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Niel Gow's Lament for the Death of His Second Wife

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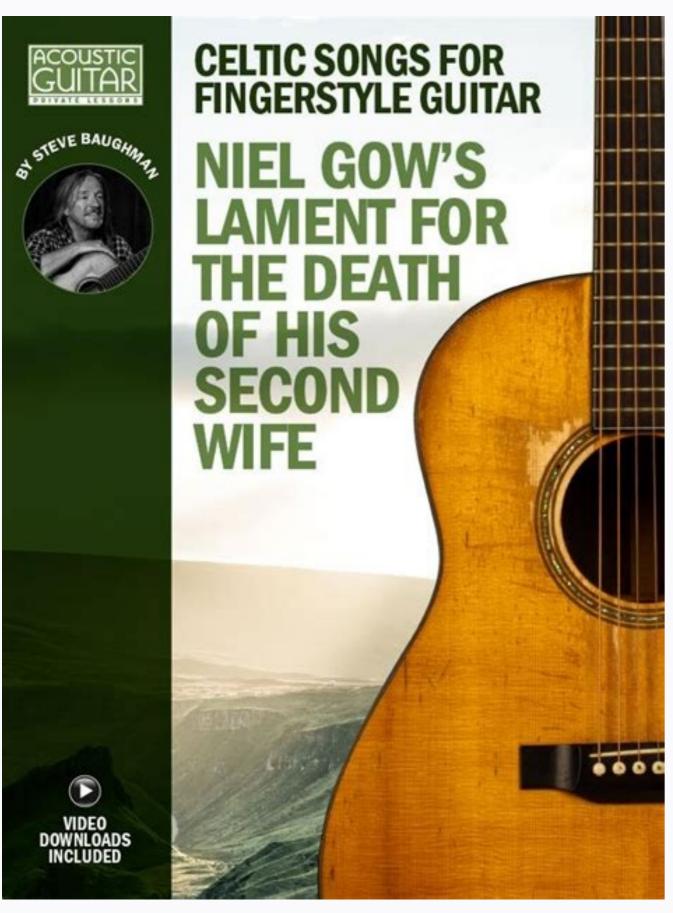
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Seductive Voices: Rethinking Female Subjectivities in *The Wife's Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*

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Abstract

This essay provides a summary of recent scholarship on the two female-voiced Old English elegies, The Wife's Lament and Widf and Eadwarer, relating to the position or condition of women in Anglo-Saxon England as 'witnessed' in those poems. In doing so I make no attempt to champion a particular view, but try instead to consider the implications of reading in particular ways and think about how the questions raised by these poems may broaden our understanding of female subject positions in Anglo-Saxon England, even if we cannot ultimately come to any conclusions about what and how those poems mean.

Full sadly I tell this tale about myself,
my own journey. I am able to tell it —
what hardships I have endured since I grew up,
new or old, never greater than now.

Ever have I struggled against the torment of my miseries.

(The Wife's Lamont lines 1–5)¹

In every revolution there are winners and losers. The emergence of written culture in the Middle Ages is no different. There is only one official version of the story and it is told by the written records themselves: the rest is very largely silence. (Stock 30)

The female speaker of the so-called The Wife's Lament beckons to us across the rifts of time, culture, and language. Her yearnings and misgivings invite us to imagine a strong, solitary female subject in the Anglo-Saxon period who, if subjugated, at least voices her protest. The speaker of Willf and Endwaer, too, offers her own sad tale in a strong female voice. These two enigmatic and isolated voices exceed the male-voiced elegies in their emotional depth and egocentrism, thereby heightening the sense of an interior selfhood. Moreover, both poems relate experiences that are particularly feminine and seem to offer, therefore, some insight into the Anglo-Saxon female psyche. In the case of The Wife's Lament, the narrator asks us to listen to the song of her sid, her 'journey'. Her journey, though,

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The unwanted wife chapter 1. The woman with the book. My wife and my life. Who is the wife.

The exact date the Wife's Lament was written is unknown, although an approximate date this poem was written ranges from around 960-990. The omission of the additive conjunction 'ond' (and) before 'ful' creates a cumulative melancholy tone, as if her lament is endless and difficult to explain. This further justifies the point critics have established that there may be another man involved in the poem. The Wife's Lament is a poem that is well known as an Anglo Saxon elegy, although to this day, it is still challenged by some scholars to be, in fact, a riddle. Her objective in doing so is to help the audience gain insight into why she feels this way before actually stating the reasons why she is in such a state of despair. She can't give up her love, but also cannot resolve the issue with her lover's kinsmen, so she is simply left to wait for him in exile, imprisoned in a dreary cave. After being exiled, the narrator in The West Germanic influences on Old English are evident in this poem as OE characteristics such as grammatical gender, which was contingent on sex are frequently used. The ellipsis here creates a heightened sense of expectation in the reader, who inevitably begins to understand the wife's despondency and mind state and therefore expects her to express her feelings through the use of similar adjectives. Since her terminology varies in accordance with her attitude, probability favours the identification of her lover who is feorres folclondes...waeter beflowen (47-49) (Literal translation: 'distant land of flowing water'). An example of her candid expression is found in lines 9-12 which quotes: 'Da ic me feran gewat folgad secan, winileas wraecca for minre weapearfe...' This is an example of how the wife expresses her feelings which echo sheer anguish but surprisingly, not contempt towards the kinsmen who have caused her to feel such pain. For example the adjective 'geomorre' (sorrowful) has a feminine ending, 're' in contrast to 'geomor' (line 17). Gnomic wisdom is an opinion or a warning that is relatable to the reader, located at the end of a poem (Definition, The Free Dictionary). "And all too often he will come to mind A happier dwelling. This poem tends to be very specific. The frequent use of amelioration in the form of 'hlaford' (lord) which the wife uses when speaking of her husband in high esteem. According to one critic in the emotionally charged closing passage she is concerned rather with her personal relationship to the man than with her formal association with him; here he appears as her friend and lover (47, 49, and 50). However, in my opinion, this is not ample evidence to suggest that she may be lamenting over the loss of more than one man. In The Wife's Lament, the dominant theme is the narrator lamenting for her lost or absent lover. It also gives us insight into the position of women during the Anglo Saxon period, when women were literally owned by men. The literal translation of the quote is 'Grave occupy when on daybreak walk under the oaktree throughout this earthcave'. Even though Faye Walker-Pelkey, a literary scholar, points out the poem has "riddle-like flavour" (The Wife's Lament: Possibly the Most Perfect Anglo Saxon Riddle Ever Written), The Wife's Lament remains an expressive, complex, and emotional Anglo-Saxon riddle characteristic. This is indicative of the love she has lost as a result of her lord's departure. The imagery of the old cave, the dark valleys and the tangled mass of prickly plants manifest into physical images for the wife. Even though such headship is rarely exercised. The narrative structure of the lament is similar to a conventional poem. Greenfield, The Wife's Lament Reconsidered). The poem is complex, with vivid use of imagery and tone, altogether consistent with the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon elegies. Most Anglo-Saxon elegies are monologues spoken by an unidentified characteristics of Anglo-Saxon elegies. and friendship, and are consistent with the tone of longing and reminiscing for what was lost. "The Wife holds on to love -her love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and the remembrance of his love for her husband and his love for creates the mood and establishes the morbid tone this poem. And joyless is the place. Throughout the poem, we the reader are experiencing the narrator's ache of absence and longing. Grief must always be For him who yearning longs for his beloved -" (The Wife's Lament, lines 53-55). Share this: Facebook Twitter Reddit LinkedIn WhatsApp The majority of this poem focuses on her present feelings rather than the love she has for her husband. She had been exiled from society by her lord's kinsmen, and was sent to live in a cold, dark, earthy cave. Old is this earth-cave, all I do is yearn. Share this: Facebook Twitter Reddit LinkedIn WhatsApp The Wife's Lament is an Old English poem, found in the Exeter Book, also known as Codex Exoniesis, a tenth century documentation of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Stanley B. The poem is condensed with the emotional pattern woven by the woman's feelings, and through the use of imagery, the Anglo-Saxon elegy displays a consistent tone of sadness, loneliness, grief, longing for the better, and emptiness. Stanley B. Greenfield, a well-known literary scholar, believes the Old English elegy to be defined as "a relatively short reflective or dramatic poem embodying a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation, and expressing an attitude towards that experience" (Klees, Research Paper). The frequent use of direct address such as 'hy' (they) and 'mec' (me) shows how vehemently she expresses her plight and troubled state of mind. "Many of the riddles begin with the first pronoun 'I', as does the opening of 'The Wife's Lament' (The Wife's Lament: Possibly the Most Perfect Anglo Saxon Riddle Ever Written). Elaborate. The syntax of this poem differs greatly to that of Middle English. Her husband has left her, for reasons unknown, but the wife supposes he too is wishing for the better life they had once shared. The Wife's Lament is a poem about a wife pining for the better life they had once shared. The Wife's Lament is a poem about a wife pining for the better life they had once shared. concludes with "... a bit of gnomic wisdom to the effect that 'It is woe for him who must long for his beloved with a sad heart -'" (Stanley B. It denotes the anguish of the wife lamenting her bitter feelings as a result of the departure of her husband. This idea stem from the fact that this lament is based on something she has lost rather than the feelings she has towards the man who has departed from her. Get your custom essay on "The Wife's Lament "Get custom paper NEW! smart matching with writer This Anglo Saxon poem has also been characterized as a riddle, where the narrator displays an element of mystery in her writing. Greenfield had also noted that there was an element of mystery and riddling in The Wife's Lament (The Wife's Lament: Possibly the Most Perfect Anglo Saxon Riddle Ever Written). In the first half of the poem, the wife exposes her mind state through the use of pre- modifiers such as 'heard heortan' (hiding heart) (line 43). The Wife's Lament is written in the first person, in the present tense. She is reminiscing about the better life she had once known compared to the present life she is barely tolerating. This is an example which demonstrates the difference between Modern English and Old English and lis also evidence that this poem was written by a woman, from a feminine viewpoint. Anglo-Saxon elegies are also known for their vivid imagery. The earliest editors disregarded the fact that the speaker is a woman but since this poem vividly portrays the sadness at such a dramatic way. The poem shares the same characteristics with those of an elegy, which include the passing of time, pain, exile, separation and longing. This helps the reader to empathise with her in order to fully understand her plight and immediately sets the melancholy mood of the poem. Although The Wife's Lament is known as an Anglo-Saxon elegy, there is still a debate regarding whether the poem could be considered an Anglo-Saxon riddle instead. The adverbials of time 'niwes' and 'ealdes;" 'old' and 'new' followed by the adversative conjunction 'no' (but) indicates the way she previously felt is incomparable to her present state. "... I have had to suffer since I first grew up, Present and past, but never more than now -" (The Wife's Lament, lines 3-4). The Wife's Lament is an elegy that tells the story of a female narrator mourning for her husband, and she is reflecting on her great loss. Here, the object, 'grave' precedes the verb and the subject, and as a result the noun which is also the epitome of the whole subject of the poem,' grave' is immediately foregrounded, and as a result gains the readers sympathy and also enables the reader to sympathise with her. The wife speaks of her anguish which is heartfelt; therefore the absence of figurative language such as metaphors is appropriate in this case. The Wife's Lament, although written in iambic pentametre doesn't rhyme This poem is written as a dramatic monologue, and the narrator laments her husband's departure which results in feelings of loneliness and despair. "... Since my dear lord Is outcast, far off in a distant land, Frozen by storms beneath a stormy cliff And dwelling in some desolate abode Beside the sea; my weary-hearted lord Must suffer pitiless anxiety -" (The Wife's Lament, lines 47-52). Full often here The absence my lord comes sharply to me-" (The Wife's Lament, lines 29-34). The narrator experiences the pattern of loss when she is separated from her lover, but she receives no consolation. Don't use plagiarized sources. For example, lines 33-36 'Frynd sind on eorpan, leofe lifgende leger weardiad, Ponne ic on uhtan ana gonge under actreo geond pas eorpscrafu'. She has an inward emotional experience of loss, fear and loneliness (Cavill Paul, Heather Ward, 36-38). The wife experiences loneliness through the passing of time, wishing for the life of happiness she had once known. The Wife's Lament may in fact be tense and loosely interpreted as religious, but it is not usual or pithy. There are the desolate landscapes, the coldness of winter, ruined or abandoned structures, violent storms at sea and darkness (Two Old English Elegies from the Exeter Book: The Wanderer and The Ruin, 1-2). The dales are dark with high hills up above, Sharp hedge surrounds it, overgrown with briars. Anglo-Saxon riddles tend to be metaphorical, tense, pithy, usual, and in the case from The Exeter Book, in which The Wife's Lament appears, they were religious. He too is in a cold, dark, desolate place. She initiates the poem by introducing her intentions, namely 'Ic pis gidee wrece'. The poem follows a similar structure as other Anglo-Saxon riddles. Get Help With Your Essay If you need assistance with writing your essay, our professional essay writing service is here to help! Essay Writing Service The Wife's Lament is a poem based on the bitterness and despondency a wife goes through the vivid use of elegiac imagery. She lost her importance and role in society, as well as her sense of belonging. The Wife's Lament is one of the 131 writings found in the Exeter Book. The wife's suffering is further enhanced because her lord is in agony.

A Wife's Lament; The Freedom Charter; Women Rise Up Against Apartheid and Change the Movement; Mandela on Trial; Share to Google Classroom. In the 1952 Defiance Campaign, the ANC mobilized thousands of ordinary people to protest unjust laws by deliberately and publicly breaking some of those laws. That campaign energized the movement, causing ANC ... The Wife's Lament. She Laments. Oh, I can relate a tale right here, make myself a map of miseries & trek right across. I can say as much as you like — how many gut-wretched nights ground over me once I was a full-grown woman, from early days to later nights, never ever any more than right now. (1-4) When is it never a struggle, a torment, this arc of misfortune, mine alone? It started ...

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