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# The Brussels Cross Inscription

## Introduction

*The Dream of the Rood* is a notable exception to the tendency for OE poems to survive in unique copies. Although the complete text of this poem is extant only in the tenth-century Vercelli Book, some of its lines are repeated on the Ruthwell Cross, in a runic inscription that was added sometime after the cross's eighth-century inception. And then there is the Brussels Cross.

It would be imprecise to call the two verse lines on the Brussels Cross an excerpt from *The Dream of the Rood*, but they unmistakably echo it. The syntactical core of the adaptation's two clauses, "Rod is min nama. Geo ic ricne cyning / bæŕ," recalls *Rood* l. 44 "Rod wæs ic aræred. Ahof ic ricne cyning." Its adverb *bifend* derives from a verb occurring twice in the longer poem which the cross applies to itself in l. 42. Finally, although the participle *bestemed* occurs twice in the poem *Andreas* and once in the verse *Exodus* with a word meaning "blood," demonstrating some poetic currency of this halfline, it is no coincidence that the exact same halfline occurs in l. 48 of *Rood*, in such close proximity to the other borrowings, in addition to an equivalent phrase, again with the participle *bestemed*, in l. 22.

The inscription is found on a reliquary purported to contain part of the one true cross. The speaker, which in *Rood* is the cross itself, is thus here present in a manner even more emphatic than in the

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case of the Ruthwell Cross, which merely mimics the true cross in shape.

The prose inscriptions are typical of metalwork, identifying the maker, his patrons, and a deceased person for the benefit of whose soul the work was commissioned.

## Object

Brussels Cross Reliquary.

## Text

(1) Draġmal me worhte.

Rod is min nama. Geo ic ricne cyning

bær byfigynde blode bestemed.

(4) Þas rode het Æþl mæx wyrican 7 Aðelwold hys beroþor (5) Criste to lofe for Ælfrices saule hyra  
beroþor.