

「不死鳥」におけるリアリズム (1)

—「Ne+主語」成句の効果—

An Analysis of Realism in *The Phoenix* (Part 1)

—Effects of the 'Ne'+Subject' Formula—

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要旨

『エクセター・ブック』写本に収録された長編宗教詩「不死鳥」は、鳥のアレゴリーを中心とした作品である。鳥がキリスト自身あるいはキリスト教徒を示すものかどうかは議論が尽きない。この作品は前半がラテン語原典を模したものであるというのが定説になっており、後半は作者自身の解釈を示していると言われている。

本稿では、まず詩の前半を対象に、ラテン語原典に見られる否定語と主語の成句が古英詩「不死鳥」にどのように引用されているかを調査し、その効果を考察する。動詞を省いたこの成句は、古英詩「不死鳥」においてたびたび使用され、古風で独特の効果をもたらしている。動詞の持つ「動き」の効果は消され、代わりに名詞、形容詞の持つ「静止」の効果が詩の中で複数回使用されている。作者が意図的にこの成句を使用して、不死鳥の住む至福の「楽園」を動的に表現し、人間の住む苦悩の「現世」を静的に表現しているという仮説を証明したい。

●キーワード：不死鳥 (the phoenix) / エクセター・ブック (the Exeter Book) / リアリズム (realism)

I. Introduction

The Phoenix is an Old English (OE) verse of 677 lines composed as a bird song in the Exeter Book. Throughout the poem, there are several metaphors and visual descriptions of paradise that make it difficult to determine the identity of the phoenix. One of the most likely protagonists is Jesus Christ, metamorphosed into a mythical bird, the phoenix. Irrespective of its identity, the distinctive quality of the poem lies in the poet's elaborate expression. This article sheds light on the realism of the poet's depiction of paradise on Earth. *The Phoenix* poet utilizes a formula comprising the use of 'not' and a 'subject' without a verb to describe the savage world of human beings as a bleak region. On the contrary, he visualises the dynamic atmosphere of paradise using lines full of verbs to paint a vivid picture for the readers.

The Phoenix is commonly divided into two parts: the first, comprising lines 1–380, is based on the Egyptian myth of the phoenix, whereas the second, comprising lines 381–677, presents an allegorical interpretation of the bird's paradise.¹⁾ In this study, the

first half is critically analysed to examine the poet's usage of the aforementioned formula. This enables readers to discover the poet's diverging views of the two parts in terms of the usage of the formula, if any.

II. The Formula: Ne + Subject

The poet deliberately adopts a set phrase popular in OE poems, 'ne' + 'subject', in several lines of *The Phoenix*. Notably, the set phrase appears where the poet shifts the focus to real-world landscapes, contrary to the imaginary visions of paradise mentioned throughout the poem. The formula also occurs in lines 66–69 of *The Wanderer* and, in lines 40–41, 44–47, and 94–96 of *The Seafarer*, both of which are present in the same codex as *The Phoenix*: the Exeter Book. This seeming coincidence can also draw the readers' attention to how *The Phoenix* is independent of the other two poems and highlight its idiosyncratic usage of the 'ne' + 'subject' formula.

The 'ne' + 'subject' set phrase first appears at the very beginning of the poem. Lines 14b–20a elaborate upon the world of human beings. Immediately before

this section, the poet describes the beauty of paradise on Earth. However, he suddenly transforms the vision in a negative light using the 'ne' + 'subject' formula as follows:

Ne mæg þær ren ne snaw
 ne forstes fnæst ne fyres blæst
 ne hægles hryre ne hrimes dryre
 ne sunnan hætu ne sincaldu
 ne wearm weder ne winterscur
 wihte gewyrdan, ac se wong seomað
 eadig ond onsund. (14b-20a)²⁾

No rain nor snow there cannot be
 no breath of frost no blaze of fire
 no downpour of hail no fall of hoar frost
 no heat of the sun no perpetual cold
 no hot weather no wintry shower
 do harm in any way, but that land remains
 happy and flourishing.

A sequence of the word 'ne' (not) emphasises the negative dimensions of nature which make human lives difficult. The lines depict the real world as a place where human beings are adversely affected by natural phenomena such as frost, fire, hail, heat, and cold. In his notes on these lines, Blake mentions that '... there is no excessive heat in paradise, just as there is no excessive cold. It is the constant change from hot to cold which is described as one of the principal torments of hell in *The Later Genesis*, and the poet of *The Phoenix* is no doubt indicating that this is not the case in heaven'.³⁾ Therefore, he implies that the poet juxtaposes a picture of hell with a peaceful vision of paradise. However, the place depicted in these lines seems to refer to the troubled real world, a concept familiar to the Anglo-Saxon readership. In this case, the poet attempts to portray realistic images of the readers' own lives using the term 'not', to illustrate the prospect of paradise on Earth, that is, a life without pain.

A key focus of this article is the lack of verbs in the poem that describe the real world. Lines 15-18, as discussed above, have a distinctive feature comprising

the set phrase 'not' + the 'noun as a subject'. This suggests that the poet intends to introduce a motionless perspective of the real world landscape. On the contrary, the descriptive picture of paradise is embellished with verbs in order to illustrate it more vividly, as evident from the following lines:

Wlitig is se wong eall, wynnum geblissad
 mid þam fægrestum foldan stencum,
 ænlic is þæt iglond, æpele se Wyrhta
 modig meahtum spedig, se þa moldan gessette.
 Ðær bið oft open, eadgum togeanes
 onhliden hleopra wyn, heofonrices duru.
 Ðæt is wynsum wong, wealdas grene
 rume under roderum. (7-14a)

Beautiful is the entire land blissfully blessed
 with the sweet scent of the land,
 unique is the island, the noble Creator
 spirited by the abundant power
 he then established the land.
 There is often open, towards happy
 the joy of music opens,
 the door of the kingdom of heaven.
 That is the delightful land, of green forest
 spacious under the heaven.

These lines deliver an explanatory picture of paradise using an 'adjective' + a 'verb' + a 'subject' sentence structure: 'Wlitig is se wong eall' (Beautiful is the entire land), 'ænlic is þæt iglond' (unique is the island), 'Ðær bið oft open . . . heofonrices duru' (There is often open . . . the door of the kingdom of heaven), 'Ðæt is wynsum wong' (That is the delightful land). These lines also include verbs such as 'geblissad' (blessed), 'gessette' (established), and 'onhliden' (opens). The use of verbs to describe the dynamics of paradise may be intentional, even as the poet leads readers to believe that the severe realities of their world are unchangeable by, composing the related lines without verbs.

If the 'ne' + 'subject' formula indeed has its origins in the Latin text *Carmen de ave phoenice*, as stated by Blake in his text, the use of the formula in the original

text should be examined.⁴⁾

Non huc exangues morbi, non aegra senectus,
Nec mors crudelis nec metus asper adest;
Nec scelus infandum nec opum vesana cupido
Cernitur aut ardens caedis amore furor;
Luctus acerbus abest et egestas obsita pannis
Et curae insomnes et violenta fames. (15–20)⁵⁾

Here no harsh sickness, nor unhealthy old age,
Nor cruel death, nor wretched fear is here;
Nor unspeakable sin, nor wild desire of wealth,
Recognized or burning rage of ruthlessness;
Harsh grief is not here and ragged poverty
And pains of sleeplessness and violent hunger.

The sentence structure that uses an adjective and a noun without a verb, draws the attention of readers to a visual description of the mischief that befalls humans, similar to the vivid imagery of the harsh real world in *The Phoenix*. The Latin verse seems to refer to the torment that human beings cannot avoid in their lives, whereas *The Phoenix* specifically highlights the natural phenomena that persistently harm people. The poet portrays the plethora of natural disasters affecting mankind to evoke a realisation of how blissful the depicted paradise is.

The 'negation' + 'subject' style of the Latin poem coincides with the 'ne' + 'subject' form of *The Phoenix*, suggesting that the Latin formula has been adopted by the Anglo-Saxon poet into his own composition. Similar to another popular Latin motif, *ubi sunt*, used in *The Wanderer*, the 'ne' + 'subject' formula also seems to have been adopted for an Anglo-Saxon audience.⁶⁾

Lines 50–59, whose expression resembles the aforementioned Latin verses, show another example of the 'ne' + 'subject' formula. Here, the reference to human agony in the real world is explicitly stated as follows:

Nis þær on þam londe laðgeniðla
ne wop ne wracu, weatacen nan,
yldu ne yrmðu ne se enga deað

ne lifes lyre ne laþes cyme
ne synn ne sacu ne sarwraçu
ne wædle gewin ne welan onsyn
ne sorg ne slæp ne swar leger;
ne wintergeweorp ne wedra gebregd
hreoþ under heofonum ne se hearda forst
caldum cylegicelum cnyseð ænigne; (50–59)

Not is there on the land the enemy
no lamentation nor vengeance no sign of woe
(no) old age nor sorrow nor that narrow death
no loss of life no coming of the evil
no sin nor strife no misery
no struggle of poverty no desire for wealth
no sorrow nor sleep nor sore disease;
no winter storm no vicissitude of weather
fierce under the heaven nor that severe frost
under cold icicle afflicts anyone;

Notably, the sequence of the 'ne' + 'subject' formula is framed by two verbs: 'nis' (is not) and 'cnyseð' (afflicts) in the first and last sentences, respectively. These OE lines are much longer than their Latin counterparts. This is probably intentional in order to exaggerate a series of subjects that are a source of continuous torment for human beings in the real world. The similarities between the OE and Latin poems in terms of the descriptions of the human world should also be examined here. Noticeable similarities can be observed in the following subjects: OE 'leger' and Latin 'morbi' (sickness), OE 'yldu' and Latin 'aegra' (old age), OE 'deað' and Latin 'mors' (death), OE 'synn' and Latin 'scelus' (sin), OE 'welan onsyn' and Latin 'opum cupido' (desire for wealth), OE 'sorg' and Latin 'luctus' (grief), OE 'wædle' and Latin 'egestas' (poverty), and OE 'ne slæp' and Latin 'insomnes' (sleeplessness). This explicitly indicates that the formula in *The Phoenix* originates from Latin conventions. The forces that trouble human beings, as expressed in the Latin poem, seem simpler than their OE counterparts, as *The Phoenix* epitomises Anglo-Saxon features based on the poet's choice of nouns. The OE version adds battle and nature imagery to the original poem, such as 'laðgeniðla' (enemy), 'wop'

(lamentation), *'wracu'* (vengeance), *'wintergeweorp'* (winter storm), *'wedra gebregd'* (changeable weather), *'forst'* (frost), *'cylegicel'* (icicle). The poet paints a beautiful but miserable landscape of the real Anglo-Saxon world using familiar nouns. It should be also noted that a series of nouns without a verb reinforces the continuous agony experienced in the savage land of human beings, because the *'ne'* + *'subject'* formula conveys the inevitability of the poet's picture and the unchangeable fate of the human world. In contrast, it can be speculated that paradise on Earth is a far more vibrant and happier world. This is perhaps the effect of the *'ne'* + *'subject'* formula used by the poet as a negative signature.

Lines 134–139 comprise the final example of the formula in the first half of *The Phoenix*. Again, the motionless effect of the *'ne'* + *'subject'* formula is evident throughout the lines. Here, the poet emphasises the lack of bliss in the real world by focusing on musical instruments as follows:

ne magon þam breahhtme byman ne hornas
 ne hearpan hlyn ne hæleþa stefn
 ænges on eorþan ne organan,
 swegleopres geswin ne swanes feðre
 ne ænig þara dreama þe Dryhten gescop
 gumum to gliwe in þas geomran woruld. (134–139)

Cannot be heard the sound of trumpets nor horns
 not the sound of harps nor the voices of man
 in any way on the earth nor organs,
 the strain of melody nor the feather of a swan
 nor any of the sounds the Lord created
 to joy for a man in the sorrowful world.

These lines draw the readers' attention to a variety of sounds, specifically those of musical instruments, reinforcing a motionless auditory landscape. The word *'magon'* (can) in line 134a is interpreted as an infinitive 'hear'.⁷ An image of paradise on Earth is awakened by a sequence of musical sounds, such as those *'byman'* (of trumpets), *'hornas'* (of horns), *'hearpan'* (of harps), *'organan'* (organs), *'swegleopres'* (of melody), and *'swanes*

feðre' (the feather of swan).⁸ In contrast, the distress of the real world is emphasised using the word *'geomran'* (sorrowful) at the end of the verse. The poet depicts the land that the phoenix resides in as a world of heavenly music, whereas mankind is portrayed as living in a place where they are tormented by the lack of joy. Notably, lines 134–139 mostly consist of *'adjective'* + *'noun'* set phrases beginning with a single verb *'magon'* (can). The lines without verbs highlight the contrast with the subsequent lines, in which several verbs appear continuously: *'Singeð swa ond swinsað sælum geblissad oþæt seo sunne on suðrodor sæged weorþeð'* (So he sings and makes melody blissed with delight until the sun comes to rest in the southern sky).⁹ A series of verbs *'singeð'* (sings), *'swinsað'* (makes melody), *'geblissad'* (blissed), *'sæged'* (to rest), and *'weorþeð'* (becomes) expresses the dynamic effect of actions such as singing, being blessed, and resting in the joyful land of paradise, in the mere span of two and a half lines.

III. An Example of the *'Ne'* + *'Subject'* Formula in *The Wanderer*

The Wanderer, which is also a part of the Exeter Book, provides another example of the *'ne'* + *'subject'* formula. The poem is usually characterised as an elegy describing the misery of an exile wandering across land and sea. The monologist's narrative of his journey after he is expelled from his homeland uses the *'ne'* + *'subject'* formula. However, the formula is somewhat different from the one used in *The Phoenix*. Notably, the formula comprises a verb in every line, which lends a dynamic quality to the description of the reality the wanderer must face:

Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wiðstondan,
 ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman. (15–16)¹⁰

No weary state of mind can withstand destiny
 no resentful thought provides help.

Each line contains a verb; for example, as *'wiðstondan'* (withstand) and *'gefremman'* (provide) at the end of lines 15 and 16, respectively. The poet of *The Wanderer* uses

verbs in each line to emphasise the idea of motion. Therefore, line 15 implies that no one can withstand their destiny in a tired state of mind, whereas line 16 indicates that rage does not help when struggling with severe situation.

Another example of the formula appears in the middle of the poem, wherein the poet applies the conventional 'ne' + 'subject' formula without verbs, perhaps in order to describe the sinful nature of mankind. This usage coincides exactly with its counterpart in *The Phoenix*:

Wita sceal geþyldig:
 ne sceal no to hatheort, ne to hrædwyrde,
 ne to wac wiga, ne to wanhydig,
 ne to forht, ne to fægen, ne to feohgifre,
 ne næfre gielpes to georn ær he geare cunne:
 (65b-69)

A wise man must be patient:
 must not be too hot-hearted at all
 not too hasty of speech,
 a man not too easily influenced, not too foolhardy,
 not too timid, not too fawning, not too avaricious,
 not never too eager for reckless vow
 before he experiences in full:

In these lines, the poet of *The Wanderer* states that man is unwise and obnoxious enough to be punished and exiled from his country, unless he decides to purge his impurities. Similar to the poets of *The Phoenix* and the Latin poem, who mention the dark side of human nature, the poet of *The Wanderer* also indicates the faults committed by the monologist in the past. A variety of adjectives are interspersed throughout the lines: 'geþyldig' (patient), 'hatheort' (hot-hearted), 'hrædwyrde' (hasty of speech), 'wac' (easily influenced), 'wanhydig' (foolhardy), 'forht' (timid), 'fægen' (fawning), 'feohgifre' (avaricious), and 'gielpes' (eager). The use of these adjectives in the absence of verbs, considering adjectives as motionless a part of speech as nouns, exposes the immutable negative side of human nature.

IV. Conclusions

As the arguments in each section of this article propose, the poet of *The Phoenix* poet adopts the 'ne' + 'subject' formula to paint a distressful picture of mankind, depicting the world as unnatural, cruel, and wild, which is attributable to the forces of nature. The inevitable destiny of human beings, old age, disease, and death, tortures mankind eternally as well. The poet apparently recognises the repetitive effect of negation (*ne*), using which he introduces the 'ne' + 'subject' formula from the original Latin text to emphasise the negative dimensions of the real world in his poem. Several appearances of the formula in the first half of the poem, as argued in Section II of this article, reflect the poet's intricate ingenuity in drawing a striking contrast between the human world and the paradise that the phoenix belongs to. As discussed in Section III, Anglo-Saxon poets, including the poet of *The Wanderer*, may reproduce a conventional formula based on Latin texts but adapt it using familiar phrases and concepts in order to recreate their own poems.

Throughout the verse, the poet attempts to describe how the phoenix's paradise is a blissful, peaceful place whose significance human beings should acknowledge. In order to preach the dignity of paradise to readers, he inserts a sequence of verbs in lines depicting paradise, whilst refraining from using verbs to describe the negative world of human beings.

A study of the 'ne' + 'subject' formula contextualises *The Phoenix* in terms of contrasting the dynamism of paradise with the unchangeable, motionless human world. The poet seeks to make readers envisage a world in which they can expect to live in peace, sing, and enjoy bliss, despite having to endure the realities of their existence amidst the cruelty of nature for the time being. As this article primarily focuses on the first half of the poem, further research is required on how the second half is constructed by the poet, based on the usage of subjects, adjectives, and verbs. Whether intentionally or not, the poet seems to avoid the use of the 'ne' + 'subject' formula in the subsequent part of the poem, which transforms into a stage focusing on the reality of paradise. Likewise, the frequent use of verbs

is expected to depict the poet's paradise towards the end of *The Phoenix*.

NOTES

- 1) Blake, however, states that 'although it is dangerous to emphasise this division in *The Phoenix*, it is helpful to bear it in mind when considering the sources of the poem.' N. F. Blake, ed., *The Phoenix*, revised edition (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990), p. 17.
- 2) Blake, *The Phoenix*. The following citations of *The Phoenix* are attributed to this edition.
- 3) Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 69.
- 4) Blake examines originals of the phoenix story as follows: 'Two early Greek versions are extant. The story is also mentioned in the second-century Greek *Apocalypse of the pseudo-Baruch*, ch. 6-8. And slightly later than this it appears in two Latin poems which are concerned entirely with the phoenix: the *Carmen de ave phoenice* attributed to Lactantius and the *Phoenix* by Claudian. But these five major early Christian texts do not all have a similar account about the phoenix.' Blake, *The Phoenix*, pp. 11-12. He also states that the phoenix story is not completely identical to those five texts; however, the 'ne' + 'subject' formula perfectly coincides with the one in *Carmen de ave phoenice*.
- 5) Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 92.
- 6) See *The Wanderer*, lines 92-93. The where-has-it-gone motif (*ubi sunt*) is regarded as a loan phrase from Latin texts. *The Wanderer* provides the following examples: 'Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mag? Hwær cwom maþþungyfa? Hwær cwom symbla gesetu? Hwær sindon seledreamas?' (Where has the horse gone? Where has the warrior gone? Where has the giver of gifts gone? Where has the throne gone? Where are the joys of the court?), G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, ed., *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records III (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 136.
- 7) Blake mentions that 'the infinitive "equal" can be understood to be omitted here'. As not only 'equal' but any other infinitival verb can possibly subordinate *magon*, a word related to a sound, such as 'hear', could be another choice. Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 74.
- 8) See Blake, *The Phoenix*, p. 74. He refers to another example of *Riddle 7*, saying 'so by swanes feðre we may understand the noise made by the swan's wings in flight'.
- 9) Blake, *The Phoenix*, ll. 140-142a.
- 10) Krapp and Dobbie, p. 134.