and speak about the journey, eager with longing'. A distinguishing characteristic of the speech introductions in *Resignation* is that both occurrences contain the adjective *fus* 'ready to depart', referring either to physical journey or to the journey of death. Raw (1978: 127) notes the prominence of the latter meaning in *Resignation*, and her argument receives additional support from the fact that *Resignation* ll. 41–43 state explicitly that the speaker hastens away from this world and towards God, while ll. 49b–53 ask God to let angels take the

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22 For a study of the concept of *peregrinatio pro amore Dei* cf. Whitelock (1950). A parallel situation may be found in *Andreas*. God orders St Andrew to travel and preach His word, despite his lack of seafaring friends (ll. 198b-201) or money (ll. 271–6, 301–4). Andreas obeys, goes to the nearby harbour and receives a generous welcome on board by a captain – God Himself in disguise. Such reliance on Divine Providence derives from Christ's command (paraphrased in *Andreas* ll. 332–9), Matthew 6: 31–33 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? … [F]or your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' and 28:19–20 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations … [t]eaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (both quotations from King James Version).

speaker's soul to Him rather than devils – to hell. Thus the recurrent use of *fus* in the speech introductions in *Resignation* puts additional emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the journey motif.

Yet another commonly recognised feature of the elegies concerns the thematic structure of the whole texts: Greenfield's (1966: 214) 'pattern of loss and consolation' or, more broadly, Klinck's (1992: 246) 'move[ment] from disquiet to some kind of acceptance'. Some elegies do not fit this pattern explicitly, e.g. *Wulf*, *Wife*, and *Ruin* offer no overt consolation. The pattern develops most prominently in *Wanderer*, *Seafarer* and *Riming Poem*.[23] The major part of both *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* describes their personas' miseries, occasionally interrupted by maxims or religious admonitions. In both poems the topic gradually changes from the fate of a presumably specific speaker to that of a human being in general. *Wanderer* ends with a maxim about discretion, followed by a similarly constructed statement about the prudence of seeking mercy and help from God (ll. 112–115). On the other hand, the author of *Seafarer* ends his poem with a rather long homiletic passage concerning the fear of the Lord, steadfastness and the eternal bliss in heaven (ll.103–124, perhaps beginning even earlier, at l. 97 or 94 – the transition between the two parts is gradual). Yet another way of implementing the pattern may be observed in *Riming Poem*, where the initial description of prosperity in ll. 3–42 precedes the 'elegiac' ll.43–79, which narrate the downfall of the speaker's good fortune. This is followed by the homiletic ending in ll. 80–87, which reminds the audience about the eternal bliss in heaven and the ways of reaching it. When compared to the above, *Resignation* may be also seen to implement the pattern, for the poet places the 'elegiac' part (ll. ca. 83–116) between a prayer to God and the final maxim-like statement *Giet bið þæt selast, þonne mon him sylf ne mæg / wyrd onwendan, þæt he þonne wel þolige* (ll. 117–8) 'Yet it shall be best, when one cannot by himself change his fate, that he should suffer it well'.

Klinck (1992: 225–227) agrees that the pattern is discernible in *Resignation*, but believes that ll. 117–118 constitute a maxim about mundane endurance of earthly hardships – for so they appear if dislodged from the context of the entire poem. The greater part of *Resignation* consists of a prayer to God for help, understanding, a remission of sins with hope for heaven, intermingled with acts of contrition. Yet crucial for the interpretation of the poem's ending are ll. 64b–76a. In ll. 64b–69 the speaker again expresses his sinfulness and thanks God for all His unmerited graces; next he declares:

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[23] It is also prominent in *Deor*, but in a unique form. Each of the poem's six stanzas is followed by the refrain *Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg* 'That was overcome, so may this', which participates in the consolation motif. Yet the motif also develops through the poem's structure: the five initial stanzas deal with great sufferings of historical and legendary personages. The speaker, Deor, may find consolation in the consciousness that famous people also experience great hardships. Additionally his own suffering may seem diminished.

> Hwæþre ic me ealles þæs   ellen wylle
> habban, ond hlyhhan,   ond me hyhtan to,
> frætwian mec on ferðweg,   ond fundian
> sylf to þam siþe   þe ic asettan sceal,
> gæst gearwian,   ond me þæt eal for gode þolian
> bliþe mode,   nu ic gebunden eom
> fæste in minum ferþe. (70–76a)

> [Nevertheless I want to have all the courage and laugh, and have hope, and
> adorn myself for the way of the spirit, and hasten myself to the journey
> which I must make, prepare my soul, and suffer it all for God with a joyful
> mind, now I am bound fast in my spirit.]

In light of this passage ll. 117–118, which follow all the narration of the speaker's
sufferings, recapitulate the steadfast and hopeful attitude expressed earlier. Thus,
Resignation makes use of the pattern of loss and consolation' in its elegiac part,
for the description of miseries directly precedes the final, consoling maxim.

6. Conclusion

The most crucial conclusion pertains to the problem of *Resignation*'s textual integ-
rity, which was rejected by Bliss and Frantzen. First of all, no codicological descrip-
tion of the *Exeter Book* appears to provide conclusive evidence for the loss of a folio
in between the pages preserving *Resignation*, and all MS irregularities can be ex-
plained otherwise. Moreover, the last word on fol. 118v, *Resignation* l. 69 *mid*, can
take the adverbial meaning 'therewith', which fits the context without the need to
assume any textual disunity at this point. Spelling and linguistic features also show
that the poem comprises a single text. Thus the non-LWS influence mentioned
above connects *Resignation A* and *Resignation B*, with *hio* 'they' at l. 48 (*Resigna-
tion A*) and <spræce> for *sprece* '[I] speak' at ll. 83 and 97 (*Resignation B*). These
dialectal features also distinguish *Resignation* from the neighbouring texts, as do the
two occurrences of *wylle* 'want' (pres. subj. sing.) at ll. 24 (*Resignation A*) and 70
(*Resignation B*) – a common word whose otherwise regular form is *wille*. Finally,
Bliss and Frantzen point to the thematic difference between *Resignation A* and *B*,
observing that *Resignation A* constitutes a confessional prayer, while *Resignation B*
– an elegiac lament. Yet the typically elegiac features of *Resignation* do not begin
before l. 83, and still the elegiac passage contains prayerful elements, such as l. 86
gode ealles þonc 'thanks be to God for everything' or ll. 108b–111a:

> Eala, dryhten min,
> meahtig mundbora,   þæt ic eom mode [s]eoc,
> bittre abolgen.   Is seo bot æt þe
> gelong æfter [li]fe. (108b–111a)

['Oh, my Lord, mighty Protector, bitterly angered because I am sick at soul.
The remedy belongs to You, after life.']

The prayer mode prevails in the whole poem. It is especially emphasised by an invocation of God and plea for His help prominently situated at the beginning. Names for God, often elaborate, abound in *Resignation* in a similar manner to certain verse prayers, such as the *Kentish Psalm 50* or *A Prayer*. The poem contains major confessional features, for instance in the repeated admission of the speaker's sinfulness, pleas for God's mercy, or the *cogitatione, verbo et opere* formula. A close, hitherto nearly overlooked parallel to *Resignation* may be found in a prose confessional prayer from the British Museum MS Cotton Galba A. xiv. Hence, the poem belongs to the general tradition of Christian confessional prayer, sharing also a few motifs with the canonical prayers.

From about l. 83 till the end (l. 118) *Resignation* approaches to an Old English elegy. Structurally, this may be seen in the presence of a 1st p. speech introduction at the beginning of the elegiac passage, and of Greenfield's 'pattern of loss and consolation'. More prominent are the common elegiac motifs, such as the loneliness of exile and a fearsome journey full of hardships. However, elegy cannot dominate *Resignation* because of the placement of the relevant passage towards the poem's end, and its relative shortness.[24]

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[24]   A reviewer points out that the paper has failed to address the issue of the relative literary quality of *Resignation*'s major parts, even though this may constitute a significant factor in the discussion of the poem's integrity. Indeed, scholarly opinion (almost) unanimously credits the 'elegiac' fragment with literary value far exceeding that of the prayerful majority of *Resignation*. The sadness and steadfastness in face of hardships expressed in the second part of the poem speak powerfully to the modern audience, including the present author. Yet it must be recognised that also the first part of *Resignation* contains passages of great beauty. For instance, the highly imaginative pair of God's titles, l. 8 *leohtes hyrde* 'Shepherd of light' and *tungla hyrde* 'Shepherd of stars', the latter uniquely occurring in *Resignation*. Equally impressive are passages of grammatically and logically parallel structures, such as the opening lines 1–2 *Age mec se ælmihta god! / Helpe min se halga dryhten!*, the *Confiteor*-like declaration that follows, or the first mention of a long journey, ll. 41–43 *Nu ic fundige to þe,   fæder moncynnes, / of þisse worulde,   nu ic wat þæt ic sceal / ful unfyr faca* 'Now I hasten to You, Father of mankind, away from this world, now I know that I must go before long'. Admittedly, the assessment of literary quality depends on a critic's personal preferences to a considerable extent; hence the present paper leaves the matter open.

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