From *IrilaR* to *Erl* – identity and career 5th to 9th century CE

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Prior to 536–550 CE eleven Early Nordic runic inscriptions mention the *irilaR*, a warrior and an autonomous follower of a sufficiently wealthy and powerful leader, who was probably a hall owner. *Beowulf*, composed after 536 with roots in the 6th–7th century, is known to us in an Anglo-Saxon version that deals with *eorl* 55 times. In the poem, we learn more about an *eorl*'s role and identity. Beowulf and his retinue are *eorls*. In the beginning of the 9th century, the Saxon poem about the life of Jesus, *Hêliand*, mentions *erl* 93 times because his followers, like Beowulf's, are *erls*. In *Hêliand*, *erls* as a group and social institution is a wider historical phenomenon than in *Beowulf*. This chronological series of written sources brings the prehistoric *irilaR* safely to the historic *erl*. Thus, based on three case studies one may describe how the identity, role and status of the Scandinavian and in all probability even Saxon pre-536, *irilaR* concept changed during a 400-year period.

Introduction

During the 2010s, Scandinavian prehistory has become better linked to history. This has happened before, for instance, when the Danevirke defence system was linked to earlier historical sources, Hellmuth Andersen (1999). We owe the present change mainly to the dating of the Fimbulwinter, which today is considered to be the result of volcanic eruptions. They resulted in significant anomalies in surface temperatures in 536 and 540 as well as a less significant drop in 547 CE. The precise character of the process, as well as its cause and effect, is still debated, see Toohey & al. (2016) & Büntgen & al. (2016). Nevertheless, this change in climate conditions has been easy to incorporate into the archaeological narrative about 6th century Scandinavia. The climate crisis in the 540s was probably followed up plague, which is attested in graves from the late 6th century north of the Alps. Whether plague was pandemic can be answered only after more DNA analyses have been studied, see Gutsmiedl-Schümann & al. (2018). The crisis, therefore, began as a long decade marked by a dust veil that

cooled down the atmosphere and obscured the sun, depriving the year of its summer, and continued with disease. The veil caused growth stagnation and crop failure during several consecutive years. Its climatic effect is visible in tree rings, ice cores, abandoned settlements, social change, material culture and myth. As students of Scandinavian Iron Age, we are indebted to researchers such as Morten Axboe, Bo Gräslund and Neil Price for making the connection between the winter and archaeological past (see e.g. Axboe 1999 & 2001; Gräslund 2008; Göthberg 2007: 440–422); Eriksson 2009: 269; Herschend 2009: 287–290; Löwenborg 2010; Price & Gräslund 2012; Iversen 2017; Gjerpe 2017). In this article the decade is considered to be a cold *c*. 15-year long acute climate crisis that did not wane until *c*. 550 and continued to influence the climate, albeit less and less, for an additional 60-90 years (see Toohey & al. 2016: Fig. 3A; Büntgen & al. 2016: Fig. 4b).

Recently, moreover, Bo Gräslund's analysis of *Beowulf* as an essentially Gotlandic tale from the 6th or 7th century about early 6th century events up and until 536-550 CE, exemplifies the new possibilities that arise when Scandinavian Iron Age becomes linked to history (Gräslund 2018). In addition, the close connection pointed out by Svante Fischer (2019) between the Sovana hoard (t.p.q 477) and solidi imported to Öland in the late 460s, has put parts of the Scandinavian solidus material into an important 5th century Italian context. In short, the period 450 to 550 CE has become historical and firmly linked to Western Europe. In this new situation (see e.g. Widgren 2012: 131–133) and with the multitude of questions that indirectly benefit from the present situation (see for instance, Löwenborg 2010; Zachrisson 2011; Iversen 2017; Ilves 2018; Holmberg & al. 2020), I intend to discuss the *irilaʀ* (earl). This concept is well anchored in the Early Iron Age hall context (Herschend 2009 & 2020A: 95–98).

The discussion is based on three early textual sources:

(1) The Early Nordic runic inscriptions. They give us a glimpse of an *irilaʀ* before 536–550. See Samnordisk runtextdatabas, signum-based and Kieler Runenprojekt, place name based. These inscriptions are *irilaʀ* statements or declarations.

(2) The Old English *Beowulf* poem (Fulk & al. 2008; Klaeber 1950; trans. Chickering 2006, or Liuzza 2013) and its protagonist Beowulf, who was himself an *eorl*, highlights an originally South Scandinavian past, up and until the Long Cold Decade, later translated into Old English and composed, perhaps as more than one poem, mainly in the 8th century (see for instance Neidorf 2014). *Beowulf* is a saga about a life consciously put into a historical context.

(3) The Old Saxon *Hêliand* (Taeger 1984; trans. Murphy 1992) anchors the life of Jesus in an early 9th century Saxon analysis of the past. In *Hêliand* the *erl* is fitted

into a historical and hermeneutic analysis about the life of a man, based on four sagas or gospels. Yet in the Old High German gospel harmony *Otfrids Evangelienbuch*, 7100 odd lines composed *c.* 865 CE, there are no *erls*.

<div align="center">∗</div>

These three cases make up the core of the analysis, and but a few of the other *c.* 275 earls in the Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry are added to the discussion. *Irilaʀ*, *eorl* and *erl* respectively, are seen as related to a social institution originally characterised by great able men. The term is common in Early Nordic inscriptions, less so in *Beowulf* or *Hêliand* and indeed in the Old Saxon *Genesis*.

Table 1. The density of *Irilaʀ*, *eorl* and *erl* in the principle texts.

Texts	No of signs	*Irilaʀ* etc.	Density measure
Runes	c. 3,700	11	11/0.37 ≈ 29.7
Beowulf	c. 93,000	55	55/9.30 ≈ 05.9
Hêliand	c. 273,000	93	93/27.30 ≈ 03.4
Genesis	c. 12,300	1	1/1.23 ≈ 00.8
Hêliand & Genesis	c. 285,300	94	94/28.53 ≈ 03.3
Andreas	c. 49,730	16	16/4.97 ≈ 03.2
Elene	c. 37,700	14	14/3.77 ≈ 03.6

If the sample is widened to include *eorl* in Anglo-Saxon laws the minimalistic Latin translation *satelles principis* – "a leader's instrumental follower" (Thorpe 1840: glossary; Lewis & Short, *satelles*) covers the better part of the meaning also of the Early Nordic, Beowulfian and Old Saxon examples without making anyone much the wiser. In these latter texts, the term often refers to a complex personal relation between leader and follower rather than a formal relation between a King and his Earl. In the almost 775,000 characters in the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, not counting *Beowulf*, *Andreas* and *Elene*, the density measure introduced in Table 1 is *c.* 2.0. The earl frequency in *Andreas* and *Elene* is similar to that of *Hêliand* (Table 1). Earl, therefore, is not an obviously important word in most Anglo-Saxon contexts.

In several Old English poems, earl is a tag attached to Biblical fathers, such as Abraham and Haran, in *Genesis*, l. 1736 or Adam, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah and Zacharias, *The Descent into Hel*, ll. 44–46. It is also used in a more general sense referring to men in the higher echelons of society as in *Andreas*, ll. 199, 251 or *Daniel* ll. 65, 192 & 260. Some texts, such as *The Wanderer* or *Deor* paint a more complicated picture of earls and their lords. In *Elene* earls are rather Beowulfian.

Earl in the *Poetic Edda* (14 examples) is used in a positive sense as a present-day phenomenon allegedly belonging to a period earlier than 536-50. The texts look back upon this period (Neckel 1927: glossary). In the short and peripheral commemorative 11ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ century Swedish runic inscriptions, *jarl* is mentioned *c*. 18 times (Peterson 2007) in what seems, owing to the short texts and the fact that rune stones seldom commemorate the highest echelons of society, to be a varied usage.

In Old Norse prose, *jarl* refers to an institution and a man closest in rank to the king (Þorbjörg Helgadóttir 2011; *Kulturhistorisk leksikon* 1981). Nearly 97 percent of the quotations refer to formal *satelles principis* notion. Of the remaining four, one pair refers generally speaking to a man, whilst the other pair is obscene referring to the male member. Notwithstanding, this last pair from *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, Chp. VII, is the important one — because indirectly and by burlesque implication, it refers back to Beowulfian times and the complex fact that a man's closest follower, despite their close and intimate relation, may or may not serve him well. This boastful, yet ironic saga episode stresses the loyal companion's executive role as well as the pleasure this loyalty inspires in the master (on Norse humour and gender see Friðriksdóttir 2015). Shaped as burlesque precedented locker-room talk, *Bósa saga* highlights Theweleit's analysis of male phantasy (1989: 346–422), albeit in a 14ᵗʰ-century story about a supposedly mid-first millennium grossly distorted adventure. The quotations, nevertheless, reflect the intimate and difficult homo-social companionship that eventually becomes inherent in the *irilaʀ* concept.

Old Danish *jærl/jerl* did not survive the 16ᵗʰ century because the concept had already become obsolete except in translations referring to the odd Norwegian or Swedish context, Gammeldansk ordbog & seddelsamling: *jarl*. Modern Danish *jarl*, therefore, is the Old Norse spelling re-introduced after a hiatus in order to cover the historical concept — "the man closest in rank to the king".

Irilaʀ, eorl and *erl*

EARLY NORDIC RUNIC INSCRIPTIONS

Since summer 2017 and the find from Øverby, Rakkestad in Østfold we know of 11 texts referring to an *irilaʀ* (Figure 1). These inscriptions are thoroughly discussed by Iversen & al. (2019: 82–86; see also Schulte, in press). On the bracteate from Trollhättan and the stone from Järsberg the word is written *erilaʀ*, and for that reason these two inscriptions are probably among the younger ones (Axboe & Källström 2013; Jansson 1978); Iversen & al. 2019: 79–82). The earliest relatively secure dates may be *c*. 400 CE, which does not exclude earlier dates (Garbazc 2016). Mees (2003: 44–50) argues that the roots of *irilaʀ* and *jarl* is a Proto-Indo-European word that

means »great, powerful, unique«. South of Øverby none of the texts, *perhaps* with the exception of Lindholmen, indicate a local earl. North of Trollhättan they all do (see also Iversen & al. 2019: 79–81; on the texts in general, see Samnordisk runtext-databas under the signum referred to in Table 2, and Kieler Runenprojekt under the place name; on the geography of Early Nordic rune inscriptions in Scandinavia, see Herschend 2020A: 15–45).
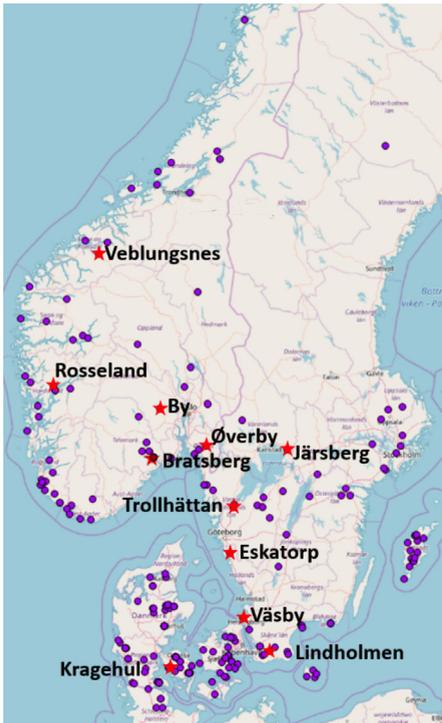

Fig. 1. *Map of the Early Nordic runic inscriptions, purple dots.* Irilaʀ *texts are marked with a red star and place name. Based on Samnordisk Runtextdatabas.*

The self-identifying expression *ek irilaʀ* – "I (am/the) earl" is important in all inscriptions expect in the one from Øverby, which says:

Table 2. *Irila*ʀ and *erila*ʀ in Old Nordic rune inscriptions.

SR signum	Place	Text
N KJ16	Bratsberg	ek irilaʀ
N KJ56 †U	Veblungsnes	ek irilaʀ wiwila ÷
N KJ69 U	Rosseland	ek wagigaʀ irilaʀ agilamudon
DR IK241,2 $U	Väsby	fahidu uuilald uuigaʀ ek irilaʀ
DR IK241,1 $U	Eskatorp	fahidu uuilald uuigaʀ ek irilaʀ
N KJ71 U	By, Sigdal	ek irilaʀ hroʀaʀ hroʀeʀ orte þat arina ut alaifu dr rmþï
....	....	....
DR 196 U	Kragehul	ek irilaʀ asugisalas muha haite gagaga ginu gahe ...lija ...hagala wiju big- ...
....	....	....
DR 261 $U	Lindholmen	ek irilaʀ sa wilagaʀ hateka : aaaaaaaarrrnnn-bmuttt : alu :
....	....	....
N Øverby	Øverby	Lu irilaʀ raskaʀ runoʀ in isni: .... ateʀ fau ...ini
Vg IK639 $U	Trollhättan	ek ekrilaʀ · mariþeubaʀ haite · wrait alaþo
Vr 1 U	Järsberg	leubaʀ hite ÷ harabanaʀ hait.. ek erilaʀ runoʀ waritu

Hew the irilaʀ Brisk the runes
in for Isni:[1] I I I I I I I I I[2] ạteʀfạụ.[3]
... ... ịni .[4]   (trans. after Iversen & al. 2019: 69–74).
————

[1] Or: in isni. [2] Nine vertical staves of an otherwise erased string of *c*. 8 runes. [3] A lexical and/or non-lexical string [4] Erased string except for three runes.

What the noun or name isni or Isni means is unclear. The point, nevertheless, is Brisk, which means just that. In Øverby, rather than signifying to a self-identifier, *irila*ʀ would seem to refer to a social institution (Iversen & al. 2019: 63–64). What and for whom, except for himself, an *irila*ʀ writes is often as obscure as his expressions "ut ailafu", "uuilald" (object?), "hagala" (power?), "alaþo" or "isni". Nevertheless, an *irila*ʀ, who often points to his ability to write and in addition masters non-lexical writing (4 cases out of 11 in the Early Nordic corpus), would seem to have a self-proclaimed reputation for writing. He paints, hews, writes and does whatever he does with a strong will to refer to himself. Judging from his names, he is fierce, nimble, fast and cunning – if he is not a great thief or a thief from the sea as in Trollhättan, Naglum. In Järsberg in Värmland he seems to have started out as a sweet boy only to become a raven. This kind of personal development brings an Odinic helper or

battlefield scavenger to mind and so does the inscription on the spear shaft from Kragehul with which Muha "the roaring one" consecrates (see Sundquist 2009). Probably, the powerful consecration is the non-lexical rune string he may have cried out roaringly (?) when he threw his spear and began the strife. An *irilaʀ* may also be rich and mariner enough to give away gold bracteates at convenient landing places, such as, Eskatorp, Väsby and Trollhättan. Despite being a wealthy literate doer and a self-confident man-of-all-work, the *irilaʀ*, nevertheless, belongs to someone and has a role to play similar to high-ranking "serfs" and "guests" mentioned in other in-scriptions (on *irilaʀ* see also Düwel 2000: 33–34).

Table 3. The name of the *irilaʀ*'s prince.

Signum SR	Place	Text	Translation
N KJ71 U	By, Sigdal	ek irilaʀ hroʀaʀ hroʀeʀ	Nimble or brisk
DR 196 U	Kragehul	ek irilaʀ asugisalas	A god's arrow shaft
N KJ69 U	Rosseland	Ek irilaʀ agilamudon	Protector of the cutting edge

Typically, an *irila*'s name tells us something about his character (Table 4). Three references refer to an *irilaʀ* as someone who belongs to someone else (Table 3). By in Sigdal may be a matter of Hroʀaʀ referring to himself as his father's son rather than referring to his lord. The two other designations, however, are more precise and as names very different from an *irila*'s name. They do not signify a doer or an executive, instead they are highly symbolic. If you fight for someone who protects your cutting edge or if you fight with or for someone who has access to a god's arrow shaft, then you probably believe that you are on the winning team. Links to the Æsir may unite *irilaʀ* and prince. In short, an *irilaʀ* is his lord's autonomous retainer. For less min-imalistic and more formal interpretations of the *irilaʀ* (see Mees 2003).

Table 4. The meaning of the *irilaʀ*' name.

Signum SR	Place	Name	Translation
N KJ71 U	By, Sigdal	Hroʀaʀ	nimble *or* brisk
DR IK241,1 $U	Eskatorp	Wigaʀ	Fight
Vr 1 U	Järsberg	Leubaʀ, Harabanaʀ	sweet & raven
DR 196 U	Kragehul	Muha	roar *or* one in a gang
DR 261 $U	Lindholmen	Sa Wilagaʀ	he (who is) cunning
N KJ69 U	Rosseland	Wagigaʀ	the fiercely faring
Vg IK639 $U	Trollhättan	Mariþeubaʀ	sea thief or famous thief
N KJ56 †U	Veblungsnes	Wiwila	throw oneself upon
DR IK241,2 $U	Väsby	Wigaʀ	Fight
N Øverby	Øverby	Raskaʀ	Brisk

It would seem that the inscriptions are concerned with giving people appellative names pointing to essential characteristics. From the 5th-century Øverby inscription, we may even infer that the term *irilaʀ* had by then come closer to becoming a label or title given to a gifted and effective executive with martial skills. This man is vigorously pushing for himself, when he points to his being an *irilaʀ*. Iversen & al. (2019) discuss the *irilaʀ* stressing a formal ideal, and they sum up their conclusion:

> *Vi mener det må finnes en utvikling i rollen irilaʀ/erilaʀ som kan gjenfinnes i rollene jarl og skáld i yngre jernalder. Da samfunnet vokste frem igjen etter pest og nedgangs-tider på 500-tallet, ble nye administrative og militære roller etablert med spor av eldre systemer.* (Iversen & al. 2019: 91)

> In our opinion, there must be a development of the *irilaʀ/erilaʀ* role that can be rediscovered in the roles of the *jarl* (earl) and the *skáld* (scop) in the Late Iron Age. When society started to grow again after plague and slump in the 6th century, new administrative and military roles came in place marked by reminis-cences of older systems. (My translation)

Arguably, there are texts in the corpus of runic inscriptions that seem to mirror prosodic development Herschend (2020A: 96–102). Typically, however, an *irilaʀ*, although he masters long and complicated texts, does never lapse into poetry. Since an *irilaʀ* travels and sponsors bracteates, which as a cultural phenomenon are con-nected to 5th-century Roman gold coins, not least solidi (Fischer 2008; 2019), some are hardly without an extra-Scandinavian experience. Nevertheless, those who pride themselves of being an *irilaʀ*, are traditional, Scandinavians. However, except for the absent word *irilaʀ*, there are several inscriptions, even prosodic texts, which may well have been written by an *irilaʀ*, for instance, the men behind the Noleby or Hogganvik stones (Samnordisk runtextdatabas: Vg 63 $U and N Viking2011 28 U). It seems plausible, therefore, that when someone identifies himself as an *irilaʀ*, he writes in his »*irilaʀ* capacity« denoting himself as representing an informal social institution.

THE BEOWULFIAN *EORL*

Beowulf consists of two freestanding poems, PART I & II. They are arranged as a pair. Originally, the second poem was *c.* half as long as the first. In PART I most events take place *c.* 50 years before most of those in PART II. Nevertheless, the narrative point expressed in the abrupt first line of PART II: "After that it came to pass ' in later days", l. 2200, is the fact that time has passed and the protagonist grown old. As an analysis

of the past each part centres on traumatic 6ᵗʰ century violence in the southeastern part of South Scandinavia. In the first, Beowulf defeats two vicious minor monsters, in the second, both he and a formidable ancient monster die, and the Iron Age world of its day and age it is lost. *Beowulf* is a saga, corroborated by empirical facts about life in times of escalating violence culminating in the mid-6ᵗʰ century, see Gräslund (2018).

Beowulf is an *eorl* with a befitting wolf name *beado-wulf* – War?-Wolf, Bothworth & Toller (online), compare Table 3. He expresses himself in alliterating plainlanguage long lines, rather than prose. As a protagonist, therefore, he does not speak like a 5ᵗʰ-century *irila*ʀ. Nevertheless, the poems befit a specific 5ᵗʰ-6ᵗʰ century South Scandinavian past.

Beowulf PART I & II are anonymous poems, divided into sections or fitts of different lengths. An Old English *fitt*, Old High German *fizze* or Latin *lectio* is a section, passage or reading passage. The German word does also mean "thread" or "tissue", that is, something spun and/or woven. In Latin, the point is simple: a *lectio* is not a *capitulum*, that is, not a section with a heading that signals a narrative unit within a larger work, that is, the kind of unit that has a narrative beginning and end. Instead, a *lectio* is a section in a flow. *Lectio* means collecting, selecting or reading out in a performative way, Lewis & Short (capitulum, lectio). A fitt, therefore, is a passage, read out from a textual flow, see Fulk (2006:91 & 109). One may compose one's narrative as a series of passages similar to chapters, or as a chain of sections in a narrative flow of episodes comparable to a series of musical movement. In the *Beowulf* case, the epic flow of PART I & II is so similar to a continuous web that there is no point other than scholarly convenience in giving the poem a specific name (Figure 2). Its fitts, as we read them, are not the author's original sectioning of the text, see Fulk (2006), if indeed a specific sectioning was ever intended. The scribes or someone involved in the production of the manuscript, nevertheless, had ideas about sectioning the epic and numbered the fitts accordingly (Fulk 2006, with references.). And they made mistakes, but did so for performative reasons.

Fitts that belong to classes with a central value of 72 or 60 lines dominate. The time it takes to recite a 60- to 72-line fit, may be 5-7 minutes, and that is the basic rhythm of the poem or the scribe's idea of a narrative pulse. The break between two fitts is important because it forces an interruption upon the listener. What happens after a break may be a continuation perhaps from a new angle, a detour, a shift of focus or a new tempo. A section may come to a narrative end, to a cliffhanger or just to a halt, but it is always a break.
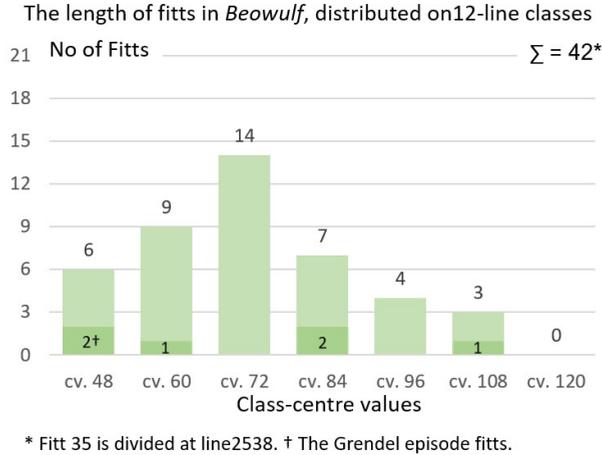
The length of fitts in *Beowulf*, distributed on 12-line classes

* Fitt 35 is divided at line 2538. † The Grendel episode fitts.

Fig. 2. The length of the fitts in Beowulf *in general and specifically in the Grendel episode.*

The narrative, especially PART II, is complex with flashbacks, time jumps, detours and parallel themes, such as funerals, which surface in different places in the poems. Given these circumstances, trying to define the length of a fitt, that is, where to make a break, is reasonable. If, for instance, the Grendel episode had not been divided into several fitts, it would have comprised *c.* 350 lines and probably called for several breaks anyway. Moreover, from a performative point of view, some episodes, for instance the Finnsburg episode, benefits greatly from the cut between ll. 1124 & 1125. In conclusion: The author wrote many possible breaks into the epic and those who copied the work and probably whoever performed it understood it as intended to be performed in fitts and cuts of varied, but suitable length. Yet there is no obvious series of fitts. The text is a tapestry.

When *eorl* verses occur, the word itself may be a significant marker within a fitt such as in l. 627, in which the queen of the Danes uses the term. In this specific context, it turns out to become one of a pair, ll. 627 & 636–637. In the first line, Wealtheow – Foreign Serf (Peterson 2004), mentions the need for an *eorl* to take on the monster Grendel and in the second, Beowulf, among a host of silent Danish *eorls*, rises to the occasion suggesting himself for her *eorl*'s job declaring himself *eorl*-material. This is an essential point, because it explains the runic expression *ek irilaʀ* – "I am an earl" meaning: I, inasmuch as I am an earl, volunteer for the job because

someone to whom I am loyal has asked for an earl. This devotedness and your capability to win makes you an earl. Eventually, however, as in the Øverby inscription, earl may signify a specific social institution hopefully manned by someone like Beowulf, who adhere to the agency of an earl, that is, to *eorlscipe*—earl-ship.

    Although *eorl* verses are spread out over the poem, they may cluster in an episode that span more than one fitt, such as Beowulf's night fight with Grendel in King Hróðgar's hall Heorot. This pivotal story starts in Fitt 11 after a clear cut between Fitt 10 & 11 and ends in Fitt 12. The *eorl* verses, therefore, run as a spine and undertone in two consecutive fitts, which cover Wealtheow's political speech when king Hróðgar – Famous Spear, Peterson (2004), has agreed to let *eorl* War Wolf help him out should Grendel attack the hall during the night. What seems a stray mentioning of an earl in l. 627, turns out to become the beginning of a model dramatic and central *eorl* tale. At its centre, that is, between Wealhtheow's call for an earl and Grendel's narrow escape from Beowulf's grip and the hall, losing an arm, there is a singular pivotal line, l. 689. It describes Beowulf, the *eorl*, as calm and relaxed while everybody else are scared fearing that Grendel will soon be at the hall. In *Beowulf*, therefore, the *eorl* in ll. 627, 637, 689, 761, 769, 791 & 795 make up a structure in order to define Beowulf's dedication and actions as normative »*eorl*« behaviour (Figure 3).
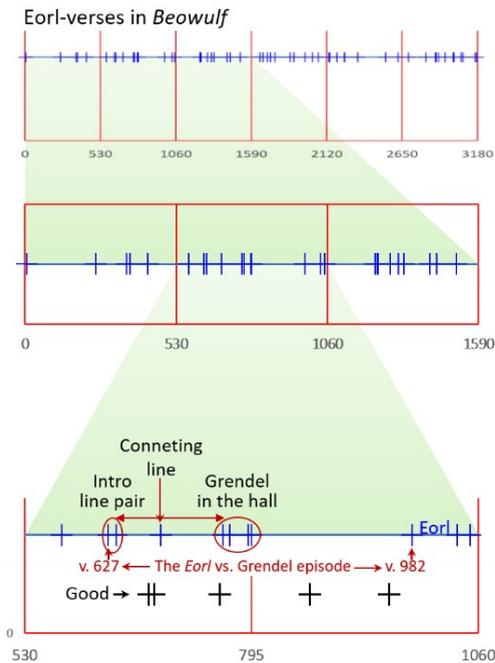

Fig. 3. The usage of the words eorl *and* god *in* Beowulf *as a whole and more specifically in the Grendel episode.*

This technique is similar to the way the author uses the notion »good«, Herschend (1998: 81–90). Good is partly used in parallel with »*eorl*«, inasmuch as »good« frames the period during which Beowulf is in charge of the hall after the king has left it. The scop describes Beowulf as good in l. 675 and in the morning when the king returns, he too calls Beowulf good in l. 956. Between ll. 675 & 956, Beowulf is called good in l. 758 when he fulfils his promise to Wealhtheow and confronts Grendel. In the morning before the king arrives at the scene those who have come to see where Grendel lost his impressive arm call Hróðgar a good king in l. 863. However, the whole story about Grendel's defeat and Beowulf's victory does not come to an end until l. 990, that is, with Fitt 15. By then Grendel's arm and its giant claw has been nailed as an ornament to one of Heorot's bargeboards, and the hall is ready to be refurnished after the fight. In l. 982 this final passage points out that we can thank "the young earl's", strength for this happy end. The tale about the model *eorl*, therefore, starts in Fitt 9, l. 627, with the word *eorl* and ends with Fitt 15 and the word *eorl* in l. 982. *Eorl* frames the whole "Beowulf vs Grendel" episode. Good, in its turn, structures and frames that part of the tale in which Beowulf, substituting the king, is in charge of the hall. Finally, *eorl* clusters during Grendel's attack in the central part of the whole episode. Owing to the Grendel episode, the goodness relation between Beowulf and Hróðgar has been building up over the night and thus good Famous Spear rewards good War Wolf. *Good*, therefore, grows in relational roles, while earl and king are individual roles – the earl accepts the king's commission, if successful, the king rewards his earl. On this loyal, albeit rare win-win situation their homosocial goodness relation thrives.

The prosody of the epic reflects the *Eorl*'s identity and agency. The "e" in *eorl* is always accented and lifted, and it always alliterates. It is relatively easy to alliterate on a vowel and in lines where the lifts are vowels, their frequency is distributed as the blue background in Figure 4. Even though there is always one "e" alliterating on *eorl* in *eorl*-lines, there may be two. Thus, when *eorl* is introduced as a lift, it attracts lifted "*e*-s" to alliterate with at the expense of all the other vowels except æ (Figure 4, green columns). It is worth noting, therefore, that the difference in the lift to the pitch of an "e", "eo", "ea" or an "æ" is often relatively small while it is larger between "e" and other vowels. This means that in terms of melody and pitch the alliteration pattern in connection with the word *eorl* tends to be monotone.

If we look into the alliterative patterns of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lift-carrying syllables in the long lines, that is the three possible ones, it becomes apparent that earl-lines do not compare with a random sample of vowel-alliterating lines. As expected, the x*ee*, *e*x*e*, *ee*x and *eee* patterns make up the difference (Figure 5B, yellow columns). If
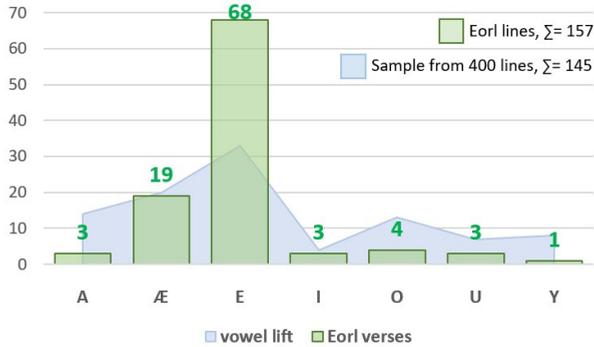
Fig. 4. The percental usage in Beowulf *of alliterating vowels in long lines. Blue background: a random sample representing the general usage of vowels. Green columns: the deviant usage in* eorl*-lines.*

we check the alliteration patterns in earl-lines, 65 percent have two or three e-alliterating words. Moreover, in the six most frequent alliteration patterns, which comprises 56 percent of all patterns, the only vowels are e and æ. If we compare the patterns of the earl-lines with a random vowel-alliterating sample defined as taken from every 5ᵗʰ verse in the first 2000 lines except from lines containing *eorl*, then the contrast is striking (Figure 5A). The random sample has many more combinations, but fewer alliterating lines characterised by double- or triple-*e* combinations.

The *eorl* verses tend to excel in *e*-alliterations and in their context. This signifies the importance of the word and an emphatic line construction. Sometimes, moreover, imbedded semi-random rhymes as in l. 1967–8 support emphasis: *elne geeodon,* ' *to ðæs ðe eorla hleo // bonan ...*—"with strength they went ' to where the earls' protector // the bane of ..." or l. 2021 about Wealhtheow: *eorlum on ende* ' *ealuwæge bær*—"to the earls on end ' the ale-cup bore". If necessary, e-alliterations may infest two consecutive lines, for instance, when Wulfgar, the *ellenrof* – strength renown – walks up the hall to old Hróðgar, who sits in his high seat elevated among his earls. Wulfgar stands above him:

> *e*ald ond *u*nhar ' mid his *e*orla ge<u>d</u>riht;
> *e*ode *e*llenrof, ' þæt he for *e*axlum ge<u>st</u>od

> Old and very grey among his host of earls;
> The strength-renown went and stood at his shoulders (ll. 356–7).
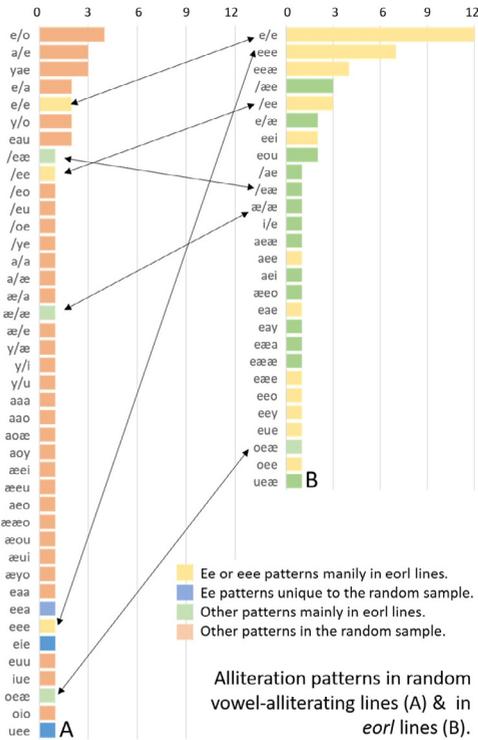
Fig. 5. A comparison in Beowulf *between A: random vowel alliterations and B: the more restricted alliterations in* eorl-*lines.*

As an alternative to these two contrasting, emphatic and monotone statements we may point to a simple and melodic three-vowel pattern such as *æ-eo-o* in l. 1228 where the first rather than the second half line starts with anacrusis to emphasize the first lift: *her is æghwylc eorl ' oþrum getrywe*—"Here every earl ' the other trusts." In this melodic line from Wealhtheow's praise and thanks to Beowulf, she expresses the simple joy of congenial hall life. In sum: *Eorl* implies a consciously used word often far from being a formal title.

The Beowulf author, moreover, uses specific alliterative word combinations, such as *eorl … ellen*, which means "earl … strength". The intension seems obvious: earl and strength are two peas in a pod. However, in the above lines, 356—7, the poet, who is indeed careful, splits the pair and puts *eorl* and *ellen* in two contrasting lines. Thus, he manages to write the Danish earls into sitting weakness and Wulfgar into

walking strength. The *eorl+ellen* combination turns up eight times spread over the epic, and in half the cases the words belong to the emphatic »triple-E« expressions (Table 5).

Table 5. *Eorl* ↔ *ellen* combinations in *Beowulf*.

Verse	1st lift	2nd lift	3rd lift	Comb
573	X	eorlas	ellen	xee
637	eorlic	ellen	endedæg	eee
1967	elne	eodon	eorla	eee
2535	eorl-	X	elne	exe
2695	and-	eorl	ellen	aee
2816	eorlas	elne	æfter	eeæ
3063	eorl	ellenrof	ende-	eee
3173	eaht-	eorl-	ellen-	eee

<div align="center">*</div>

These technicalities support a story in which the following happens: When Hróðgar has accepted Beowulf's offer to help, his foreign queen Wealhtheow, the lady with the mead cup (see Enright 1996), serves the important men in the hall and expresses a hope that an earl would help the Danes with their terrorist problems. Ten lines later, the other prominent foreigner, Beowulf, declares that he set out only to save them from the monster and now he will succeed or die in the monster's grip, that is, a victim of its preferred way of killing hall guests before eating them. Beowulf's reference to himself as an earl is steadfast: *Ic gefremman sceal // eorlic ellen, ' oþðe endedæg*—"I shall perform // with *eorl*-like strength ' or end my days." The celebration of this fact continues until the king and his queen leave the hall for her chamber, and then the confident and righteous *eorl*, puts his head to rest on the pillow, while everyone else is scared despite or due to being told in l. 667 that Danes are guarding the hall.

This is the ominous end of Fitt 10, and in the first line of Fitt 11, l. 710, Grendel arrives at the hall. Fifty lines later Beowulf grabs him and holds him fast in his incredibly strong grip. The monster understands that he must flee for his life, but he cannot because Beowulf will not let go of him. The Danes outside the hall, mistake the boisterous fight for a "beer brawl". The last part of this term *ealu-scerwen*—"beerscerwen" is obscure, but in all probability, it refers to the fact that everything may be bashed and smashed when a party is fueled by beer. This is what the Danes think, and would it surprise us if they were the sleeping archers supposed to protect the hall in l. 703? The fight continues, the hall is on the brink of falling apart and now predictably, the Danes are frightened. From the point of view of composition, the

design of this soundscape prevents the Danes from offering their help. Since Danes in *Beowulf* tend to fall short of earl-ship, we do not want them to interfere and spoil the scene by entering it.

In l. 791, Beowulf becomes the protector of his earls and in l. 795 these loyal warriors draw their swords in order protect him and kill Grendel. Since they do not know that edged weapons cannot hurt Grendel they cannot succeed. Loyally, however, they tried. In the end, everything boils down to Beowulf's victory.

In this series of *eorl* verses we are introduced to the model *eorl*. As pointed out by Russom (1978), Beowulf, being nobility is gifted, he stands by his word and as a righteous warrior, he serves and he protects. Since he is a paragon, a clever and rational fighter, a mixture of fairness and martial insight, he figures out the only possible way to fight Grendel, that is, with his bare hands. Beowulf then becomes the protective leader of his earls after cleverly sacrificing his earl Hondscio as a decoy to lure Grendel into the hall, ll. 740–745A & 2075–84. By implication, we understand that his earls are loyal and self-sacrificing as indeed they should be. Moreover, in the Grendel passage, and in the whole poem, Beowulf grows by fighting from being a righteous earl to becoming an outstanding leader and earl because he is victorious when tested in fierce combat. To be an *eorl*, therefore, is a matter loyalty and executive leadership. From a social point of view, Beowulf has grown in supremacy and become an earl to kings and queens and a beacon to his men yet he will always honour *earl-ship*. Don't ask an *eorl* what you can do for him; ask him what he can do for you. Reward him when he has completed his mission – and feel good. Consequently, in old age, Beowulf must take on the dragon and die. When it comes to identity, an earl could be a sage like Ongentheow, ll. 2951, or the child Scyld, although the message in l. 6 is somewhat obscure.

The link between the *irilaʀ* in Early Nordic inscriptions and *eorl* in *Beowulf*, especially Beowulf himself, is striking because *eorl* as well as *irilaʀ* is defined mainly by agency: an *eorl* is supposed to serve his master and risk his life in order to fulfil his obligations. For his services, his prince remunerates him. Courage, strategy, rational intelligence, martial and guardian skills and generosity as well as openness and a mutual goodness relation with his lord are some of the many foundations supporting the *eorl*'s mind. That is why Hróðgar, when his earls couldn't even prevent Grendel's mother from killing his Æschere, puts this aged *eorl*'s death into context:

"Ne frin þu æfter sælum! ' Sorh is geniwod
Denigea leodum. ' Dead is æschere,
Yrmenlafes ' yldra broþor,

min runwita ' ond min rædbora,
eaxlgestealla, ' ðonne we on orlege
hafelan weredon, ' þonne hniton feþan,
eoferas cnysedan. ' Swylc scolde eorl wesan,
æþeling ærgod, ' swylc æschere wæs!"

You shall not ask for joy! Sorrow has returned to the Danes. Dead is Æschere, Yrmenlaf's elder brother, my *runwita* and my counsellor. Shoulder by shoulder we stood aligned, as footmen clashed like dashing boars. So, an *eorl* should be, a hero of old. So, Æschere was! (ll. 1322–29).

With Æschere's death, it is as if an old warrior ideal has died. And he was more than the essence of the old ideal inasmuch as he was earl as well as counsellor and *runwita* in one and the same person. The term *runwita* indicates deep esoteric insights as well as literacy and, given that he was an earl, this is probably what we see in the Early Nordic inscriptions in which the *irilaʀ* mix plain language and non-lexical rune strings. Although Æschere was earl and a counsellor, he was as old as Hróðgar and evidently no longer an earl in the warrior sense. He stands out as a loyal courtier, who, because of his career one may still address as Earl. If thus entitled, he is comparable to *Irilaʀ* Brisk at Øverby.

<center>*</center>

In severe crises, for instance, in the end of *Beowulf* PART II, it becomes evident that some earls do not match the old ideal, that is, their *eorlscepi*, despite the facts that they have taken the *eorl's* oath. In the end of the poem only Wiglaf is up to the mark among Beowulf's earls. And in an almost surreal symbolic gesture, Beowulf, the dying king acting as his people's earl rewards his faithful Wiglaf (ll. 2809–14). Then in l. 2814 he dies combining *eorl* & *ellen* in a steadfast, emphatic or monotone last *eeæ* long line with very many high pitched i, e, eo, ea and æ vowels (8 of 10) on his lips: *eorlas on elne; ' ic him æfter sceal* – "the strongest of earls, I shall follow them." *Beowulf* is an epic, moral, tragic and programmatic earl – pinpointing his death on the day the ideal cracked.

Finally, therefore, Wiglaf must end Fitt 39 condemning his fellow, disloyal and consequently forever disgraced earls telling them:

"Nu sceal sincþego ' ond swyrdgifu,
eall eðelwyn ' eowrum cynne,
lufen alicgean; ' londrihtes mot

þære mægburge ' monna æghwylc
idel hweorfan, ' syððan æðelingas
feorran gefricgean ' fleam eowerne,
domleasan dæd. ' Deað bið sella
eorla gehwylcum ' þonne edwitlif."

Now shall the treasure taking and sword giving, all joy of estates, fail your kin-folk, all men must move about empty of *landriht*.[1] when nobles from afar hear about of your flight, an undiscerning deed. Death is better for any *eorl* than life in disgrace (ll. 2884- 2890A).

[1]On personal rights and land right see Hübner & Philbrick (1918:41 & 49).

There are three more land right references the in Anglo-Saxon poems: from *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Deor*. The first concerns the earl Abraham who says that he and his nephew, the earl Lot, must respect that they and their people are not given land right and thus they cannot stay among the Canaanites and Perizzites.

' Ne willað rumor unc
landriht heora;

They would not give room for us in their land right, (1836b–37a)

The *Exodus* quotation explains how one gets land right:

eorla æðelo. ' Him wæs an fæder,
leof leodfruma, ' landriht geþah,
frod on ferhðe, ' reomagum leof.

... the noble earls. They had one father, a beloved founder, he received land right, a prudent mind and beloved kinsman

Either you are given land right among other people because you are worthy of it or you inherit it as an earl, that is, as a progeny of the forefather who first received it.
    The third quotation is Deor's "lament":

Ahte ic fela wintra ' folgað tilne,
holdne hlaford, ' oþþæt Heorrenda nu,

leoðcræftig monn ' londryht geþah,
þæt me eorla hleo ' ær gesealde.
þæs ofereode, ' þisses swa mæg!

For many winters I had a good service, a kind lord, until Heorrenda, a skilled singer, received land right, which ere the shelter of earls gave me. That passed over, this also may! (ll. 38 −42)

In the latter quote, some translate "land right" as "estate", but that is a fate fare too mild. Besides the fact that the singer Heorrenda gets land right, the point would seem to be that Deor lost his this right to be living in the country. His loss deprives him of everything or does it? His reaction is subtle. Seemingly Deor − Wild Beast, sets up Heorrenda as a flattering contrast to himself calling his successor *leoðcræftig* literally "song crafty". Were it not for the etymology of the name Heorrenda we might have believed him. There is only one Heorrenda in Anglo-Saxon poetry. In its common Norse version, however, *Hjarrandi* comes from the word *hjarri* which means a "hinge" and *hjarrandi* thus "hinging" (Falk 1924: *hjarrandi* with references). A hinge may well operate silently, but since "hinging" refers to a scop's skilful singing it may even refer to the strong repetitive song of a hinge[17]. In these the last lines of the poem, Deor demonstrates his defaming skill praising and belittling his successor in one go. It is difficult to pity Deor, because we must think that he has in some way or other been disloyal to his otherwise earl-protecting lord, and the chorus: "that passed over …" suggests that Deor does protest too much. He did not loose his land right, he got a compeditor.

Landreht − "land right", occurs twice in *Hêliand* in the same explanatory conclusion: "− their people's land right −". "Their" refers to a Jewish mob and "people" to the Jews (ll. 3860 & 5321). The context is as follows. Two Jews are accused of crimes − a woman of adultery and Hêliand of blasphemy. If they are guilty, they can be tortured and killed. From a Saxon point of view, however, one cannot kill someone who has land right. By referring to land right, the author explains how serious these misconducts are in the eyes of Jewish jurisdiction. Adultery is not a crime among Saxon, and Hêliand almost by definition is not blasphemous. As Murphy points out in his notes to Song 63, Jewish jurisdiction is consciously depicted as abominable by the *Hêliand* author, who is in effect an anti-Semite, se Murphy (1992:173-76). All five

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[17] One may, for instance, listen to typical hinge songs on YouTube and compare the scop's recitation of half lines to continuously opening and closing a squeaking door: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TspuiaFX2YQ

quotations link-in with the one from *Beowulf* and the concept of land right as a reference to basic rights and obligations of a free member of society.

In the three first quotations, *eorl* has the ring of someone who like Beowulf represents his kin, that is, the social institution. The Beowulfian usage indicates that his earls, who are members of a retinue, rewarded with gold rings and swords as well as estates and high seat, do also represent each their *cynn*, that is, the collectives to which they belong and from where they came to Beowulf. When he himself was a boy, he too came to his king as a child of his kin delivered by his father to be brought up at court. Eventually he came out as an earl.

Together, a number of kinships make up a polity, such as the Geats, led by a king by means of his earls. Now, because the earls from the kinships have let down Beowulf who led down nobody, all the men in these families effectively become outcasts without rights to stay in the(ir) country because their envoys could not live up to earl-ship. The earl's personal moral responsibility is cardinal and could explain why the *irilaʀ* is so keen to establish the »*ek irilaʀ*« notion.

By and large, and because the Øverby inscription is the first to refer to *irilaʀ* as a 3rd person, the resonance between *Beowulf* and the Early Nordic runic declarations stands out as representing the roots of the institution, but perhaps not yet the entitled earl as hinted in Hroðgar's relation to Æschere.

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The Anglo-Saxon *Elene*, a poem contemporary with or somewhat younger than *Hêliand*, links in with *Beowulf*. As Zollinger (2004) has discussed the poet Cynewulf's intend was not least to amalgamate as universal Christian Roman and Pagan Germanic history as well as the conversion of Roman England with the process of converting Pagans in general, Zollinger (2004): 181-90. Allegedly, this was an issue in the Late Roman Age and the years before 536-50. The author favours inherited oral family history above anything else. In this case, a wise Jewish noble called Judas knows the universal truth about the past because:

> Thus once my father's father, prophet with the wisdom of age and far-famed in victory – his name was Zaccheus – gave like counsel unto my father and spake this word, which in after times he himself told to his son, as he turned him from the world: (trans. Holt 1904: ll. 435–440.)

Elene was the Emperor Constantine's mother. In the poem, she is a rather emancipated mother, and parallel sub ruler, with a warrior retinue of her own. Son and mother stand out quite similar to a complementary married pair, like Sigibert & Brun-

hild or Otto & Mathilda (Herschend 1996ʙ; Gilsdorf 2004; on *Elene* see Gradon 1958; Klein 2003).

The first 210 lines concern Constantine, and earls are mentioned twice. Then up and until l. 1235 Elene is on focus and in these 1025 lines, there are 14 earl-lines. In the beginning of the poem, we are given a glimpse of Constantine as a campaigning ruler with his warriors and his retinue of earls. He is a shield for his able men and an upright ruler surrounded in the camp by his earls (*Elene*, ll. 1–98, especially ll. 11–12 & 65–66). As Constantine set out on a campaign so did Elene. He defended the Roman world against Franks and Huns, and converted them to Christianity. She went to Jerusalem to find Christ's cross, make a horse bit out of the nails that caused his stigmata and convert a Jew to Christianity. She could be compared to Beowulf in ᴘᴀʀᴛ I, because without being a ruler, she becomes aware of a problem in a foreign overseas country, see Zollinger (2004: 186–87).

The Jews' problem is that they have forgotten Christ. Elene, therefore, embarks with her earls and sails from one hall to another. There the queen and her retinue solve the problem. She holds consultations with the Jewish earls and argue convincingly referring to indisputable truths. In addition, she sends out her warrior earls on missions, which they complete successfully having loyally followed her instructions. Contrary to Beowulf's earl Hondscio, they survive and there is no violence involved. Suffice it that her frank criticism of the Jews and their earls is outspoken. Beowulf could perhaps have bestowed more of this clarity upon the Danish earls. In the two poems, the weight between fighting and arguing is shifted as if they and gender were mirrored concepts. Elene doesn't speak as much for herself as Beowulf. There is no need for her to do so. More often than Beowulf, she uses her earls in strategic ways and she is the one that gives precious presents when she goes home. However, like Beowulf she returns in splendour. Spring turns into summer as she arrives from Jerusalem (ll. 1217–28). Both stories are about a handful of earls and their leader in an idealised world, independent of literacy. In this world, the teams are able to act correctly and solve problems based on their ideals. In the poems, the social world is small, while geography is large. Without a boat, no one goes anywhere.

By some *Elene* has been considered a figurative poem of little historical interest (see discussion e.g. in Klein 2003; Zollinger 2014: 181; Bailey 2016: 177–178). Nevertheless, one must not overlook the psychological or cognitive historical approach to a pre-550 understanding of a small-scale hall-governed society. For a broader discussion of the psychology of *Elene* (see Bailey 2016).

THE *ERL* IN *HÊILAND*

Contrary to *Beowulf*, which is one flow secondarily sectioned into fitts, *Hêliand* is a gospel harmony composed as a number of fitts that often retell a specific narrative. Although these fitts are not captioned it is easily done, albeit differently by different editors (Murphy 1992 differs from Cathey 2002).

These fitts were the author's way of structuring the biography and they teach us what it says in the gospels harmonised as the life of Hêliand for the benefit of 9th century Saxons. The linear biographical component is in focus, but at the same time, the fitts are related to their performance as didactic narratives. Thus, one section may tell the story and the next explain its meaning, such as Fitt 43 & 44. Some sections break off dramatically in the middle of a line and continue after a caesura like Fitt 58 after 57.

Owing to their importance, the instructions on the mount, which are in fact one episode, consists of no less eight consecutive sections, Fitts 16 to 23. They cover 12 percent of *Hêliand*, compared to *c.* 3 percent of the Gospels. The first four fitts are the longer ones, 102 lines on average, while the last four are short, 74 lines on average. This is reasonable, since there is quite a lot to put in place to begin with, while in the end most listeners would have got the drift. However, among the four long ones, Fitt 18 is short, 38 lines shorter than the relatively speaking long Fitt 17, that is, 89 and 121 lines respectively. The reason for using this narrative grip, which interrupts
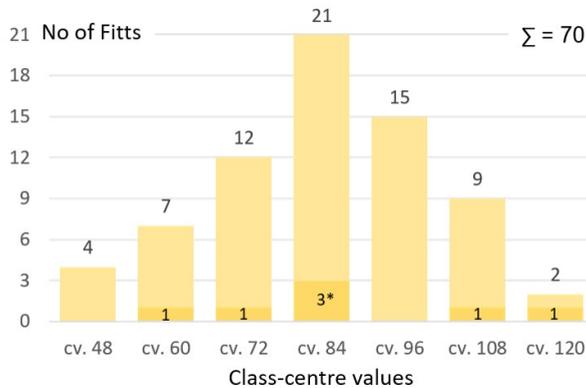

Fig. 6. The length of the fitts in Hêliand *in general and in the Instructions on the Mountain episode.*

Hêliand's instruction in l. 1587, is a wish to bring on Fitt 19 and the Lord's Prayer, ll. 1600–12, as something new and surprising.

Hêliand is not complex. It is pedagogic and meant to teach listeners or readers in an allegedly straightforward way. This shows in the length of the *Hêliand* fitts. They make up a relatively symmetrical distribution in which the most common fitts have central values at c. 84 or 96 lines and no fitt is half that length (Figure 6). The time it takes to recite an 84–96-line fitt, 7-9 minutes, is thus the basic didactic rhythm during the seven and a half hour It takes to recite the poem.

Like the *Beowulf* poet, the *Hêliand* author uses *erl* throughout the poem. He usages clusters in relation to the stories told and there are passages that lack *erl* completely, for instance, in connection with Doomsday (see Figure 7).

In *Hêliand*, the notion of the *erl* has much in common with that of the *irila*ʀ and *eorl*. Like the child Scyld (possibly) John, in l. 166, is a child earl. Kings like David, l. 364, and the arrogant Herod, l. 775, and Joseph, ll. 756–7, who has inherited king David's hall building in Bethlehem where consequently Hêliand is born, are all earls. The same goes for prominent figures like Simon Peter, ll. 5898–9, or the Three Magicians, l. 559. In fact, earls inasmuch as they are important men belong in the upper privileged echelons of every society. They are clever heroes that give well-argued advice, ll. 440–443. They are sensible landholder, because they run their estate together with their competent wives, ll. 507–510a. They may be envoys from the abodes of power: – "The heroes asked, they were the earls, there on errand, envoys from the
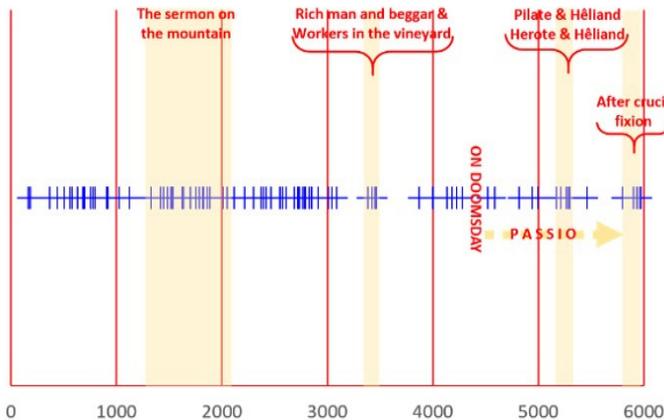

Fig. 7. The usage of the words erl *in* Hêliand *and its relation to episodic examples.*

castles", ll. 917–919.[18] Travelling into the past the *Hêliand* author goes out of his way to make *erl* a central historical phenomenon.

Since all societies have their earls, the anti-Semitic *Hêliand* author also recognises Jewish earls, for instance in ll. 4003 or 5172. He often dislikes them as much as he dislikes Herod. Nevertheless, Hêliand decides to choose his followers among the
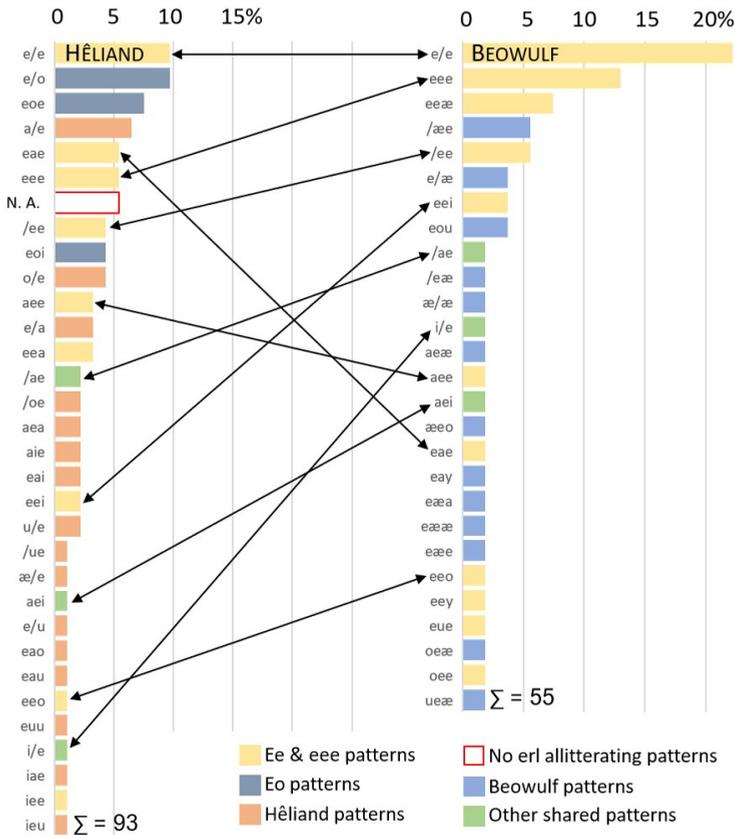

Fig. 8. A comparison between eorl-/erl-*alliterating patterns. A: in* Hêliand. *B: in* Beowulf

[18] 'Castle' – burg, actually means a socially and topographically elevated settlement, see Wolfram (1988: 101) or the archaeological example Borg in Lofoten, Stamsø Munch & al. 2003).

people, and actually, he is looking for earls and earl material, that is, for moral warrior qualities, see Fitt 15. Hêliand choses his earls among men whose earl qualities are presently obscured by society. Yet they are better than ordinary people. Hêliand, therefore, must *select* his earls. In ll. 1233ʙ–35ᴀ, they are pointed out: "Some, however, were very wise men, men of intelligence and of worth before God, an elite among the people." (Murphy 1992: 43) This strongly suggests that besides a social status in general in all societies and a loyal dependency relation with those more powerful, wisdom and cleverness and executive talent are inherent parts of an *erl*'s identity as it was part of the *eorl* identity in Beowulfian days before the Long Cold Decade.

This allows us to look closer into the meaning of the word *erl* based on very conscious narratives. None the less, before we do so we should check the prosody in order to see whether *erl* caries the same qualities as *eorl* did in *Beowulf*. The comparison results in a number of similarities and differences (Figure 8). *Hêliand* has more alliterating patterns and since there is no *æ* in Saxon words, except *Aegypteo-land*, the difference is greater than the diagram shows. Although the *eee-* or *ee*-patterns are far less frequent in *Hêliand* than in *Beowulf*, the patterns match relatively well, and most of them are represented in each sample. Even the distortion between them, indicated by the slant of the double arrows in Figure 8, is the expected one. Only two patterns, *eae* and *aee* break the rule that *Hêliand* arrows, owing to the greater number of combinations used, should go upwards from the left to the right. A most significant difference, nevertheless, is the fact that *erl* is not always alliterating in the lines where the word is used. Moreover, it is noticeable that the second and third most common patterns *exo* and *eoe* are Hêliand patterns. This suggests that both authors had some similar if not identical prosodic ideas about word combinations. Probably, *erl* is a broader phenomenon than *eorl* in *Beowulf*.

In *Hêliand*, the combination *erl ... ôðr* – "earl ... the other" stands out as the most common one (Table 6). This pattern is obviously of prosodic value. If is stands in the first half line it is melodically attractive because there is a fall in pitch between *erl* and *ôð* and if *ôð* comes after the caesura it may well get the highest pitch of the long line especially after anacrusis. Usually this variation in pitch is desirable. The pattern is also meaningful because it relates earls to other earls or to the earls of other people, see e.g. l. 557. In effect, therefore, some of the characteristics of the alliterative patterns in the *erl*-lines, especially the *exo*, *eoe* and *eoi* patterns, which are *not* used in *Beowulf*, stand out as prosodic choice.

Even the alliterating and rhyming expression *alloro erlo* is quite common in the alliteration patterns (Table 7). As one would expect *all ... erl* expressions are less prosodically important. This has to do with fact that although the *alloro → erlo* ex-

Table 6. The *erl ↔ ôðr* combinations in *Hêliand*

557	erlos fon ôðrun thiodun. ' Ic [gisihu] that gi sind eðili[giburdiun]
	559 [êri] fon ôðrun thiodun, ' sîðor ik môsta thesas erlo folkes,*
	683 that sie im* thanan ôðran uueg, ' erlos fôrin,
1446	erl ôðarna. ' Ôc is an them êo gescriƀan
1477	that ênig erl ôðres ' idis ni bisuuîca, (does ênig or erl carry the 1st lift?)
1486	than is erlo gehuuem ' ôðar betara,
1526	that erl thurh untreuua ' ôðres ni uili
1536	Dôe alloro [erlo] gehuilic ' ôðrom manne
1621	that gi ne uuileat ôðrun ' erlun alâtan,
1699	erlo gehuuilicomu, ' [sulic sô he] it ôðrumu gedôd,
2464	erlo aftar thesaro erðun: ' bistêd thar ôðar man,
4587	Thô bigan thero erlo gehuilic ' te ôðrumu scauuon,
4819	erlos ôðren man: ' "ik gangu imu at êrist tô", quað he,
	5208 "the it thi ôðre hêr ' erlos sagdun,

_____

   * The grey lines are *oxe* lines, the tenth most common combination in *Hêliand*

Table 7. The *alloro ↔ erlo* expression in *Hêliand*

1536	Dôe alloro erlo gehuilic ' ôðrom manne
1752	huuô alloro erlo gehuilic ' ôgit selƀo,
1824	erðu getimbrod ' Sô scal allaro erlo gehues
2051	alloro erlo gehuilic ' êrist scoldi
2768	endi allumu themu erlskepie, ' the thar inne uuas
3868	te allun them erlun: ' "sô huilik sô iuuuar âno sî", quað he,
	5173 erlos ênuuordie ' alle uurðin,*
5458	allaro erlo gihuem ' uƀilo githîhan,

_____

*'[Until] the erls all agreed between them'. These are Jewish earls, not Hêliand's. Hêliand is
waiting and the earls are sitting *an themu thinghûse*—'at the thing house' in Jerusalem until they
have agreed on Hêliand's brutal punishment and execution.

pression is forceful it turns out to be difficult to scan in *one* specific way. This means
that »all − earl« is a significant concept and not specifically invented for prosodic rea-
sons. This is mainly due to the author's need to specify "all earls" even more by adding
words such as *gehuilic*, *gehues* or *gihuem* to the expression. In these three words, the
prosodic accent comes *after* the unaccented *ge-* as in l. 1824: *erðu getimbrod. ' Sô scal
allaro erlo ge_hu_es*. Since the 4th lift is not allowed to alliterate the last lift on the 4th and
often on the 2nd must be on -*hu* in *ge_hu_es*. This mean that the 1st or the 3rd lift could
be on *_a_llaro* as well as on *_e_rlo*. That in its turn gives us a choice to lift either "*a*" or "*e*"
in *_a_lloro* or *_e_rlo* in ll. 1536, 1752, 1824, 2051 and 5458 (see Table 7). There is in other
words a possible choice of emphasis, rather than a problem for the scansion. On the
other hand, the importance of the emphatic, albeit doubtful, all-earls-are-equal state-

ment *alloro erlo gehu*[*-es, -em, -ilic*] which means "of all the earls everybody" or "anyone of all the earls" becomes significant and important in a *Hêliand* dictum at the expense of prosodic simplicity.

These examples suffice to show that the author is consciously using prosody *and* catch phrases to drive home his message. There are 20 *erl … ôðr* or *alloro … erlo* lines in *Hêliand*, Tables 6 & 7. Typically, 9 of these lines are found between ll. 1446 and 1824, that is, 45% of the lines in the 6.4 % of the text that comprise the central part Hêliand's instructions on the mount. These eight fitts, ll. 1279–1993, are as pivotal as the Grendel episode in Beowulf, albeit less dramatic.

As in Beowulf, the prosody reflects the poet's attitude to the *erl*. He is less emphatic than the *Beowulf* author, that is, there is no »triple-ᴇ« expression, and in addition to the above *allero erlo*-lines there are no less than three *erl* verses where the word cannot not alliterate, Figure 7. Contrary to the *Beowulf* author, it is important to the *Hêliand* poet to drive home the overarching idea that all earls compare with each other. In *Hêliand*, emphasis is not just performative and prosodic as in *Beowulf*. The word is an analytical, conceptual and rhetorical label as well, see ll. 1477 & 86, 1527 & 37 or 1636 & 38.

<div align="center">*</div>

Hêliand's instructions on the mount, ll. 1279–1993, paraphrase the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew Chps 5-7. The author is in the detail. As expected, he points out eight ways, ll. 1279-1325 in which his earls in l. 1326 will be fortunate. These earls are his *gesîðos* – his warrior companions pointed out in l. 1280 as those he had already chosen among the people. They are the ones sitting in front of him on the mountain. Everyone can hear the instructions that follow upon the eight good fortunes, but Hêliand turns specifically to his earls 1+15+1 times. If we list the contexts, we understand why.

The first reference is to historical background facts:

(1) In the old days, *erls* were law-abiding, ll.1414–18:

' it an forndagun
tulgo uuîse man ' uuordun gesprâcun,
than sie thana aldan êuu ' erlos heldun,
endi ôc sulicu suuîðor, ' sô ic iu nu seggean mag,
alloro gumono gehuuilic ' gode thionoian,

Just as in ancient times very wise men said that *erls* held the old laws, and indeed very strongly, so I may now tell every man to serve God (ll. 1414-18).

This 9ᵗʰ-century historical truth may well refer to an *erl* similar to the *irila*ʀ or to Beowulf, that is, one who serves and upholds traditional law in an emphatic way. As Hêliand's rhetorical backdrop, it allows him to turn to the present and point out the first cluster of three instructions indirectly suggesting that some earls ignore these rules.

> (2) An *erl* must not so completely lose his temper that he wants to kill another man, ll. 1442–46.
> (3) An *erl* must not desert another man's woman, his wife, in pregnancy, ll. 1475b–78a.
> (4) If any part of an *erl's* body tempts him to follow the path of evil, he must cut it off and throw it away, ll. 1484–87.

Based on these serious 9ᵗʰ-century problems, Hêliand starts to give his instructions in order to teach his *erls* in a more reason-based way. The next three come in a cluster that concerns the *erl's* public appearance.

> (5) An *erl* must avoid taking many oaths otherwise he cannot control himself, ll. 1514-16.
> (6) An *erl* must answer Yes! If true, and No! If false, otherwise *erls* will not believe each other, ll. 1526–27.
> (7) An *erl* shall always do well for the other man as he wishes the other man to do for him, and God shall be generous, ll. 1527–39.

Even the following three instructions cluster. Ultimately, they concern the *erl's* relation with God.

> (8) An *erl* must forgive another *erl*, and other men too, as it were. Otherwise, God will not forgive him, ll. 1620–23.
> (9) An *erl* must humbly serve God, who will then reward him, ll. 1634–37.
> (10) An *erl* must not unjustly acquire wealth. Work for God instead, ll. 1637–38.

After these two clusters, we turn to the last six instructions. Although they contain one pair of verses ll. 1817 & 1824, they are more evenly distributed between ll. 1694 & 1858. They focus on rational social behaviour and interaction with other men thus they are often self-evident.

(11) An *erl* must never be unjust, because it will come back to him, ll. 1698–1700.

(12) An *erl* is expected by mankind openly to speak his mind, ll. 1750–52.

(13) In this world, an *erl* should take the narrow road that most people do not like, ll. 1783–86.

(14) An unwise *erl* is he who does not follow Hêliand's advice; his house will fall down, ll. 1815–17.

(15) An *erl* who follows Hêliand's advice builds a solid house that will stand when others fall down and he will prosper, ll. 1824–26.

(16) An *erl* should have no more than one set of clothes to wear among the public, ll. 1855–58.

This is where the instructions to his retinue of earls end.

(17) Finally, having thus instructed them, they are send off into the future on their executive duties among other *erls*, for instance, the ones from the above points point (2) & (3). If they behave as told, they will be successful:

Than uuesat gi eft an iuuuon dâdiun ' dûþon gelîca,
hebbead uuið erlo gehuene ' ênfaldan hugi,
mildean môdseþon, ' [that] thar man negên
thurh iuuua [dâdi] ' bedrogan ne uuerðe,
besuican thurh iuuua sundea. '

Then you should also be like a dove in your actions. Have a simple, straightforward mind toward every earl, be generously spirited, so that no one comes to be deceived because of your behaviour, tricked because of your sins (ll. 1884–88A).

To begin with, in instruction (1) the ideal is under pressure. Together with the *erl*s' actual behaviour, their mind is in need of reformation and almost consequently, they are in need of a new leader. In the days of the *Beowulf* epic, the dragon crisis triggered the final breakdown of the *eorl* ideal. In the days of the *Hêliand* gospel harmony, the flaws of the ideal are systemic. It is obvious, nevertheless, that the *Hêliand* author's missionary purpose has made earls his allies in the good work of conversion. He has identified a once limited and select group of men, who have now become a relatively large group of free and capable men that would benefit from a leader, who does not corrupt them. Indirectly, and in a turbulent political situation after the Carolingian

victory over the Saxons, the author appeals to their better selves with a possibility by means of an ideal Christian moral, to restore their ideal and make them righteous rather than corrupt.

His argument is simple: the earl ideal used to be genuine (and *erl*s like Abraham a beacon to their kinship), but things have changed. However, if earls follow Hêliand, the ideal will be restored. In his instructions, Hêliand is cautious to define earls as set apart of common people although they mix with them, see ll. 1270–72A on Bartholomew and Philip. Actually, when Hêliand came back from his isolation in the deep woods, rather than the Biblical desert, he decided to find his followers among the people's earls:

> ' Thô forlêt he uualdes hlêo,
> ênôdies ard ' endi sôhte im eft erlo gemang,
> mâri meginthiode ' endi manno drôm,

> Then he left the lee of the wood, the abode of solitude, and sought for himself again the company of *erls*, the large crowds and life among men (ll. 1124b–26).

The earls are but a few, the crowds are large and "men" are humankind. As soon as Hêliand returned, he began to pick out his followers.

In the gospel, Jesus could be said to instruct everyone on the mountain, but to Hêliand – instructing his *gesiðos* is his first priority and they are the ones he sends out as his warriors, (ll. 1884–88). For strategical missionary reasons ordinary men come second. However, if you remove the warrior metaphor from Hêliand's followers they will look very much like ordinary men converted to Christianity.

<center>*</center>

If we hypothesise that the *Hêliand* author was typical of his day and age when it came to understanding mission and conversion, we may wonder how instruction (17) played out in the 9th century when it comes to earls. There are hints to this in the Anglo-Saxon poems, for instance, in the poem *Andreas*. This poem is an Old Ebglish version of a Latin 4/5th century apostolic romance of Matthias and Andrew, recomposed as 1722 long lines. Probably, the poem we read was composed in the 9th century, perhaps after *Hêliand*. It was, however, partly based on a reworked earlier poem, Maddock (2019). It concerns Andrew's missionary work including his relation to earls, North & Bintley (2016:4-5 & 114-5). In the narrative, *eorls* belong in the important echelons of society for what it is worth, and the author uses the word in accordance with Hêliand's instructions, albeit more like a label. Since Andrew is six

parts disciple and one part *eorl* of the noble self-sacrificing Beowulfian kind, he com-
forts his own earls and fights alone like a Beowulf, albeit reluctantly, see Cavill (1993).
In principle, his earls are loyal like Beowulf's, see ll. 1254 &1263. And the word *eorl*
clusters as in ll. 401, -60, -63, -75 & 508. In Hêliand's final off-you-go instruction
(17) there are more precise echoes of a genuine earl identity, than in *Andreas*.

A division of the ideal into an original personal and an added official role shows
in *Andreas*, for instance, in the section A1, which represents the poem's final expanded
form, Maddock (2019: 21–22). Hêliand instructs his earls to wear plain clothes, see
instruction (16), but in *Andreas*, when the apostle Andrew meets God and two of his
angels, they stand out because evidently, they are earls posing as and dressed-up as
sailors (ll. 250–251). To the poet this charade is not a problem. However, in the 790s
it was important to the hardliner Alcuin that kings and princes should wear ordinary
dresses when they moved among people, not outfits or extravagant clothes (see Al-
cuin's letter to Æthelred in Whitelock 1979, No 193, p. 843). The *Hêliand* author
would have agreed with Alcuin, owing to instruction (16), but in practice it would
seem that Anglo-Saxon earls instead of melting in were simply visibly akin to high
nobility even when they chose to disguise themselves. However, in one of the re-
worked sections from the earlier poem (B2, ll. 459–547, Maddock 2019) Andrew has
a more Beowulfian or old style brother-in-arms attitude to earls because during a
storm he comforts them when they are worried (ll. 458–465A). This scene is parallel
to Beowulf protecting his earls during Grendel's attack on the hall Heorot.

In *Andreas* only the disloyal earls and not their kinfolk are punished (see section
A1, ll. 401–414). Disloyalty, as we have seen, was a problem already in *Beowulf* and
reflected in *Deor,* who was set aside by his lord. Later on in *The Battle of Maldon*
three of Byrhnoth's earls flee. Although this is shameful, we are not told that they
were or will be punished – they are just disloyal because they are afraid of dying.
Valiantly, the rest of Byrhnoth's earls sacrifices themselves one by one. Evidently,
there are two old components – the earl representing his kin, and his unconditional
loyalty – that do not make it into 10th century. Moreover, there is a new component
– the earl who represents high nobility akin to God and his angles.

<div align="center">*</div>

Beowulf and *Hêliand* see earls in a historical perspective. And the analysis of *Beowulf*
suggests that despite its emphatic meaning before 536, the concept was nevertheless
difficult to embrace wholeheartedly at least for some Danish earls. In *Beowulf* PART
II, which takes place after the Long Cold Decade the problem has become a moral
one: Some have difficulties when it comes to honouring their earl's oaths because
they may risk their lives – a commonplace obtrusive risk – from which they flee. In

Hêliand, the author revives the ideal of the loyal earl having pointed out that the *erl-skêpi* has broken down because no secular king can recompense a dead earl. This nevertheless, is what Hêliand and his father can do in this world and forever in the next. The procedure is simple: Since you have an earl's mind you can agree to Hêliand's moral code. Thus, you can be baptised and become a Christian like Hêliand, and thus, like him, you are rewarded even when you die.

That an earl has reason to turn to God would seem to be a consequence of the pressure earls feel in 9th century society. And in *The Wanderer* or *Deor* the discontents of earls, which Hêliand hints to, are evident.

In the interpretation of the gospel harmony, the original earls are a historical backdrop, and Hêliand's analysis centres on the individual and his identity, that is, on the ideal that existed before the Long Cold Decade. The intension is political and ideological. In Hêliand, Rome as well as Judea are rotten societies and so are many of their official earls. In principle, however, there is nothing wrong with empires and kingdoms, as long as they are not rotten. If they are, they must be in want of reformation. This need can be fulfilled by means of giving latent earls new and correct guidelines and a fair remuneration for their loyalty in this world or, preferably, in the next. What the Hêliand author suggests having written his poem using Franconian, Saxon and Frisian, as if he drew upon an existing larger poetic context, see Collitz (1901:34-6), is simple: Today, what was once needed in the Roman world and brought about by earls, as exemplified in *Elene* is needed in Saxony.

Given that Deor is already a happy-go-lucky earl with a seemingly unpredictable lord. Given that king Ludwig in *Ludwigslied* in 881, ll. 40−41, finds it crucial to recompense the families of those, who, dying for God were already forever recompensed. Given that *The Battle of Maldon*, as late as in the 990s, ll. 3−4 & 185−197, has a fait accompli view upon the disloyalty of the earls of a most honourable lord. Given this, one wonders how Hêliand, negligent of Hallelujah and xenoglossia in his good work, could believe that the *Hêliand* poem would convince anybody.

He could nevertheless, have pointed out at least three reasons.

(1) Earls were actually valued as nobility among the Anglo-Saxons.
(2) The Carolingian emperor had remunerated their counterparts, that is, his Christian counts.
(3) If baptised, Saxon earls could become Carolingian counts because they were already righteous earls.

And what if they did become Carolingian lords? Luckily, there is a contemporary text that makes it overwhelmingly clear that the Carolingian model, indirectly envisaged by the *Hêliand* author, did not turn out to be a panacea for the problem of loyalty-to-God-*and*-lords.

Trauma and dreamland

The Dutchess Dhuoda was born *c.* 800 CE She was of royal decent and her native tongue probably German (Dronke 1984). She received a Christian and classical education and learnt to read and write Latin. Some of her Latin poetry, notwithstanding, is characterised by rhythmic and accentuated strophes with four lifts and some rhymes and alliterations (Meyer 1908: 73–85; Nordberg 1958). A young educated Carolingian woman of her day and age, she was given in marriage to the emperor Louis the Pious' godson and favourite, the 29-year old up-and-coming Bernard of Septimania. It was a midsummer wedding 824 in the place church in Aachen. Everyone was there. Familywise, Bernard's was the important one. She was probably chosen not least because of her birth, competence and personal skills. If she wasn't educated at the court, she may well have attended a school such as the Carolingian canoness abbey at Herford, 250 km northeast of Aachen founded in the 810s (Crusius 2001). As a duchess and in practice a single mother from 826 and onwards, Dhouda lives mostly in Uzès, 40 km WNW of Avignon, from where she is administrating Bernhard's duties and estates in the easternmost part of Septimania. There she gave birth to two heirs. William born in 826 and a second son in 841. In Uzèz she negotiated loans to pay for Bernhard's unsuccessful engagement in the civil war that commenced after the Emperor's death in June 840.

  Since Louis the Pious sponsored the *Hêliand* author, it doesn't come as a surprise that her marriage may be compared to that of Anna and her *erl* who ran his estate in tandem (ll. 503–10). In 841, nevertheless, Bernhard sends Dhuoda's 15-year old son William more or less as a hostage to Charles the Bold and arranges for the second 6 months old unbaptized son to be send to Aquitaine leaving Dhouda alone in Uzès. In Novembre 841, when this happens, she starts to write a manual to William, finished in February 843, trying to teach him how to behave himself as a Christian and young nobleman at court. Dhuoda's book was an original take on a popular 9th century genre (Anton 1968: 198–245 & 213; Dronke 1984).

  If the *Hêliand* author points to the possibilities of an earl, one may argue that Dhuoda tells an earl, that is, her son, how to manage against heavy odds (Dronke 1984; Neel 1991; Riché & al. 1991; Thiébaux 1998). Her aim is to guide her beloved

son to survive as his father's heir and a decent and God-fearing member of the upper Carolingian classes. She believes that if he follows her advice God will reward him, and in her book in 18 strophes, one for each letter in William's name she sums up her advice. The following strophe, echoed, for instance, by the *Hêliand* author, is significant:

> **H**uc et illuc Compensor unus est dator
> Meritis reddens singulorum prae factis
> Verbis et operi tribuens optima
> Coelorum sidus.

> Here, there, the sole Giver, Compensator / Repays each for good deeds done / For words and works he bestows the best / A heavenly star (Thiébaux 1998: 222–23)

The heavenly star is not a metaphor; God will bring the best upper-class men directly to his court when they die. Cleared by God, without awaiting Judgement day they will become everlasting stars in Heaven. Nevertheless, the growing predicament, which Dhuoda feels right through her book, leads her to fear that nothing can save William or his father of the perils and moral downfall of the intricate civil war. As it turns out she is dying and right and her advice did not save William. Bernard was executed already in 844 and William killed 850 in his early twenties. The *irilaʀ* ideal is easy to understand, but difficult to survive in complex Carolingian days.

<center>*</center>

In the poem *The Gifts of Men*, composed later than *Hêliand* every man has a God-given skill (see Stanley 2015). There are all kinds of giftedness and thus men of all sorts in all parts of this completely homo social society. In the poem's long *sum* catalogue, that is, a series of "some have *a skill*" lines, skills cluster between polarised yet complementary social institutions (Stanley 2015: 350–368; here Figure 9). One institution, extravagant and geared at warfare, is secular and hall-based (ll. 30–48. The other, modest, devout and intellectual, is spiritual and Church-based (ll. 86–96). The border between these poles runs between ll. 66 & 67. From one line to the next the focus of the *sum* catalogue shifts from the ways of the armourer to that of the almsgiver. Moreover, the author introduces himself as belonging to society's Church side:
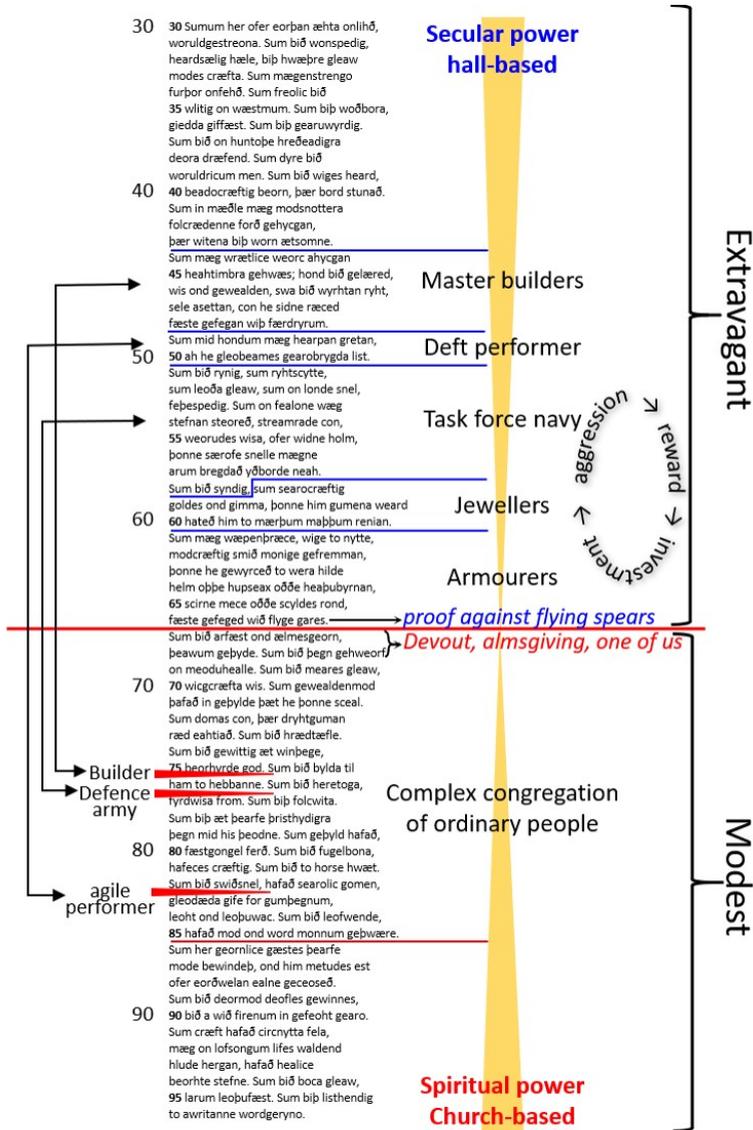
Fig. 9. The structure of the 'Sum *Catalogue' in the Old English poem* The Gifts of Men.

> [One] constructs securely the boss of a shield [66] proof against the flight of a spear. [67] One is devout, generous in almsgiving, is one of us in his ways. (Trans: Stanley 2015: 352)

Typically, the hall-sided warrior fists his hand around the shield handle, covers and protects himself with the high-quality boss, while the Church-sided almsgiver in his encounters will stretch out an unprotected open hand.

  Although skills are most often unique, they adopt to context. Thus, each side of the social tapestry has their house, warfare and entertainment – lavish, attacking and artful in the hall, moderate, defending and simple in the Church. Since the paradigm states: One man, one skill! there are no kings or earls, that is, no old-fashion multi-skilled individuals with a title and a corresponding mind. Inasmuch as there are no kings etc. the poem is free of ontological (dis)loyalty and (im)perfection. A world true to Christian ideals has freed itself of that kind of characters. The poem, nevertheless, points out many of the building blocks of the old ideals and link-in with pre-Christian Germanic nobility markers (Rossum 1978). Nevertheless, as Stanley (2015) points out, the reason the skills are being fragmented probably has to do with the poet being influenced by Saint Benedict's rules (Stanley 2015: 355) and he concludes:

> *Gifts* presents us with a world far removed from the world of heroes, a different world from that of *Beowulf*. (Stanley 2015: 372)

And, bearing in mind that the poem's religious component is a world different from that of *Hêliand* too, it would seem quite natural that earl exists only as a formal title such as "count" or "duke".

Conclusion

Together, the analysed *irilaʀ*, *eorl* and *erl* texts make it possible to sketch how an originally South Scandinavian and Saxon Early Iron Age concept contributes and adapts to social change during *c.* 600 years in the first millennium CE. For the sake of convenience the sketch will refer to the concept »earl«, written as Earl in the body of the text in this conclusion. Its denotations will be Earl(s) and the lived social role Earlship.

  It is reasonable with reference to Iversen & al. (2019:79) and Mees (2003:44-50), to suggest that Earl was originally rooted in a word that signified »great, powerful

or unique« human beings in terms of their personal and social stature. The way
Anglo-Saxon and Saxon authors associate pre-dynastic nomadic leaders, that is, Bib-
lical fathers like Abraham and Lot or Moses with Eαrl suggests this background. The
Latin usage of the folk name *Heruli*, the same word as *irilaʀ*, Hellquist
(1922:272:Jarl); suggests that spokesmen of kin and people who have a flat social or-
ganisation and no king, may refer to themselves as great, powerful and unique men.
The fact that Hêliand finds many Eαrls in society indicates that Eαrls could indeed
see themselves as the essence of a people. The situation in *Beowulf* where the disloy-
alty of Eαrls results in the loss of land right for their kinfolk, also point to a socially
flat society signified by Eαrls.

If this is the first root, the concept's second root is the Eαrl's link to spiritual
power. In Old English & Old Saxon poems concerned with the oldest Eαrls, this
power is equated with God. In the Early Nordic inscriptions the esoteric non-lexical
rune strings may well signify the Eαrl's link to spiritual or divine power. It is reason-
able, therefore, to conclude: When the need occurred to describe the character of
Biblical fathers, the original Eαrl concept as an emblem of a most ancient and charis-
matic leadership in a kinship based society stood out as befitting.

An important step in the development of the Eαrl concept becomes visible in
the runic inscriptions where in some cases the Eαrl appears to be a loyal executive or
servant in the retinue or household of a leader or lord. In Øverby, moreover, Eαrl may
already have become a title that refers to a formal position. If this is the case, it is a
significant step in the development of Eαrl-ship, but not a ground-breaking change.
The end of the early Eαrl-ship, nevertheless, is a development that stars before 550
years and ends centuries later when Eαrl is formalised in order to signify an *earl* or a
jarl appointed by the sovereign of a Christian society. This formal Eαrl is reflected
most clearly in the Anglo-Saxon Laws where Eαrl means *satelles principis*. This final
stage in the development of the Eαrl never takes place in Saxony, in part because on
the Continent counts take care of the formalisation of the Eαrl's social role and posi-
tion.

Long before society reached a complexity that formalises the Eαrl's role as an
appointed *satelles principis*, Eαrls were self-identified and accepted into a pair bond
with their chosen lord as in the Beowulf case. By default, when the relation becomes
asymmetric and more lord-driven self-identification becomes less important and the
paramount demand on an Eαrl's loyalty is weakened and formalised as mirrored by
the poem *Deor*.

These two, essentially reconstructed roots of the Eαrl, the kinship leader and
the lord's loyal self-identified follower, leave us with two major stages before the Eαrl

disappears and becomes the king's appointed *earls* and *jarlar*. The first stage is the heyday of Earl-ship in the centuries leading up to the Long Cold Decade. This period is represented by the poems *Elene* and *Beowulf* PART I, and to a lesser degree by *Andreas*. The two former ones, however, centres on the success of the model team »Lord/Lady and Earls«. These happy days end in *Beowulf* PART II when the poet links the first major breakdown of the ideal to disloyal Earls, who act as passive onlookers when Beowulf dies and the world collapses.

The Beowulf author excelled, for narrative reasons, in the fateful contrast between the triumphant and the sacrificed Beowulf in the first and second part of the poem. Thus by means of rhetorical contrast, disloyalty brings about the definite end of the Earl as we knew him before 536. But since disloyalty is fatal even in *The Battle of Maldon* in the 990s, it is reasonable to see the second stage after the Long Cold Decade and before the informal Earl disappears as the wake of Earl-ship.

The *Hêliand* author employs Earl and Earl-ship in a historical analysis of the past in order to revive an essentially pagan ideal, the Earl, as a central Christian concept. Those who Hêliand/Jesus selects as his followers were in essence Earls. Consequently, those Saxons, who in the early 9th century embraced the Earl ideal may as well be baptised and become God's retainers and Earls. And yet the ideal from the heydays of Earl-ship has to be revived because it has been corrupted. The *Hêliand* author doesn't discuss why the Earl concept has deteriorated. Some Earls, nevertheless, have not lived up to the ideal and indirectly we understand that Earls were not always recompensed by their lords − Hêliand's point being that God, contrary to secular lords, never fails to reward his loyal Earls.

This means that after *c.* 550 the relationship between Lord and Earl is problematic. Like any other warrior, this Earl will ask his lord the simple yet previously unthinkable question: What is my loyalty worth to you? Alternatively: What's in it for me? The poem *Deor* depicts the lord's arbitrary decisions and consequently the indifferent Earl. In *Ludwigslied*, on the other hand, Ludwig makes a great point of the fact. Before he starts the battle of Soucourt he vows to reward *all* his warriors as well as the families of those who dye in the battle. Already 840 the duchess Dhuoda points to the traumatising difficulties, primarily owing to Carolingian power struggle in the 9th century, to combine loyalty to God and his kings with loyalty to one's family. Four hundred years after this foreseeable conflict between Earl and lord became possible, that is, when the Earl of a kinfolk vowed to become loyal to a lord, it has become systemic. Dhouda's traumatic situation makes it obvious that in practice loyalty to family does not combine with the Hêliand model of Earl-ship despite God's reward guarantee. This is the bitter end to the original point in being an Earl. The only part of the

Earl that can survive the social development is the one Deor refers to, that is, the one chosen by a sovereign who may give the Earl land right and wealth or take it away. Not surprisingly, in *The Gifts of Men*, the utopian vision of a balanced new Christian society, there is no room for multi-gifted, multi-tasking loyal and executive Earls.

In the *Poetic Edda*, that is, in allegedly pre-Fimbulwinter days the informal individual ideal is referred to in the first part (in *Hávamál*, st. 97,4 & *Hárbarðsljóð*, st. 24,5). In the second part, the so-called heroic poems, *jarlar* and their wives are emblematic of royal courts. Atli and his continental world is involved in all examples. *Jarlar* are informal as well as formal characters. As individuals Atli's *jarlar* build his pyre and are relieved (*Guðrúnarhvǫt* st. 20,1 & 21,1). In *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, King Svafnir's *jarl* and counsellor Franmarr compares with Hroðgar's *eorl* Aeschere. *Jarl* as the entitled representative of high nobility, second only to the king is found in the fragment *Rígsþula*, st. 34–45, which describes society after the Long Cold Decade as a socially stratified kingdom. The poem is not included in the *Poetic Edda*.

Old English *Genesis*, finally, draws a significant line between an Old English *eorl* and an Old Saxon *erl*. In the Anglo-Saxon fragment, translated from the Old Saxon text (Bergmann 2013: 130) the only *eorl* mentioned is Jared, who is a generous "first spear", a *primus pilus* and thus the senior centurion of the legion and the career officer closest to its commander. Thus formally speaking Jared is an entitled earl. In the Old Saxon *Genesis* B, however, the only *erl* is Enoch, Jared's son, who far from being a formal earl has an original Earl's mind as well as his social qualities since "he used to walk with God".

Taken together, the literary sources suggest that a concept with Early Iron Age qualities rooted in a society with a flat kinship-based organisation starts to change in tandem with the development of a more stratified social organisation. The Long Cold Decade accelerated this process rendering obsolete the foundation of the original Earl-ship. The fact that the formal concept survives in England, but not in Saxony and hardly Denmark, indicates that society on the continent could do without Earls, but not without counts and dukes at an early stage while Earls in England, where the traditional Germanic concepts during the conquest may have played a greater part in the development of society, could not. On the Scandinavian peninsular, it would seem that Earls fared better than in Denmark. Indirectly, the lack of local *ek irila*ʀ inscriptions south of Øverby and the Beowulfian, that is, Gotlandic moral critique of Danish earls suggests the same.

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