

CELTIC INFLUENCE ON OLD ENGLISH RHETORIC –
A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERFACE BETWEEN DIACHRONIC
CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC AND HISTORY OF ART

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1. Problem and method

Kari Sajavaara, whose 60th birthday this volume celebrates, is both an expert in the history of the English language, and he played a leading role, too, in launching modern contrastive linguistics, in extending its scope to cross-language studies, and strongly promotes its current transition into synchronic contrastive rhetoric. The following contribution attempts to weave these two strands together, the diachronic one, and the contrastive rhetoric one.

For a general topic we select Old English poetry, the specific theme being some major characteristics of its textual structures. Our *aim* is a *philological* one: to cast some light on the origin of these structures. *Theory* and *method* applied to achieve this end are *linguistic* ones, complemented by an extralinguistic extension: we will draw on contrastive rhetoric to furnish us with intralinguistic evidence, which we will submit to confrontation with extralinguistic, non-literary, contemporaneous evidence by drawing on history of art.

Research into and descriptions of the history of the English language would confine the impact of the Celtic element to traces left in placenames,¹ river-names, topographical and other designations,² and to Celtic transmission of

¹ E.g., *Kent* < *Canti* or *Cantion*; *Devon*(shire) < *Dumnonii*; *Cumberland* 'land of the Cymri', *York* < *Eburacum*; e.g., also the first syllable in placenames like *Exeter*, *Gloucester*, *Lichfield*, *Salisbury*, *Winchester*, *Worcester*.

² E.g., apart from the river *Thames*: *Avon*, *Exe*, *Esk*, *Usk*, *Wye*, all of them designating 'water' in Celtic; cf. also Celtic designations for 'hill' in e.g., *Bredon*, *Barr*, *Bryn Mawr*, *Creech*, *Pendle*; for 'deep valley' as in *Duncombe*, *Holcombe*, *Winchcombe*, for 'high rock' as in *Torr*, *Torcross*, *Torhill*, for 'brook' as in *Pylle*, *Huntspill*, for 'badger' as in *Brockholes*, *Brockhall*, *Brockhouse*.

Latin elements as (parts of) placenames.³ In addition, e.g., Baugh and Cable (1996) would point out to two further groups of lexemes: the ones acquired by the Anglo-Saxons via everyday contact with Celts,⁴ and the ones introduced via the Irish missionaries.⁵

As seen from a language contact situation, what is amazing about such lists is their restriction to the level of lexis, the more so when we consider the chronological and the sociolinguistic patterning of that language contact situation.

As early as at least two centuries before the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain there had been numerous contacts between (Romano-)Celtic British people and Roman army soldiers of Germanic descent, who would serve as (sometimes fairly high-ranking) mercenaries in Britain under Roman rule, marry mates of Celtic descent, ultimately settling down with them in the security of the precincts of Roman forts to raise children in a trilingual Celtic-Germanic-Latin environment, within which more emphasis must have been given to Celtic and Germanic, due to the sociolinguistic status of Latin as the language of the ruling class; and as to the rivalry between Celtic and Germanic in this early setting: the father as the speaker of a Germanic language would wage war, take care of the family estate, whereas it was the mother with her Celtic language and cultural background, who would raise their children, imbibing Celtic tradition and thought. It is true, in the aftermath of the Anglo-Saxon conquest, many Celts either made their retreat to remote corners of the country, thus reducing language contact to a minimum, many were enslaved, thus being prone to adopt the language of the Germanic conquerors (in language contact situations, at least), but: Celtic-Germanic intermarriages outlived the conquest, and about one century later, missionaries of Irish, i.e. of Celtic descent took the lead in christianizing the North of England, soon excelling in cultural and educational leadership. It was in the milieu of their monastic communities, where the incentives to produce literature and art were provided for the young talents; it was to these monasteries in Northumbria and Ireland, to which Anglo-Saxon students would flock to receive their education.

Language-wise the issues of such a kind of language contact situation will not differ significantly from the ones yielded by comparable language contact settings in the world of today, as they are demonstrated by a large number of empirical studies that were carried out in bilingual settings within an educational framework, above all, in contrastive rhetoric (rather than e.g., in syntax or in phonology).⁶ Thus, a restriction of the Celtic influence on Old English to the

³ Cf. e.g., the Latin elements *castra*, *fontana*, *fossa*, *portus*, *vicus* in a huge number of placenames in Britain.

⁴ Cf. e.g., ags. *binn* 'basket', *bratt* 'cloak', *brocc* 'badger'.

⁵ Cf. e.g., ags. *ancor* 'hermit', *clugge* 'bell', *gabolrind* 'compass'.

⁶ Cf. the extensive bibliography provided by Connor (1996).

mere level of lexis seems unlikely. Under these circumstances, it is amazing that contrastive rhetoric attention has hardly ever been given to Old English poetry with a view towards Celtic poetry. One can only speculate on the reasons. A specific one may well be inherent in the object of research itself: a comparison of written texts that were produced so many centuries apart from each other can only rest on highly treacherous grounds. A more general one may well be constituted by the theoretical-methodological desideratum of adapting recent contrastive rhetoric to historical objects of research, i.e. to non-present-day languages.

2. Some specificities of Old English rhetoric within the Germanic setting

2.1. Old English versus Old High German poetry

Text 1: Battle-scene from the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* (ll. 63-68), written c. 820.⁷

do lettun se aerist asckim scritan,
At first, they let their ash-spears fly
scarpen scurim: dat in dem sciltim stont.
With such dire force as to make them get stuck in their shields.
do stoptun to samane staim bort chlodun,
They crashed together, the 'painted boards' burst asunder.
heuwun harmlicco huitte scilti
They hewed their white shields grimly
unti im iro lintun lutilo wurtun,
Until their linden shields disintegrated,
giwigan miti wabnum ...
Attacked with their weapons ...

Text 2: Battle-scene from the Old English *Battle of Maldon* (ll. 96-116),⁸ written c. 1000:

Wodon þa wælwulfas, for wætere ne murnon
The war-wolves advanced, heeded not water,
wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan
West across Panta; the Viking host
ofer scir wæter scyldas wegon,
Over shining water carried their shields.
lidmen to lande linde bæron.
[The seamen carried their shields ashore.]⁹

⁷ Original quoted from Braune; our translation.

⁸ Original quoted from Bolton; Trapp's translation.

⁹ Line left out in Trapp's translation.

þær ongean gramum gearowe stodon
 Among his warriors Byrhtnoth stood bold
Byrhtnoð mid beornum. He mid bordum het
 Against the grim foe; bade form with shields
wyrcean þone wihagan and þæt werod healdan
 The war-hedge for battle, hold firm the folk
fæste wið feondum. þa wæs feohte neh,
 Against the foemen. Then fighting was near,
tir æt getohte; wæs seo tid cumen
 Honor in battle. The hour was come
þæt þærð fæge men feallen sceoldon.
 Doomed men must fall. A din arose.
þær wearð hream ahafen, hremmas wundon,
 Raven and eagle were eager for carnage;
earn æses georn; wæs on eorþan cyrm.
 There was uproar on earth.
Hi leton þa of folman feolhearde speru,
 Men let from their hands
grimme gegrundene garas fleogan;
 File-hard darts and sharp spears fly.
bogan wæron bysige, bord ord onfeng.
 Bows were busy, shield stopped point,
Biter wæs se beaduræs, beornas feollon
 Bitter was the battle-rush. Warriors fell
on gehwæðere hand, hyssas lagon.
 In both the armies. Young men lay dead
Wund wearð Wulfmær, wælraeste geceas
 Wulfmær was wounded; Byrhtnoth's kin,
Byrhtnoðes mæg; he mid billum wearð,
 His sister's son, was savagely butchered
his swustersunu, swiðe forheawen.
 Choosing the slaughter-bed, slain with the sword.

Despite the Anglo-Saxon influence that is evident in many spellings throughout the *Hildebrandslied*,¹⁰ sharp contrasts stand out as to both macro- and microstructure.

2.1.1. The rhetoric macrostructure

As to text 1:

The battle-scene is preceded by a dialogue between Hildebrant and his op-

¹⁰ Cf. e.g., 1.1: <ðat> 1.3: <Haubrant>; 1.5 <guhamun>; 1.7, 1.8: <h-> in <her>.

ponent and son Hadubrant, extending from l. 11 to l. 62, i.e. there are no transition elements between both passages, no descriptive elements, let alone comments introduced by the narrator/poet, no evaluative judgements, no emotive evaluations (other than from the very sides of the two competitors in their respective direct addresses to each other, which build up to a highly dramatic tension).

As to text 2:

The battle-scene is embedded within the sequence: descriptive epic introduction (96-103a), narrator's lapidary estimation of the situation (103b), his evaluative judgement (104a), along with his sense of grim emotional foreboding (104b-105a) – all of which sets the stage for the actual battle-scene (106ff.), which pointedly advances from general (106a-111a) via specific (111b-112) to extremely personal concern (113-116).

2.1.2. Microstructures

As to text 1:

Basically it is a matter-of-fact report of the sequence of the fight, first spears against shields (63-64), then swords against shields (65-67), then summing up by using the generic term *wabnum*.¹¹ The technique of enrichment via variation is traceable, but hardly exploited as a rhetoric technique extensively; it is limited to 'shield', and rather seems to primarily serve the purpose of recounting the logical sequence of events – spears getting stuck in *sciltim*, wooden *scilti* get hewed, and, therefore, these *lintun* are getting smaller and smaller. A logical sequence of events – which indicates as such that it is not for linguistic nor for narratological reasons why *scilt* and *linta* are used in variation. However, what about the *staim bort* in between? Our translation above ('painted boards') follows the reading of *staimbort* as a kenning; it rests on insecure ground, however: this would be the only kenning in the entire body of Old High German alliterative poetry; therefore, a host of alternative readings have been proposed, e.g., *steinbort clûbôn* ('tearing asunder their jewelled array').

As to text 2:

(A) Setting the mood for the battle-scene by evoking the mythological sphere, most likely still clinging to the (not infrequent) term *wæhwulfas* ('wolves of the blood-drenched battleground, i.e. warriors'): an interweave of natural and supernatural, of human and non-human elements.¹²

¹¹ This is, where, unfortunately, the fragment ends.

¹² Cf. in particular the two wolves as resting to Odin's feet, associating that prime god with war and carnage (*wæl*); within this context, it may well be significant, that *wæl* is resumed in l. 113b – thus serving as the conceptual frame for the entire battle-scene. And, historically, *wæl*, too, is burdened with a high emotional load. In pagan times *wælreste* was not a gruesome place, but rather the supernatural sphere beyond (s.a.), where the brave warrior slain in battle, would live, love and battle on.

(B) Manifestation of this interweave by the simultaneity of the wolves' gloomy greyness, the silvery shining of the *scir wæter*, the darkness of the *gramum / feondum*, and the blackness of death as emanating from ll. 103b, 104b-105b, and as being drastically resumed in 107a by the blackness of the raven (which, at the same time, resumes the interweave natural/supernatural),¹³ and by the gruesome ending of the scene in ll. 111ff., too: a strong feeling for the colour-effects of light, of luminescence, glow, and gloom, semiotically related to a strong predilection for iconicity as a means to achieve plasticity.

(C) Equalizing imminent fighting with the prospect of earning honour: the poet's sociocultural evaluation.

(D) The fast beat of the pulse of events, which achieves a merger of linearity and simultaneity: the battle-*hream* → the *hremmas*, the *earn*, birds of battle → the throwing of the *speru*, resumed by the flying *garas* → the creaking of the *bogan* → the crashing of the whizzing arrows against the *bord* → death, *beornas feollon*. This enormous density of events is achieved by

– the stylistic device of repetition, in particular by variation,¹⁴

– by showing how a multitude of phenomena, which the poet presents as if he were driven by a horror vacui, are, after all, nothing else but different facets that would constitute and illuminate one underlying basic topic, here 'battle', i.e. by letting deeper unity shine through surface plurality.

(E) This sequence of events is summed up in l. 111a by the poet's personal evaluation concerning the bitterness of the *beaduræs*, augmented by the personal involvement which shines through his report of the deadly fate of the hero's relative, whom he would even mention by name (*Wulfmær*) and by affiliation (*swustersunu*).

The typicality of these five rhetoric characteristics of Old English rhetoric is mirrored widely across both genre, time, and topic, as the following examples will indicate.

Text 3a is from the considerably older *Beowulf* epic (ll. 1425-30, 1440ff.):¹⁵

Gesawon ða æfter wætere wyrmcynnes fela,
 Their eyes beheld
sellice sæ-dracon sund cunnian,
 The swimming forms of strange sea-dragons,
swylce on næshleoðum nicras licizean,
 Dim serpent shapes in the watery depths,
ða on undernmæl oft bewiti zað
 Sea-beasts sunning on headland slopes;

¹³ Two birds had been sitting on god Odin's shoulders in olden times – two ravens.

¹⁴ As to repetition in general and variation in particular cf. most recently Strauss (1998).

¹⁵ *Beowulf*: all original texts quoted from Nickel's edition; translation of this passage: Trapp's.

sorhfulne sið on selzrade,
 Snakelike monsters that oft at sunrise
wyrmas ond wildeor.

On evil errands scour the sea.

...

wundorlic wæzborā. Weras sceawedon
 A wondrous wave-beast; and all the array
zyrelicne zist.

Gathered to gaze at the grisly guest.

In particular, this text illustrates the merger of the staring humans with the world of the unreal in the depths of the waters, the density and plasticity, caused by the poet's *horror vacui*,¹⁶ and effected by his drawing on variation so extensively, i.e. by evoking a huge variety of different linguistic forms, and, along with them, differing associations (plurality!) to reflect the monstrosity of the habitat in the depth (unity!).

The following extracts and texts 3b-f¹⁷ will serve to come to a better understanding of what we diagnosed above as "a strong feeling for the colour-effects of light". It is not by exhausting the wide range of terms which Old English provides for the facets of the colour spectrum, it is not by making direct mention to a multitude of colours, that Old English poetry causes that keen awareness of colour and light in the listener/reader. It is true, the colour 'gold' e.g., is mentioned not less than six times within e.g., *Beowulf* 1020-1107, referring to gold and gold-adorned objects (*Beowulf*'s presents and initiation of the Finn episode). It rather is the composition of objects and their interrelation with the (natural or man-made) environment, within which they are set, that add up to build a highly iconic associative sphere, which would conjure up these intensively felt effects of light – be it bright or (more frequently) dark.

E.g., *Beowulf* 32ff., Scyld's departure for the world beyond, to which a ship is supposed to take him: there are the *hrinzedstefna* adornments of the stem of the ship, icely shining, *isi3*, there are the *madma fela* and the *frætwa*, the costly adorned treasures, there is the unprecedented (l. 38: *Ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol zezyrwan!*) and unsurpassed assembly of *hilde wæpnum*, *headowædum*, *billum* and *byrnum*, i.e. the heap of glistening weapons and armour, swords, coats of mail, shimmering brown, and even more *madma*, *þeodzestreonum*, radiant gems and jewellery, and high above his head a *segen zeldenne*, a golden battle banner.

¹⁶ Cf. also the immediately following description of the hero's helmet and sword in ll. 1448-1454 and 1455-1464, respectively; it illustrates the very same drive in an extremely concrete manifestation, because what is so abundantly "covered" (both in the sense of 'covered by rich adornment resp. etching' and 'covered by the poet's description') in these two cases, are solid metal objects.

¹⁷ Translation mine.

E.g., too, *Beowulf* 303-314, experiencing the arrival of Beowulf and his companions by the striking impression of *Eorforlic scionon ... zehroden zolde, fah ond fyrheard*, the shining boar emblems on the crests of their helmets, adorned with gold, glistening and hardened in fire, their marching towards the *sæl ... zeatolic ond zoldfah*, the stately hall, shimmering with gold: *Lixte se leoma ofer landa fela*, a torch that would cast light over many countries, and they were shown around *torht zetæhte*, that radiant court.

Too long to be quoted here in extenso, wide stretches of the poem the *Dream of the Rood* are an absolute fireworks of preciousness bathed in light; cf. text 3b.¹⁸

Text 3b: *Dream of the Rood* (ll. 4ff.): The Holy Rood is seeing itself in a dream as:

... *sylicre treow*
 ... a precious tree
on lyft lædan, leohte bewunden,
 rearing up high, cast in light,
beama beorhtost. Eall þæt beacen wæs
 brightest of trees. This entire sign
begoten mid golde. Gimmas stodon
 was covered with gold. Jewels gleamed
fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron
 at its foot, and five gems were
uppe on þam eaxlegespanne
 at the intersection of its beams at the top
 ...
wædum geweorðode, wynnnum scinan,
 beautifully adorned, shining with joy,
gegyred mid golde; gimmas hæfdon
 gilded with gold, precious
bewrigene weorðlice ...
 beset with jewels ...

In a multitude of other cases it is the *contrast* of light-effects, in particular the contrast between brilliancy and goom, between light and dark (as corresponding to joy versus distress), that would set an event, a (human or non-human) being, or a scene into relief; cf. texts 3c-e.

Text 3c: *Beowulf* (ll. 86ff.) as contrasting Grendel's dark spirit with the joyous atmosphere reigning in the mead-hall:

¹⁸ Original quoted from Krapp's edition. Translation mine.

ða se ellenzæst earfoðlice
 The powerful monster, living in darkness,
þraze zepolode, se þe þystrum bad,
 had wrathfully endured for a long time
þæt he dozora zehwam dream zehyrde
 the loud clamor of joy in the hall,
hludne in healle, þær wæs hearpan swez,
 the playing of the harp,
swutol sanz scopes.
 the scop's bright singing.

The synaesthetic effects contribute towards creating an audio-visual unity, that can easily dispense with an explicit enumerating of more colour terms.

Text 3d: *Beowulf* (ll. 648-651), the King's forebodings concerning Beowulf's nightly fight against the monstrous Grendel:

siððan hie sunnan leoht zeseon meahton,
 From the broad sunlight of the early day
oþðe nipende niht ofer ealle
 until the coming of the night,
scaduhelma zesceapu scriðan cwoman,
 when the creatures of darkness would approach,
wan under wolcnum.
 pale under the clouds.

Similarly in *Beowulf* 702ff., *Com on wanre niht scriðan sceadugenga*, Grendel is approaching in the pale darkness of the night, intent on *under sceadu bregdan*, on throwing men into the realm of darkness; *he com of more under misthleopum*, it is from the moor and under the veils of the mist, that he would seek the place where *winreced, goldsele gumena, gearwost wisse, fættum fahne*, where he knew the gold-adorned and colourfully decorated hall of feasting to be; a sensation of brightness, that will be counterbalanced a few lines later by a look into Grendel's eyes: *Him of eagum stod ligge gelicost leoht unfæger*, a sinister light was gleaming in his eyes like a flickering blaze.

The effect of such contrast between gloomy luminescence and bright incandescence is heightened by syncretism; cf. text 3e.

Text 3e: *Brunanburh* (ll. 11-17):¹⁹

Sceotta leoda and scipflotan
 The people of the Scots and the fleet

¹⁹ Original quoted from van Kirk Dobbie's edition. Translation mine.

fæge feollan, feld dænnede
 were doomed and fell. The ground was drenched
secga swate, siðþan sunne up
 with the warriors' blood from the sunrise
on morgentid, mære tungol,
 in the morning, when that bright heavenly body,
glad ofer grundas, godes condel beorht,
 God's, our eternal Lord's glistening candle,
eces drihtnes, oð sio æpele gesceaft
 glided over the land, until his noble creatures
sah to settle.
 go to retire for the day

One out of numerous examples for the high degree of personal evaluation and involvement on the poet's (*scop*'s) side from among the epic genre is Beowulf's preparing for his last great heroic deed (Beowulf 2417-2424).

As to the lyric genre, actually, the very existence of that genre in Old English poetry happens to be the example *par excellance*,²⁰ for an illustration of our above mentioned criteria, we will briefly draw on the Old English elegy *The Wife's Lament*:

The lady's mourning mood and the bleakness of the nature around her (ll. 27a-33a rep. 36b) are closely intertwined, and: within the rhetoric macrostructure of the whole text, the description of that dim dwelling-place occupies a nicely centered position: it is preceded by 26 lines that are devoted to her and her husband's enforced separation (with the emphasis on the sadness of her own situation), and it is followed by the almost equally long passage, where she is bewailing their distressful state again, this time, however, with the emotional emphasis on *his* situation.

So many facets (plurality) are but manifestations of the one pervading topic, 'sadness' (unity): e.g., in the variations of ll. 1-5: *ful zeomorre*, my deep sadness – *yrmda zebad*, endured meserable conditions – *wite wonn*, I suffer torture – *minra wræcsiða*, my miserable exile, or in those of ll. 38-41: again *mine wræcsiðas* – *earfoða fela*, my hardships – *modceare*, my grieving mind – *lon zaðes*, my longing.

As to the role of evaluation and involvement on the poet's (*scop*'s) side, it is shining through each line of this elegy – due to its very genre.

2.2. Old English versus North Germanic poetry

For a comparison with North Germanic poetry we have to draw on the *Edda* – despite the chronological problem involved. It is Iceland, from where North

²⁰ We do not know of any elegies existing in Old High German poetry – and we could hardly conceive of any!

Germanic mythological and heroic poetry has been handed down to us. Iceland was christianized towards the end of the 10th century; however, Icelandic clerics cherished local language, customs, and traditions, and after the recent acquisition of the art of writing, became the founders of an Old Nordic literary tradition. The poetic tales which Sæmund Sigfusson (1056-1133), founder of one of the first Icelandic schools, collected (rather than composed on his own; controversial!), as well as the prose sagas which are associated with the early historian Snorri Sturluson (born in 1179, murdered in 1241), had been brought to Iceland from Norway, the oldest ones dating from the 6th century.²¹ This date justifies a comparison with the Old English texts above.

There is the frequently presented concept of Valkyries, female beings from the world beyond, marrying human mates in *Völundarkvidha*.²² In the *Sigrdrífumál* there is the (human) hero Sigurðr, who is given a love-potion by the Valkyrie Sigrdrifa; macrocontextually, this briefly related fact, however, does not initiate any further emotional entanglements, but merely serves as an opener to make Sigurðr susceptible to her immediately following explanation of the runes and to the wise pieces of advice, which she draws from that knowledge of hers in order to give him rules of proper action and conduct. There are the (mythological) Norns, foreboding e.g., the span of life assigned to the human Helgi in *Helgakvidha Hundingsbana fyrri* – again, however, mainly a macrocontextual opener to the fateful events following. In *Sigurdharkvida Fafnisbana önnur* there is the 'person' who would introduce himself as Hnikarr, miraculously calm the sea for Sigurðr's voyage, and instruct him as to natural good omnia (e.g., following the raven or hearing the howling wolf), that might influence his battle against the (supernatural) dragon Fáfnir. Hnikarr, however, is not a human being endowed with a gift of divination; he rather turns out to be Óþenn himself, the supreme god of wisdom and of battle – which, above all, makes his explanations serve the mere purpose of bestowing rules from above to humans, in this case to advise Sigurðr how to overcome the encounter with the (supernatural) dragon Fáfnir, a battle, to the presentation of which the dialogue between Sigurðr and Hnikarr serves as the opener.

Thus, the rhetoric functions of this human / non-human interweave in Old Nordic poetry is very different from both its make-up and its functions in Old English poetry.

As to iconicity a brief glance at the occurrence of colour in the first three sagas²³ of the Elder Edda might suffice. The 66 stanzas of the *Völuspá*, the theme of which covers the entire range from the creation to the final destruction

²¹ Chronology as to (Elder) poetic Edda and (Younger) prose Edda is controversial; for details concerning the written tradition cf. Lorenz (1984: 18ff.).

²² Spelling of titles following Simrock.

²³ Sequence according to Simrock.

of the earth, refer to greening vegetation (*þa vas grund groen grønom lauke*), to the shining dew of the green mythological tree Yggdrasel (... *ausenn hvíta aure*), the sun turning black (*Sól tér sortna*) in the destruction of the earth. The 54 stanzas of *Grimnismál* refer to golden bowls (*glöf, ór gollnom kerom*) the golden Valhalla (... *þars en gollbjarta / Valhöll víp of þrumer*), a silver roof (*silfre þokþo sale*), golden pillars of the silver roof (*golle studr / ok silfre þakeþr et sama*), and green shrubbery (*Hrise vex of hþvo grase*). The 56 stanzas of the *Vafthrúdnismál* have no colour term at all. Where colour shows up in other songs, it is predominately red (blood!), gold (wealth!), and black (death and fate!). In all respects: very much unlike Old English.

Sociocultural evaluation, ethical values, become evident in many sagas from the point of view of the respective combatants (e.g., gods vs. giants), very rarely, however, as explicit personal comment of the poet. The passages where the listener/reader would expect them most, are the endings of the sagas and tales. The first section of the Younger Edda, the *Gylfaginning*, however, ends with the image of Gangleri, standing alone on a wide and deserted plain on his way back home; and "Bragi's discourse" (second part of the Younger Edda, the *Bragarædhur*), ends with the statement that what the preceding tale reveals is why we call scaldic poetry Óþenn's *find* or Óþenn's *potion*.

As to the use of features "unity in plurality, *horror vacui* and variation" and "personal evaluation, emotional involvement" in these Nordic songs it seems they should be treated in close relationship to each other. A multitude of evidence – again from very different spheres, like battle and love – offers itself for discussion; cf. texts 4a-d for an emphasis on the former features, 4e-h for an emphasis on the latter ones.²⁴

Texts 4a-d present extracts from some battle-scenes and a reference to the supreme god Óþenn from the *Elder Edda*:

Text 4a: *Helgakvidha Hundingsbana fyrri* (stanza 10):

Skamt lét víse vígs at bíþa,
For a short time (only) the King let him wait for battle,
þás fylker vas fimtán vetra;
the leader was 15 years old
hann harþan lét Hunding vegenn,
when he had killed brave Hunding
þanns lenge réþ lqndom ok þegnom.
who had so long advised land and people.

²⁴ Originals quoted from Sijmons; translations mine, mainly based on Simrock and on Sijmons' edition of Gehring's Edda commentary.

A one-line observation only, that battle had happened; no elaborating on the description of the fight, but instead via the mere statement of it: the demonstration of the young hero's valiant character.

Text 4b: (same source, stanzas 55-56) follows the self-same pattern and aim, and thus underlines their typicality:

Svipr einn vas þat, es saman kvómo
It was like a storm, when they met,
fólver oddar at Frekasteine:
the glistening swords at Frekastone:
ey vas Helge Hundingsbane
always Helgi, the killer of Hunding
fyrstr í folke, þars firar þorþosk;
marched in front in the battle where men fought
[óstr á ímo, alltrauþr flugar,
fast in the din of battle, unwilling to retreat
sa hafþe hilmer hart móþakarn.]
a brave heart was the King's.
Kvómo ór himne hjamvítr ofan
There appeared like from the sky, the one with her helmet
– *óx geira gnýr – þærs grame hlífþo;*
– the darting of spears increasing – she protected the warrior;
þá kvap þat Sigrún – sárvítr flugo,
Sigrún, skilled in riding the air, shouted

Text 4c: *Atlamal* (stanzas 39ff.):

Flykþosk þeir Atle ok fóro í brynjor,
Atle and his warriors put their armour on
genko svá gorrer, at vas garþr mille.
Thus armed, they marched against the wall
Urposk á orþom aller senn reiþer:
Many words of wrath were exchanged.
'Fyrr vþrom fullráþa at firra yþr lífe'
'Long ago we have decided to kill you.'

...
Óþer þá urþo, es þat orþ heyrþo:
Those who heard these words got enraged.
forþoþo fingrom ok fengo í snóre,
They stretched their fingers, grasped the strings
skuto skarplega ok skjöldom hlífþosk
shot sharply from behind their shields.

Inn kvam andspille, hvat úte drýgþo

Now it became known outside what was happening inside

The deadly combat between the Huns and the Nibelungen is condensed into two lines for getting ready and marching forward, a brief pointing out to the usual invectives preceding battle, and one gestural image: the fingers that would touch the bowstring behind the protecting shields. With this, the poet would leave the battle-field for quite a while, in order to focus on Guþrún inside the hall.

Comparable restraint is evinced by the two stanzas 62-63: We hear Gunnarr playing on the zither, the women wailing and the heroes grieving in stanza 62, and stanza 63 – completely skipping intermediate action reports:

Doo þá dýrer: dags vas heldr snimma:

By dawn the valiant ones were dead.

léto á leste lífa íþróttu.

It was only their virtue, which was to survive.

These passages indicate, too, a certain amount of variation in referring to one concept; most clearly so, too, in e.g., text 4d.

Text 4d: *Grimnismál* (stanza 54):

Óþenn nú heitek, Yggr áþan hét,

Now my name is Óþenn; it had just been Yggr,

hétomk þundr fyr þat;

I have also been called Thunder,

Vakr ok Skilfingr, Vófoþr ok Hróptatyr,

The Alert and the High one, the Wanderer, Conjuror of powers

Gautr ok Jalkr meþ goþom;

The Gaut and the Sailor with the gods

Ofner ok Svafner, es hykk at orþner sé

The Snake and The Bringer of Sleep;

aller at einom mér.

It is me only, who knows the origin of all of them.

Unity in pluralism, homogeneity (Óþenn) in heterogeneity? A kind of pluralism resp. heterogeneity which differs, however, from the one we diagnosed in our Old English samples. Whereas Old English variation often seems playful, yielding itself to word-play, variation in Old Norse is of a much more regulated kind. It is true, it shares with Old English the love for kenningar, but in so many cases variation (via *kenningar*) would rather serve mythologically clearly profiled, “mythologically denotative” needs than connotative-associative ones as they often do in Old English: each one of the names of Odhin designates

a specific role of his in a specific incident, saga, myth. Therefore, most of them are recurring. This, actually, is a constitutive part of *Eddulist*, the Nordic art of poetry, which is governed by *Eddureglur*, the rules of poetry – as laid down in *Skaldskaparmál*, an appendix to the Younger Edda (authorship uncertain; often associated with Snorri), which lays down this very art and its rules by e.g., posing and answering a multitude of questions like “How is Sif to be called? – As Thor’s wife, Ullr’s mother, the fair-haired goddess, Jarnsaxa’s rival, Thrud’s mother” or “How to refer to Gold? As Oegir’s fire, Glasir’s leaves, Sif’s hair, Fulla’s hair-ribbon, Fryja’s tears ...” – and there is a mythological background to each one of these designations, which thus they evoke. Another example of denotating unity via a kind of plurality that is non-mythological, but equally far remote from the Old English *horror vacui* for reasons of its highly realistic, every-day portrayal is provided e.g. by *Rígsmaal* 27 ff., where “peaceful home” is described as “The Lord of the house sat there to wind the string, to bend the bow, to prepare the arrows, while the wife was enjoying looking at her arms, stroke her dress, stretching its sleeves”.

Situations and settings of texts 4e-h raise high expectations on the listener’s/reader’s side as to how emotions are dealt with.

Text 4e: *Gudhrúnarkviða fyrsta* (stanzas 1-2):

Ár vas þats Guþrún gørbesk at deyja,

Once Guþrún desired to die,

es sogfull sat of Sigverþe;

when she was sorrowfully leaning over Sigurþr

gørbet hjúfra né hondom slaa

she did not cry, nor did she wave her hands about,

né kveina umb, sem konor aþrar.

did not start wailing as women are used to.

...

þeyge Guþrún gráta mátte,

Guþrún was unable to weep for grief,

svá vas hón móþog munde springa.

she was near bursting for pain.

Her husband Sigurþr’s assassination had left Guþrún a widow. These first two stanzas present her as the loving widow grieving his untimely death, sitting by the side of his corpse, leaning over him. Whereas in the Old English poem *The Wife’s Lament* the woman is loudly bewailing the mere absence of her lover throughout that entire elegy, the incomparably more serious grief as experienced by Guþrún about her husband’s murder is visualized by this pieta-like

gesture of mourning. This petrified attitude of hers is felt as so intense an expression of mourning, that line 5 above is literally resumed in stanzas 5 and 10, and stanza 11 of *Gudhrúnarkvidha önnur* recurs on it, too.

The *Atlamál* presents a different sort of Guþrún's emotion: the outbreak of her wrath is initiated by non-verbal, gestural means:

Text 4f: *Atlamál* (stanza 43):

hlaþen halsmenjom: hreytte gǫrvøllom,
in her wrath she would grasp her adorning necklace,
[sløngþe svá silfre, at í sundr hruto baugar].
threw the silver, the rings bursting.

This way of expressing emotion gesturally corresponds to a nicety with the beginning of the battle-scene as rendered in the same song two stanzas above (and quoted as text 4c above).²⁵

For a last example we shall draw on *Skirniför*. Asked by his servant Skirnir why he was looking so lonely and so depressed, God Freyr confided to him that he had fallen in love at the sight of Gerþr, daughter of the giant and enemy Gymer. The four lines of stanza 6 are devoted to Freyr's describing her physical beauty. The expression of his own feelings towards her is confined to the four lines of the following stanza:

Text 4g: *Skirniför* (stanza 7):

Mær's mér típare an man manne hveim
I love that maid more than any young man
ungom í árdaga;
has ever loved a maid since time out of mind
ása ok alfa þat vill enge maþr
but neither anyone of her kin nor of mine
at vit samt seem.'
wants us to be together.

This fairly brief revelation of Freyr's distress induces Skirnir to ride to her home, wooing for her on Freyr's behalf. She refuses to accept his gifts; he resorts to threatening and to putting her under curses, she yields, he rides home, and compresses his report and joyful tidings into one single stanza:

²⁵ It is only after some time has elapsed, that grief would find more extensive verbal expression, as in *Gudhrúnarhvöt* 2ff. and in the following *Hamdismál* 4ff., where Gudrun incites her sons to avenge the cruel killing of their stepsister.

Text 4h: *Skirniför* (stanza 42):

'Barre heiter, es[vit] báþer vitom,
Barra, as both of us know, is the name
lundr lognfara:
of that secret meeting-place to go to:
en ept nætr nio þar mon Njarþar syne
it is there, where after nine nights, Njarþ's son
Gerþr unna gamans.
will be given pleasure by Gerþr.

Very much unlike the detailed portrayal of the events, the feelings, and the accompanying evaluative judgements that would constitute e.g., a battle-scene in Old English poetry, very much unlike the verbosity in presenting stirrings of grief, or emotions of joy in Old English poetry, Old North Germanic poetry exerts a considerable amount of restraint as to all features discussed above.²⁶

Summing up, as to the features investigated here, Old English shares a basic rhetoric "toolkit" with North Germanic poetry, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, it seems, with Old High German poetry, too. But the rhetoric functions to which these tools are put in use, and the extent to which they are used and modelled, are setting Old English very much apart. This is why, at that point, a consultation of Celtic rhetoric is indicated.

3. Specificities of Old English rhetoric as compared with Celtic²⁷ rhetoric

Text 5: Battle-scene from *The Dream of Rhonabwy* in *The Mabinogion*, preserved in a Welsh manuscript c. 1400:

And that game was ended and another begun. And as they were beginning the first move of the game, they beheld at a small distance from them a tent speckled yellow, the largest ever seen, and the figure of an eagle of gold upon it, and a precious stone on the eagle's head. And coming out of the tent, they saw a youth with thick yellow hair upon his head, fair and comely, and a scarf of blue satin upon him, and a brooch of gold in the scarf upon his right shoulder as large as a warrior's middle finger. And upon his feet were hose of fine Totness, and shoes of parti-coloured leather, clasped with gold, and the youth was of noble bearing, fair of face, with ruddy cheeks and large hawk's eyes. In the hand of the youth was a mighty lance, speckled yellow, with a newly-sharpened head; and upon the lance a banner displayed.

²⁶ What benefits from that restraint is the dramaticity of presentation of the sequence of events, and the emphasis on the so often gloomy role of fate, too.

²⁷ For examples of Celtic we confine ourselves to Welsh poetry. All Welsh texts are quoted in Modern English translation only. The author is indebted to Dr. Frank Meyer from the University of Hildesheim /Germany for kindly having assisted with linguistic expertise on Welsh and for having drawn the author's attention to various Welsh texts outside the sphere of Arthurian romance as represented in various tales of the *Mabinogion*.

Fiercely angry, and with rapid pace, came the youth to the place where Arthur was playing at chess with Owain. And they perceived that he was wroth. And thereupon he saluted Owain, and told him that his Ravens had been killed, the chief part of them, and that such of them as were not slain were so wounded and bruised that not one of them could raise its wings a single fathom above the earth. "Lord," said Owain, "forbid thy men." "Play," said he, "if it please thee." Then said Owain to the youth, "Go back, and wherever thou findest the strife at the thickest, there lift up the banner, and let come what pleases Heaven."

So the youth returned back to the place where the strife bore hardest upon the Ravens, and he lifted up the banner; and as he did so they all rose up in the air, wrathful and fierce and high of spirit, clapping their wings in the wind, and shaking off the weariness that was upon them. And recovering their energy and courage, furiously and with exultation did they, with one sweep, descend upon the heads of the men, who had erewhile caused them anger and pain and damage, and they seized some by the heads and others by the eyes, and some by the ears, and others by the arms, and carried them up into the air; and in the air there was a mighty tumult with the flapping of the wings of the triumphant Ravens, and with their croaking; and there was another mighty tumult with the groaning of the men, that were being torn and wounded, and some of whom were slain.²⁸

This Welsh text is set apart from the Old High German text and from the Scandinavian ones, too, with respect to all five characteristics, that distinguished Old English rhetoric within its Germanic setting:

(A) Interweave of natural and supernatural, of human and non-human elements:

The battle is waged between men and ravens: human contra non-human. What matters more, however, is that both the human and the non-human nature merge in the ravens in the Celtic text, thus achieving that higher-level merger between the natural and the supernatural, which pervades early Celtic poetry so distinctly. Here it is the Ravens, that are equipped with human emotions (*wrathful and fierce and high of spirit ... courage, ... furiously and with exultation ... triumphant ravens, that had been caused anger*).

(B) Strong emphasis on colour, a strong predilection for iconicity as a means to achieve plasticity:

The description of the youth reveals an acute awareness of and sensitivity for colour, literally a craving for colour and light: *thick yellow hair – a scarf of blue satin – a brooch of gold – shoes of parti-coloured leather – clasped with gold – with ruddy cheeks – a mighty lance, speckled yellow*. In the scene that immediately follows the above mentioned battle-scene this strong iconicity

²⁸ Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion* translation.

literally becomes a rhapsody in colours. There, a knight appears upon a dun-coloured horse:

And marvellous was the hue of the dun horse. Bright red was his right shoulder, and from the top of his legs to the centre of his hoof was bright yellow ... The clothing of the horse from the front opening upwards was of bright red sandal, and from thence opening downwards was of bright yellow sandal. A large gold-hilted one-edged sword had the youth upon his thigh, in a scabbard of light blue, and tipped with Spanish laton. The belt of the sword was of dark green leather with golden slides and a clasp of ivory upon it, and a buckle of jet-black upon the clasp. A helmet of gold ... the helmet was the image of a flame-coloured leopard with two ruby-red stones in its head ... He had in his hand a blue-shafted lance, but from the haft to the point it was stained crimson-red with the blood of the Ravens and their plumage.

The following description of the next two approaching knights revels in the same colourfulness.

Semiotically, the high symbolic overlay of this vast iconic colour spectrum is explicitly alluded to in the concluding lines of the dream: because of all these colours of all these different beings and objects, *no one knows the dream without a book, neither bard nor gifted seer*.

(C) Sociocultural evaluation:

It is implicit in the Arthurian setting of the dream, in particular in the gathering of energy and strength when rallying to the banner.

(D) Horror vacui – deeper unity shining through surface plurality:

The one concept 'death', manifesting itself via disintegration and dismembering of the body; a full arsenal: *heads, eyes, ears, arms*.

(E) Personal emotion and involvement:

Semiotically, the portrayal of emotions of the protagonists is so highly indexical, that the dreamer's own involvement is easy to grasp, and, therefore, need not be made explicit; e.g., the youth approaching *fiercely angry, and with rapid pace; he was wroth*; the ravens being *wrathful and fierce and high of spirit ... furiously and with exultation*.

As had been seen with Old English texts, the typicality of these five characteristics with their full-scale exploitation of the semiotic repertoire of iconic, indexical, and symbolic relationships between language and the world to which it relates, is mirrored likewise across a huge diversity of Celtic texts. A few more illustrations only:

The poem *Y Gododdin*, part of the 13th century Welsh manuscript *The Book of Aneirin*,²⁹ and bringing to life a British defeat at Catraeth/Yorkshire as com-

²⁹ Conran's translation.

posed by the 6th century bard Aneirin, abounds in colours (*Swords blue and bright, / And fringes of goldwork; Men went to Catraeth with the dawn./ ... Mead they drank, yellow, sweet and ensnaring /.../ Red their swords .../ White their shields ...*) and indulges in multifaceted presentation of what is one underlying idea: a "military marching" (*Men went to Catraeth with battle-rank and warcry, / Power of horses, blue armour and shields, / Shafts held on high, and spearheads, / And shining coats of mail, and swords. / He led the van ...*).

The following passage from *Gwalchmai ap Meilyr's* poem *The Battle of Tal y Moelfre*³⁰ (1157) is self-revealing in the light of our above mentioned criteria, but it is, nevertheless, worth quoting for the reason of its superficial similarity and deep contrast with the above mentioned passage from the *Hildebrandslied*.

And before him ran a miserable confusion,
Ruin and battle and a grievous end
On struggle, blood and struggle; on terror, dire terror;
And a thousand war-shouts about Tal y Moelfre.

On spear flashed spear, shaft upon shafts,
On panic woe and panic, drowned with the drowning,
And Menai without ebb from the tide of their bleeding,
And colour of warriors' blood in the brine.

And the blue chain-mail, and the ache of disaster,
And the wounded heaped from that lord's red spear,
And the musters of England, and combat against them,
And their destruction in wild disarray.

Density, *horror vacui*, variation, and unity in plurality are carried to the extreme in *Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr's Elegy for Madog ap Maredudd*,³¹ his lord and comrade, whom he praises as:

Door of a fortress, companion like a shield,
Buckler in the thrust of battle, in a fine fight,
The tumult of fire roaring through heather,
Scatterer of his foes, a shield in slaughter.
Chieftain celebrated in song, hope of minstrels,
Red, irresistible, unswerving comrade.

For a genre opposed to war and battle we drew on Old English love poetry above. Therefore, a few passages from the same genre from three more Mabinogion tales:

In the tale *Math the Son of Mathonwy* Math seeks, by charms and illusion, to form a wife ... out of flowers (natural/supernatural, human/non-human interweave), and took for that purpose *the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden* (iconicity of colour as implied by the different types of blossoms; unity: "the maiden" / plurality: her "assemblage"), and *she became filled with his love. And he gazed on her, and the same thought came unto him as unto her, so that he could not conceal from her that he loved her ... Thereupon she was very joyful. And all their discourse that night was concerning the affection and love which they felt one for the other ...* (very strong emphasis on conveying to the listener/reader the intensive emotion of the protagonists, and poet's personal statement concerning her joyfulness).

In the tale *Kilhwch and Olwen* the young warrior Kilhwch perceives Olwen, a maiden *clothed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and about her neck was a collar of ruddy gold, on which were precious emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain ... Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan, her cheek was redder than the reddest roses:* again, the craving for colour; the union between human and non-human nature, coupled with presenting a unity, "Olwen", via a plurality of metaphors, which, actually, make Olwen a wood anemone, a swan, a rose. The poet's own emotional stance follows lapidarily: *Whoso beheld her was filled with her love;* and what follows this portrayal is the performance of a large number of miracles which Kilhwch, the suitor, has to work: supernatural, magic tasks, which he manages to complete with the help of – the fictionally real! – King Arthur.

In the tale *The Lady of the Fountain*, a maiden, *with yellow curling hair, and a frontlet of gold upon her head, ... in a dress of yellow satin ...* (colours!) rescues Owain from a very real and precarious situation by evoking the power of concealment as bestowed upon him by a ring (natural/supernatural!), leads him to a safe place, and *Owain looked around the chamber, and behold there was not even a single nail in it that was not painted with gorgeous colours; and there was not a single panel that had not sundry images in gold portrayed upon it.*

A more ostentatious embodiment of the *horror vacui* principle cannot be imagined! Within our framework this is a first indication of its validity beyond the realm of literature, here extending into architecture of a dwelling structure. And when that ring is taken off from his hand, because he had "failed in keeping his promise" (unitary idea) to return to his "Lady of the Fountain" (again unitary idea), *the fairest, and the most chaste, and the most liberal, and the wisest, and the most noble of women* (plurality) within three months' time, he is ac-

³⁰ Conran's translation.

³¹ Johnston's translation.

costed as *the deceiver, the traitor, the faithless, the disgraced, and the beardless* (plurality).

And as to the final passage: the poet's evaluation, which in this case is rather socially than personally oriented, though being just as lapidary as in *Kilhwch and Olwen: thenceforward Owain dwelt at Arthur's Court greatly beloved*.

Summing up, all rhetoric features as to which the Old English texts differed from Old High German and from North Germanic poetry, not only proved to be characteristic for the Celtic texts, too, but even showed themselves in a climactically augmented proportion there.

The claim which we derive from this evidence is not the strong assertion, that these rhetoric features had been adopted by Old English poetry from indigenous Celtic traditions via linguistic and cultural contact. After all, we noticed, that these very features manifest themselves in Germanic languages other than Old English, too, which are remote from direct Celtic influence. However, in these other Germanic languages they are manifested to a considerably smaller extent and degree as compared to their mode of occurrence in Old English. This is why our claim will be of a weaker kind: the Celtic influence on Old English rhetoric affected in particular and reinforced such Old English rhetoric features as had been existent in Germanic poetry anyway,³² but which had enjoyed special highlighting in Celtic rhetoric, thus causing their further elaboration in Old English rhetoric vs. the rhetoric of other Germanic languages.

The problem which remains even with this weak claim, however, derives from chronological considerations. The Old English texts predate the extant Welsh texts by about half a millennium. It is true, there is unanimous agreement on the fact, that "the contents of this volume [i.e. the Mabinogion] are older – some of them much older – than the MSS. in which they are found" (Mabinogion, 1ff.). There is also a fair amount of agreement on the remarkable continuity and on the resilience of Celtic languages and culture: "Tudur Aled, in the sixteenth century, shares with Taliesin, in the sixth, a common approach to verse composition that would be hard to parallel (except in Ireland) anywhere else" (Conran 1986: 23).

But these arguments cannot rule out completely the possibility of – at least partly – reversing the roles: could the elaboration of the rhetoric techniques which we diagnosed as being so characteristic for both Old English (vs. other Germanic) and Celtic rhetoric, not be a genuine Anglosaxon achievement, which, in turn, could have spread to Old Welsh poetry, making it "a somewhat bloodless version of Anglo-Saxon" (Conran 1986: 23)?

³² This type of a language contact effect would be in complete accordance with what Nickel (1966) had proved to have happened in the realm of Old English syntax to the "expanded form" (to be + part. pres., e.g., *is singing*), which had been indigenous to Old English, but the use and functions of which had experienced considerable reinforcement by the language contact of Old English with Latin (vs. the strong claim of an ultimately Latin origin of that Old English form).

Due to the lack of early authentic Celtic texts, the question cannot be resolved on pure linguistic grounds. Therefore, we have to look for contemporaneous non-linguistic evidence.

It is art, that can provide such evidence: metal art and book illumination. The question will be: do the basic principles and patterns underlying Celtic art match with the ones we found in Celtic rhetoric? If they do, this might support the hypothesis of Celtic being the giving party to Old English rhetoric; if they do not, the highlighted features of Celtic rhetoric might as well have been received from the Anglosaxons. What makes this question a very intricate one, however, is the fusion of styles, which occurred in the late 7th century, as resulting from an "Anglo-Saxon-Irish-Scottish" background as mirrored by many a work of art of that time.

4. Specificities of Old English and Celtic rhetoric as compared with contemporaneous Celtic art

The major characteristics as attributed to Anglo-Saxon art by Wilson (1986: 10ff.) are its "love of colour, ... that *horror vacui*³³ ... no space could be left unornamented ... to emphasize life, colour and even movement ... the visual approach of the Anglo-Saxon to his man-made environment."

The earliest extant Northumbrian illuminated manuscripts date from the mid 7th century, outstanding among them the *Book of Durrow* (Dublin, Trinity College MS. A.4.5 (57)) as "the first of the surviving gospel books with a fully developed set of ornamental pages" (Youngs 1989: 15), and as being the first Northumbrian illuminated manuscript that "preserves a complete scheme of decoration" (Backhouse 1991: 110).

Its carpet page folio 85v³⁴ can be regarded as the prototype of that desire for not leaving any space vacant; it reflects a seemingly endless interweave of different round and straight patterns, the plurality of which, however, does not obstruct the recognition of an underlying homogeneous pattern as manifested by variation in repetition. This holds both for the composition of the page in its entirety as well as for its component part and for the structuring of its framing decoration, too.

To us the most striking example is its central circular panel. An encompassing outer circle sets it apart from the 14 other equally circular panels, the interlace of which is so intricately knit, that a maximum of density is achieved, which even comes close to a three-dimensionality of impression. The distribution of the red, yellow and green colours of that interlace serves to even augment

³³ As to my knowledge, Wilson was the first one to apply that term in the context of Anglo-Saxon literature and art.

³⁴ Due to the fees charged by the museums, we regret not being able to offer any copies of the objects discussed in this article. For the object discussed above we refer the reader to Wilson (1986: 20).

that plasticity and iconicity of impression. The dominating pattern of the central panel is a ribbon. It is slung in such a way as to be perceived as four leaves that are diametrically opposed to each other; two opposing leaves are filled in turn with what might be viewed as a vegetative pattern, ears of corn, the two others with what might be viewed as zoomorphic patterns. The spaces between the four leaves are filled by four smaller ribbons of interlace; the skilfulness of their slinging-pattern make the observer aware of a meticulously structuring human mind. Of special importance within our context: the plurality of creation, encompassing flora, fauna, man, has a unitary deep structure: a close view reveals how each one of these elements is but one constituent part of the ribbon that constitutes their shapes. Everything is connected with everything: the personal message of the artist's view of the world.

Other carpet pages of the *Book of Durrow* invite the same interpretation, e.g., folio 3v with its trumpet scrolls, lentoids, spiral peltae and triskeles. And so do the carpet pages of "the jewel" among illuminated manuscripts, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (London, British Library, Cotton Nero D.iv); e.g., *Lindisfarne* folio 94b, where animals are represented iconically on the margin, and more indexically within parts of the interlace ribbons, which would end in animal heads, like e.g., in folios 95, 210b, and in folio 211, too, where interlace ribbons end up in both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms. Both human and non-human forms are interwoven even more intricately on several folios of the *Book of Kells* (Dublin, Trinity College), in particular e.g., folios 2R, 2V, and 3R, where both are intertwined within one panel (evangelists and their animal symbols), but also on e.g., folio 124R, on the margin of which human and non-human forms alternate. Many initials, too, show the same interweave patterns in both books.

It is true, though the script of the *Lindisfarne Gospels* strongly indicates Irish influence, it has often been pointed out, that the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (late 7th century) are indebted to the style of several metalwork objects as had been found among the Anglo-Saxon find of the Sutton Hoo shipburial (early(!) 7th century). The style of the animal art is often invoked for that purpose; and so are the step patterns of the faceted surface of the Sutton Hoo clasp; and even more often: the mount from the base and the plaque from the side of the Sutton Hoo hanging-bowl, both of which are inlaid with enamel, which, in turn, has multicoloured millefiori inlay.

Without doubt, these are elements of style which enjoyed great preference in Anglo-Saxon metal art. What is beyond doubt, too, is the fact of the stylistic influence, exerted by metal work on book illumination.

What is doubtful, however, is the chronology of these influences. For a very lapidary pro-Celtic stance cf. Ryan (1991: 628), in support of Bruce-Mitford (1987): "Recent discoveries make it clear that the artistic background for this

piece [i.e. the Sutton Hoo hanging bowl] lies in the Irish midlands". In addition, the *Lindisfarne Gospels* share many of these elements of style with a huge number of pieces of Irish aristocratic jewellery, dating from the same period as the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, and without doubt being of Irish provenience. There are, above all, various brooches like the annular Hunterston Brooch (Hunterston, West Kilbride, Ayrshire), the style and spirit of which is recalled by the most famous "Tara" brooch (8th century; found at Bettystown, Co. Meath), and the back of the perhaps slightly later Killamery brooch, and other brooches and pins. Within the same stylistic context, there are other prestigious metal objects, too, e.g., the famous Ardagh chalice, the Derrynaflan chalice, the Derrynaflan paten (Co. Tipperary).

Thus, two possibilities cannot be ruled out: 1) though most of such hanging-bowls were found in Anglo-Saxon graves, they may well be imports, from which 2) the techniques as shown on the escutcheons of the hooks of these bowls may well have made their way to the north of England, reinforcing the Irish style, which had been dominating there, anyway. With too much rigour, perhaps, Youngs states "From the seventh century the north of England became what one eminent scholar described as a 'cultural province' of Ireland" (Youngs 1989: 14).

Summing up, Celtic art which is contemporaneous with Old English poetry shows all the characteristics which we diagnosed as distinguishing it from other Germanic poetry, and which we found in such abundance in Celtic poetry.

It certainly cannot be ruled out *a priori*, that some of these characteristics may, actually, be of Germanic heritage, which may have permeated the Irish-Scottish style of art and may have given support to corresponding pre-existing tendencies there, thus causing a kind of polygenetic reinforcement.

Again, an answer can only be approached on the basis of further evidence. This must be evidence of a kind that predates the Celtic/Anglo-Saxon contact. But, lacking written monuments of that period, it is only art again, that can provide such evidence: the Celtic art of the La Tène period (ca. 450 BC – 50 AD).

If it turns out that that Irish-Scottish-Anglo-Saxon art – and rhetoric – in Britain from the 7th century onwards shares essential characteristics with the art of the Celtic La Tène period, these characteristics

1) may legitimately be regarded as having been handed down from La Tène origins to the first millennium AD and

2) will have made their way into Irish-Scottish-Anglo-Saxon art from the Celtic part of that merger.

On the other hand, the fewer the correspondences between (earlier) La Tène art and (later) Celtic-Anglo-Saxon art of the first half of the first millennium AD, as described above, the greater the likelihood of an indigenous Germanic nature of such characteristics in art – and rhetoric.

5. Specificities of Old English and contemporaneous Celtic rhetoric and art as compared with early Celtic art

It is metal art, which yields most evidence for that early period. As we are looking for general characteristics, we shall draw on very different types of objects, in order to eliminate object- or object-type-specific parameters of style. As we have set out from the Anglo-Saxon period, we choose the road that leads backwards via five objects of art.

Object 1: The Deborough mirror from Celtic England; 1st century BC; London, British Museum.

Object 2: The bronze shield found in the Witham River near Lincoln, England; 3rd century BC; London, British Museum.

Object 3: The ceremonial bronze-iron-gold leaf enamel helmet from Amfreville-sous-les-Monts (Eure); 3rd century / second third of the 4th century BC; Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Musée des Antiquités Nationales.

Object 4: The bronze disc from Auvers-sur-Oise (Val-d'Oise); early 4th century BC; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.

Object 5: Two appliquéd bronze and coral items from a Bouvandeau chariot tomb at Somme-Tourbe (Marne); early 4th century BC; Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Musée des Antiquités Nationales.

Object 1: The Deborough mirror³⁵

Its bronze back is lavishly covered by engraved ornament, “where shapes twist and turn across the bronze, one form melting into another, patterns receding and advancing with the interplay of light and shadow as different elements of the decoration are allowed to take prominence in the eye of the beholder” (Raftery 1991: 565). Though in the period concerned the vegetal style and the plastic one had already given way to the severe and disintegrating styles, the floating lines and the flowing spaces of that object reflect an acute sensitivity for vegetality: coupled with what might appear as dozens of pairs of animal or human eyes, which, if you view the centre of the mirror in the way these modern 3D – “magic eye” – pictures have to be viewed, might as well be seen as leaves. The entire composition integrates into an human (non-human?) face: two eyes, staring at you, a gaping mouth, curls of hair (=coiled leaves) twisting backwards. The plurality of seemingly disintegrated elements is recomposed into a unity by the attention of the observer. Without doubt, a masterpiece of insular La Tène art.

It shares all major characteristics which we have thematized for both later Celtic rhetoric and later Celtic art.

³⁵ For this object we refer the reader to Andreose et al. (1991: 566).

Object 2: The Witham river bronze shield³⁶

With this object the continuously flowing vegetal style of the mid La Tène period shades over into the plastic style of the late La Tène period. Vegetal scrolls are still discernible, encircling the repoussé – and, therefore, very plastic – centre of the shield like a lightly spreading foliage, that would leave no space open, variegated as its constituent parts are, which would, nevertheless, combine into one unitary meandering ribbon; and below, already: a (also repoussée) face, two staring, round eyes (which might as well be buds), a nose-mouth area, within which the nostrils and the ornamented bridge of the nose might as well be perceived as being of a zoomorphic nature, the ears shading over from human to vegetal-palmettic: a plurality which integrates into a unity, into a – be it human, be it non-human – face; and again, too: distinctive light effects, caused by the interplay of light and shadow, due to the engraving and repoussée techniques, which were very deliberately used for that very purpose.

Quite obviously: as early as in the 3rd century BC the essentials of the characteristics which we investigate can well be traced.

Object 3: The ceremonial helmet from Amfreville-sous-les-Monts (Eure)³⁷

Dating from roughly the same period as object 2, it shares all stylistic characteristics with that object. In addition, however, there is a strong emphasis on colour, as conveyed by the contrast in materials – bronze-iron-gold-enamel; there are stretches of pure gold vs. spaces of red enamel, both appearing in combination, too, in a chain of enamel studs with gold inlays.

Quite obviously, again: anticipating major characteristics of much later Celtic art, and rhetoric, too.

Object 4: The bronze disc from Auvers-sur-Oise (Val-d'Oise)³⁸

This is a considerably older and simpler piece. It marks the transition from what we may call early La Tène style to continuous vegetal style. Crossroads between human vs. non-human, between natural vs. supernatural expression are at best in a budding stage – provided one is prone to interpret the four pairs of repoussée S- and inverted S-shapes as raising serpents, and the ensemble of each pair, along with the coral and enamel spaces between both and within the upper coils of the S-curves as a human / non-human merger of a head; coral and enamel studs contrast with the embossed gold leaves (= serpents). As early as in the 4th century: a budding fusion of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and vegetal elements. The entire surface of the disc is covered with dotted spirally

³⁶ For this object we refer the reader to Andreose et al. (1991: 562).

³⁷ For this object we refer the reader to Duval (1989: 66).

³⁸ For this object we refer the reader to Andreose et al. (1991: 198).

curling lines, which would leave uncovered only the “fleshy” parts of what may well constitute the four faces.

The patterning is not yet calculated and designed with the extreme precision of later Celtic art, but the elements, which are to become constitutive for later periods, can well be perceived in a budding stage.

Object 5: Two appliquéd bronze and coral items from a Bouvandeau chariot tomb at Somme-Tourbe (Marne)³⁹

These two items seem to be yoke or shaft mounts. They mark the beginning of the vegetal or plant style. The basic patterns of these mounts are similar in style to those of object 4, e.g., its serpent-like playfulness of the S-bodies, their points of tangency, their incessant flow. In addition, however, there is a crescendo resp. diminuendo in size of the (inverted) S-patterns, which anticipate much later works of art that would make use of perspective. The plurality of pairs of S and inverted S-curves, as running from the broad bottom to the narrow tip of these mounts, combine into a unitary undulating line, if viewed not S-shape per S-shape, but at one rapid glance along the entire mount. Furthermore, as these mounts are done in openwork, two ways of looking at them are possible: either looking at the solid parts or looking at the empty spaces between them (formerly: coral studs). To the careful observer, the second view reveals stylized (human or non-human) faces in between the vegetal solid bronze patterns.

Even in this object from the beginning of the 4th century BC the major characteristics which we diagnosed for much later Celtic art above can be seen at an incipient stage.

Summing up, it is true, the style of such Celtic art as was contemporaneous with the Anglo-Saxon epoch, has not just been handed down from the La Tène period to Christian times. Therefore, it is only with some reservation that we quote Michael Ryan: “The Celtic La Tène style was established in Britain and Ireland in the prehistoric Iron Age and appears to have survived the Roman colonization, however tenuously, in the south of Britain but more vigorously in the north and in Ireland” (Ryan 1991: 628). The Celtic La Tène style has not simply survived. Our five objects demonstrate that there had been a gradual process of development, within which by the 1st century BC all elements of those characteristics had evolved, which provided both the stylistic and the conceptual repertoire and views for 7th century and later Celtic metal art and book illumination.

³⁹ For this object we refer the reader to Duval (1989: 45).

6. Conclusion

In the light of the evidence as provided by the preceding four chapters we briefly try and retrace our chain of reasoning.

1. It has not been too difficult a task to demonstrate the enormous amount of continuity between features highlighted in early La Tène art and in much later 7th/8th centuries' Celtic art likewise.
2. This continuity gives support to the hypothesis that these selfsame features which characterize 7th/8th century AD and later metalwork and book illumination within the merger of their Irish-Scottish-Anglo-Saxon background, owe a great deal to the Celtic contributions to this very merger.
3. As that metalwork and book illumination on the one hand, and Celtic rhetoric on the other hand, share in these very features as constitutive elements, they will have figured prime in the Celtic world view.
4. Finally, as these selfsame features are traceable in other Germanic languages to a very restricted extent only, whereas they come to assume a key role in Anglo-Saxon rhetoric, the format and the *valeur* of this role in Old English poetry can only have evolved via the – hardly ever discussed – Celtic influence on Old English rhetoric.

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