THE SEA IN *BEOWULF*[1]

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In dealing with Old English poetry, we can pay special attention to what a given poem has in common with other works and elucidate the literary tradition to which they belong. On the other hand an attempt must be made to throw light on the unique qualities which the poem displays within the tradition. The present article aims chiefly at taking up the sea images which play a prominent part in *Beowulf* and examining their connection at various levels with the theme of the poem.

I

The vocabulary of *Beowulf* has some traits which distinguish the poem from the rest of the corpus of Old English poetry. According to the glossary of C. L. Wrenn's edition,[2] the number of those simple and compound words which occur only in this poem amounts to about 735 (and the number will be a little larger, if we include those words of which only some meanings appear in *Beowulf*). This number is significant, even if we take into consideration the length and characteristic theme of the poem.[3] Some

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[1] This is based on an article in Japanese, titled '*Beowulf* ni okeru umi', *The Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, No. 70 (1969).

[2] *Beowulf* (London: Harrap, 1958[2]).

[3] Of the compounds peculiar to *Beowulf*, the more frequent first elements are as follows (the bracketed numbers indicate frequency): *beado-* (*beadu-*) (9), *deað-* (5), *dryht-* (4), *feorh-* (*ferh-*) (8), *fyr-* (4), *gar-* (5), *gold-* (5), *guð-* (22), *hand-* (*hond-*) (10), *heal-* (6), *heaðo-* (*heaðu-*) (12), *heoro-* (*heoru-*, *hioro-*) (6), *here-* (12), *hilde-* (19), *hord-* (5), *hring-* (7), *inwit-* (7), *land-* (4), *lind-* (4), *mægen-* (6), *maðm-* (*maðþum-*, *maððum-*) (5), *medo-* (*medu-*, *meodo-*, *meodu-*) (6), *mere-* (7), *morgen-* (4), *nið-* (5), *sæ-* (10), *searo-* (5), *sele-* (5), *wæl-* (16), *wig-* (11), *wunder-* (*wundor-*, *wundur-*) (6).

of them may be due to the invention of the *Beowulf* poet, while others are among the common hoard of the poetic tradition to which he belonged. Anyway, many words which denote the sea are naturally included in this number.

We cannot easily state the precise number of the words for ' sea ' in *Beowulf*, for it is difficult at times to decide whether given words are used in reference to particular aspects or attributes of the sea, or they are merely rhetorical expressions for the sea. Moreover, between ' sea ' and ' lake ' there is no rigid demarcation and one and the same words (e.g. *sæ*, *mere*, etc.) are used for both, which adds to the difficulty. If we are allowed to disregard such ambiguities, the number of sea words (including kennings) in *Beowulf* may be counted as about 31.[1] But it would be rather pointless to try to be precise about the number; we must make much of the uniqueness of diction.

Beowulf has some features of its own: of simple words, *ford* (568) is used in the sense of ' waterway, sea ' only here; *hæf* (1862 (MS *hea þu*), 2477)[2] does not occur elsewhere.[3] (In passing, it is noteworthy that such a rare word occurs both in Parts I and II, and besides in reference to peaceful or strained relationships between two nations.) Among compounds and kennings peculiar to *Beowulf* are *floda begong* (1826), *lagu-stræt* (239), *segl-rad* (1429), *sioleða*

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[1] *brim*, *faroð*, *ford*, *geofon*, *hæf* (*heaf*), *holm*, *lagu*, *mere*, *sæ*, *stream*, *sund*, *wæd*, *wæter*, *yð*; *brim-stream*, *eagor-stream*, *eg-stream*, *floda begong*, *ganotes bæþ*, *gar-secg*, *hran-rad*, *lagu-stræt*, *lagu-stream*, *segl-rad*, *sioleða bigong*, *swan-rad*, *wæg-holm*, *wind-geard*, *yða ful*, *yða gewealc*, *yð-gewin*. Besides these, there are kennings for the lake where Grendel lives: *yða geswing* (848), *yð-geblond* (*-gebland*) (1373, 1593, 1620), *yða gewinn* (1469), *holma geþring* (2132). Cf. H. Buckhurst, " Terms and Phrases for the Sea in Old English Poetry ", *Studies in English Philology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929), pp. 105–108, who estimates the number of simplexes for ' sea ' in OE poetry at twenty-four, of which seventeen occur in *Beowulf*.

[2] Cf. ON *haf*, OFris. *hef*.

[3] The doubtful form *hofu*, however, occurs in the *Husband's Message*, 8; Sievers emends it to *hafu* and his emendation has been followed by many editors.

bigong (2367), *wæg-holm* (217), *wind-geard* (1224),[1] *yða ful* (1208),[2] *yð-gewin* (2412). For the undulation or waves of the sea, but not for the sea itself, there are such expressions as *brim-wylm* (1494), *flod-yð* (542), *holm-wylm* (2411), *sæ-wylm* (393), and *wæter-yð* (2242), and of these the forms with *-wylm* are especially to be noted.[3]

II

We cannot, however, elucidate the uniqueness of treatment in *Beowulf* satisfactorily by considering the individual words apart from the context; the technique of the *Beowulf* poet will not be brought out in full relief until we put them in their context and compare them with corresponding words in other poems.

For example, are such kennings as *hran-rad* (10), *swan-rad* (200) and *ganotes bæþ* (1861),[4] as H. C. Wyld[5] asserts, nothing but hackneyed phrases like the 18th century poetic diction,[6] or should we

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[1] As for the interpretation of this controversial word, I should like to accept the view which regards it as a variation of *sæ*. Cf. ON *vind-heimr* ' wind-home, the air '. Again we may refer to *Riddle* 2 where the storm is supposed to be confined in the bottom of the sea:

Hwilum ic gewite, swa ne wenaþ men,
under yþa geþræc eorþan secan,
garsecges grund. . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . Sundhelme ne mæg
losian ær mec læte se þe min latteow biđ
on siþa gehwam. (1–3a, 10b–12b)

[2] Cf. *lagustreama ful* (=clouds) (*Riddle* 3, 38), *windes ful* (=air) (*Solomon and Saturn*, 25), *wætres byht* ' water's abode, i.e. bay ' (*Riddle* 22, 12).

[3] The fact that in *Andreas* there occur *flod-wylm* (516) and *stream-welm* (495) is noteworthy as well as its other resemblances to *Beowulf*.

[4] Cf. *fisces bæð* (*Andreas*, 293; *Rune Poem*, 46).

[5] " Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon Poetry ", *Essays and Studies*, Vol. XI (1925), p. 58.

[6] In this connection, Buckhurst (*op. cit.*, p. 115) holds that in the type of compound and phrase which describe the ocean as the abode or bath of monsters and sea-beasts " OE poets show little imagination, and the terms are generally used quite conventionally."

recognize with A. Bonjour[1] " the associational uses of words " in them?

Bonjour, referring to two articles by Caroline Brady,[2] takes up four kennings and goes a step further in his opinion about their expressiveness. As to *hronrad* in the passage

> Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum,
> monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
> egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð
> feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,
> weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,
> oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra
> ofer *hronrade* hyran scolde,
> gomban gyldan. Þæt wæs god cyning! (4–11)[3]

Brady says:

> *Hronrād* here imports less the limitless, trackless aspects of the ocean than it does the breadth, the expanse. By its use in this passage the poet appears to suggest the extent of Scyld's sway : not merely the near-neighbors, but all the peoples dwelling around, across the ocean, were forced to accept his dominion and to pay tribute to him.[4]

And this interpretation seems to be convincing. Bonjour, on the other hand, asserts that the whale as the greatest of animals suggests the kingly sway, and therefore it not only emphasizes the expanse of Scyld's territory but also shows how powerful he grew.[5] But it will be rather far-fetched to try to detect there an immediate connection between Scyld and the whale. It is true that *hronrad*

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[1] " On Sea Images in *Beowulf* ", *Twelve Beowulf Papers* (Geneva: Université de Neuchatel, 1962).

[2] " The Synonyms for ' Sea ' in *Beowulf* ", *Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1952) and " The Old English Nominal Compounds in *-rād* ", *PMLA*, Vol. LXVII (1952).

[3] All the quotations in this article are from G. P. Krapp and E. van K. Dobbie: *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1932–51).

[4] Brady, *PMLA*, Vol. LXVII (1952), p. 568.

[5] Bonjour, p. 116.

suggests the vast expanse of sea in the speech of the Creator addressed to Adam and Eve in *Genesis*:

> Inc is halig feoh
> and wilde deor on geweald geseald,
> and lifigende, ða ðe land tredað,
> feorheaceno cynn, ða ðe flod wecceð
> geond *hronrade*. (201b–05a)

and in the remark which God in the guise of a mariner makes in reply to the hero's question whence he has steered the ship in *Andreas*:

> Us mid flode bær
> on *hranrade* heahstefn naca,
> snellic sæmearh, snude bewunden,
> oðþæt we þissa leoda land gesohton,
> wære bewrecene, swa us wind fordraf. (265b–69)[1]

But the Mediterranean is naturally less adequate as the background to this word than the North Sea, and in *Beowulf* it is used with much more vividness.

As to *swanrad* in *Beowulf*, Brady says that this kenning is deliberately chosen to serve as an introductory to the hero's voyage to Denmark and to suggest the body of water which "flota famigheals fugle gelicost" is to cross,[2] and again that it is thought to be a calm navigable body of water accompanied by no danger.[3] Bonjour, accepting Brady's opinion, says:

> Just as *hron* suggested vast sovereign sway, *swan* is suggestive of easy grace, swiftness and speed.

and proceeds to say (although he admits that on the surface the foamy prow is likened to the neck of a swimming bird):

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[1] *hronrad* is used in two other lines of the poem (634, 821) in reference to the same sea.

[2] "Synonyms", p. 29.

[3] Brady, p. 568.

I am not sure whether a connotation of flight is not lurking behind that " riding place of the swan "—especially in view of the following comparison of the sailing ship with a bird (*fugle gelicost*).[1]

and this is quite an illuminating comment. According to his line of argument, *swonrad* in the passage of *Elene*:

hu gesundne sið ofer *swonrade*
secgas mid sigecwen aseted hæfdon
on Creca land. (996–98a)

may be said to agree with the exuberant jubilation over the discovery of the true cross, while in the scene in which the persecutor of Juliana is drowned:

Þa se synscaþa
to scipe sceohmod sceaþena þreate
Heliseus ehstream sohte,
leolc ofer laguflod longe hwile
on *swonrade*. (*Juliana*, 671b–75b)

swonrad is in no way relevant to " tranquility " or " grace " (though the sense of ' surface of the sea ' may be sharp and clear)[2], and again in the passage of *Andreas*:

Ðæt mæg engel þin eað geferan,
halig of heofenum con him holma begang,
sealte sæstreamas ond *swanrade*,
waroðfaruða gewinn ond wæterbrogan,
wegas ofer widland. (194–98a)

we cannot but think that it is incongrous with the context or has no definite association, unless we regard it as contrasted with the agitated sea.[3] (By the way, in *Andreas*, though the bird simile is

[1] Bonjour, p. 117.

[2] Brady, p. 569

[3] Brady (*op. cit.*, p. 568) regards this passage as " an enumeration of those things which must be known to him who would make a successful and fast voyage across the ocean to Marmedonia " and *hronrad* here as " a part or characteristic of the ocean ".

not accompanied by *swanrad* as in *Beowulf*, there is a similar passage:

> Is þes bat ful scrid,
> færeð famigheals, fugole gelicost
> glideð on geofone. (496b–98a)

Concerning *ganotes bæð* in the passage where Hrothgar makes a prediction as to the future relationship between the Danes and the Geats:

> Hafast þu gefered þæt þam folcum sceal,
> Geata leodum ond Gardenum,
> sib gemæne, ond sacu restan,
> inwitniþas, þe hie ær drugon,
> wesan, þenden ic wealde widan rices,
> maþmas gemæne, manig oþerne
> godum gegretan ofer *ganotes bæð*;
> sceal hringnaca ofer heafu bringan
> lac ond luftacen. (1855–63a)

Brady says:

> here Hrothgar does not wish to emphasize the distance, the *expanse* of water between the two peoples; rather, across the peaceful surface of the sea men may exchange gifts.[1]

and Bonjour explains, " That the locution flashes before one's mind a sunny vision of the sea at its quietest and loveliest is significant."[2] In the lines:

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[1] " Synonyms ", p. 44. But in the lines of *The Seafarer*,

> Hwilum ylfete song
> dyde ic me to gomene, g:netes hleoþor
> ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
> mæw singende fore medodrince. (19b—22)

the cry of the gannet is given as one of the signs of rare creatures onthe dreary expanse of the wintry sea.

[2] *Twelve Beowulf Papers*, p. 117.

Ac byþ on eorþan elda bearnum
flæsces fodor, fereþ gelome
ofer *ganotes bæþ*; garsecg fandaþ
hwæþer ac hæbbe æþele treowe. (*Rune Poem*, 77–80)

this kenning may have a slight association (here *ac* means at once 'oak (acorn)' and 'ship of oak'), while in the lines of the poem inserted in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

And þa wearð eac adræfed deormod hæleð,
Oslac, of earde ofer yða gewealc,
ofer *ganotes bæð*, gamolfeax hæleð,
wis and wordsnotor, ofer wætera geðring,
ofer hwæles eðel, hama bereafod.
(*The Death of Edgar* (*975*), 24–28)

it is used in reference to the banishment of Oslac the Earl of Northumbria, and has nothing to do with 'peace'.

In view of the above instances of other poems than *Beowulf*, these kennings sometimes seem to be used as hackneyed expressions without definite associations in particular. Compared with them, those in *Beowulf* are on the whole bestowed with life. Is it that they were used so as to conform to the context by the *Beowulf* poet who was aware of the associations which their literal meanings evoked, or that the conventional clichés unintentionally used happened to achieve a happy effect? Perhaps it makes no difference after all. And we should probably admit with Brady that the *Beowulf* poet is "an artist who knows how to use a variety of words and phrases in their literal senses to convey the effect he desires".[1] It goes without saying that, masterly as his art is, he does not always employ kennings in such a way.

III

The uniqueness of the *Beowulf* poet, as seen above, appears in

[1] "Synonyms", p. 44.

diction, but on a higher level it reveals itself in the structure of the poem as well. Before going ahead, however, it will be convenient to survey how the mentions of the sea are distributed throughout the poem. They occur in the following passages:

In the Proem:

(1) the sea across which the neighbouring nations pay tribute to Scyld: ofer *hron-rade* (10)

(2) the sea where the ship-funeral takes place: to *brimes faroðe* (28); on *flodes* æht (42); leton *holm* beran (48); geafon on *gar-secg* (49)

(3) the sea over which Scyld as a child was sent forth: ænne ofer *yðe* (46)

In Part I A:

(4) the water encompassing the earth (in the song sung by a scop in the revelry in Heorot): swa *wæter* bebugeð (93)

(5) the billowy ocean which Beowulf crosses on his way to Denmark to help Hrothgar: ofter *swan-rade* (200); flota wæs on *yðum* (210); *streamas* wundon (212); *sund* wið sande (213); Gewat þa ofer *wæg-holm* (217); þa wæs *sund* liden (223)

(6) the same as above (in the speech of the coast-warden): ofer *lagu-stræt* (239); hider ofer *holmas* (240)

(7) the sea which Beowulf is to cross when he returns home (in the speech of the coast-warden): ofer *lagu-streamas* (297)

(8) the sea on whose shore the coast-warden keeps watch against hostile bands (in his own speech): Ic to *sæ* wille (318)

(9) the sea-billows over which Beowulf and his followers have voyaged to Denmark (in Wulfgar's speech): ofer *geofenes begang* (362); ofer *sæ-wylmas* (393)

(10) the sea where Beowulf once slew sea-monsters (in Beowulf's speech): ond on *yðum* slog (421)

(11) the surging sea across which Ecgtheow, Beowulf's father, came to Denmark to take refuge (in Hrothgar's speech): ofer *yða gewealc* (464)

(12) the sea's ridge over which Hrothgar sent reparations for Ecgtheow to the Wylfings (in Hrothgar's speech): ofer *wæteres*

hrycg (471)

(13) the open sea where Beowulf and Breca ventured on a swimming contest (in Unferth's speech): on sidne *sæ* ymb *sund* flite (507); *wada* cunnedon (508); on deop *wæter* (509); þa git on *sund* reon (512); þær git *eagor-stream* (513); mæton *mere-stræta* (514); glidon ofer *gar-secg*. *Geofon* yþum weol (515); he þe æt *sunde* oferflat (517); *holm* up ætbær (519)

(14) the same as above (in Beowulf's reply to Unferth): þæt wit on *gar-secg* ut (537); þa wit on *sund* reon (539); *flod-yþum* feor (542); hraþor on *holme* (543); on *sæ* wæron (544); oþþæt unc *flod* todraf (545); *wado* weallende (546); Hreo wæron *yþa* (548); ymb brontne *ford* (568); *brimu* swaaredon (570); ne on *eg-streamum* (577); Ða me *sæ* oþbær (579); *flod* æfter faroðe (580); *wadu* weallendu (581)

(15) the sea over which Beowulf came to Denmark (in his own speech to Wealhtheow): þa ic on *holm* gestah (632)

(16) the seas encompassing the earth (in the passage to praise Beowulf's valour who has slain Grendel): be *sæm* tweonum (858)

(17) the sea which lies between Friesland and Denmark (in the Finn episode): on *mere* drifan (1130); *holm* storme weol (1131)

(18) the sea which Hygelac crossed on his expedition to Friesland (in the description of the subsequent history of the necklace given to Beowulf by Hrothgar): ofer *yða ful* (1208)

(19) the sea encompassing the earth (in Wealhtheow's speech): swa *sæ* bebugeð (1223); *wind-geard*, weallas (1224)

In Part I B:

(20) the same as above (in reference to Æschere, a favourite of Hrothgar, who has been killed by Grendel's mother): be *sæm* tweonum (1297)

(21) the bottom of the sea as one of possible refuges of Grendel's mother (in Beowulf's consolation to Hrothgar): ne on *gyfenes grund* (1394)

(22) the seas encompassing the earth (in reference to Hrothgar's eminence): be *sæm* tweonum (1685)

(23) the sea which destroyed the brood of giants (in the account

of an inscription on the hilt): syðþan *flod* ofsloh (1688); *gifen* geotende (1690); þurh *wæteres wylm* (1693)

(24) the welling of a flood as one of the agents which might cut Beowulf off from power (in Hrothgar's sermon to Beowulf): oððe *flodes wylm* (1764)

(25) the expanse of the sea which lies between Denmark and Geatland (in Beowulf's speech): ofer *floda begang* (1826)

(26) the sea across which friendly intercourse will be held between both nations (in Hrothgar's speech): ofer *ganotes bæð* (1861); ofer *heafu* bringan (1862)

(27) the streams of the sea which Beowulf and his followers cross on their way home: Cwom þa to *flode* (1888); drefan deop *wæter* (1904); wind ofer *yðum* (1907); forð ofer *yðe* (1909); ofer *brim-streamas* (1910); Hraþe wæs æt *holm* (1914); fus æt *faroðe* (1916); þy læs hym *yþa ðrym* (1918)

(28) the sea which Thryth(?) crossed when she was given in marriage to Offa (in the "Thryth" episode): ofer fealone *flod* (1950)

In Part II

(29) the sea near where the barrow with the hoard in it stands: *wæter-yðum* neah (2242)

(30) the expanse of waters across which Beowulf swam back to his people after the lost battle in Friesland: þa he to *holme* stag (2362); Oferswam ða *sioleða bigong* (2367)

(31) the sea which Eanmund and Eadgils, banished nephews of the Swedish King Onela, crossed to seek shelter: ofer *sæ* sohtan (2380)

(32) the sea which Beowulf crossed with an army to avenge Heardred's death by helping Eadgils: ofer *sæ* side (2394)

(33) the sea near where the barrow with the hoard in it stands: *holm-wylme* neah (2411); *yð-gewinne* (2412)

(34) the sea which intervenes between the Swedes and the Geats who were hostile to each other (in Beowulf's speech): ofer wid *wæter* (2473); ofer *heafo* healdan (2477)

(35) the sea which surrounds Hronesness where Beowulf's bar-

row is to be raised (in Beowulf's speech): æt *brimes* nosan (2803); ofer *floda genipu* (2808)

(36) the sea which engulfs the body of the dragon: *flod* fæðmian (3133)

IV

As the scop recites at the banquet in Heorot, the Creator made the world as ' middangeard ' surrounded by the sea (. . . *se ælmihtiga eorðan worhte, / wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð* (92–93)) so that the sea is always descried and the sea roar comes floating from afar. Therefore, when valour or virtue is celebrated, such expressions must be used as:

> . . . suð ne norð be sæm tweonum[1]
> ofer eormengrund oþer nænig
> under swegles begong selra nære
> rondhæbbendra, rices wyrðra. (858–61)

or

> Se wæs Hroþgare hæleþa leofost
> on gesiðes had be sæm tweonum,
> rice randwiga, þone ðe heo on ræste abreat,
> blædfæstne beorn. (1296–99a)

or

> on geweald gehwearf woroldcyninga
> ðæm selestan be sæm tweonum
> ðara þe on Scedenigge sceatas dælde. (1684–86)

or again

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[1] The phrase ' be sæm tweonum ' occurs in *Exodus* (443, 563), *Guthlac* (266, 1359) and *Paris Psalter* (Psalm 71, 8); of these the second instance in *Guthlac* (*se selesta bi sæm tweonum*) is of the same pattern as the third in *Beowulf*. Incidentally, the two instances in *Exodus* occur in the predictions made respectively by God and Moses as to the future destiny of the Israelites and are bound together by alliteration with *gesittað*.

Hafast þu gefered þæt ðe feor ond neah
ealne wideferhþ weras ehtigað,
efne swa side swa sæ bebugeð,
windgeard, weallas. (1221–24a)

The sea encompassing Denmark and Geatland which are the microcosms of the world is the scene of their activities, the place of communication between the peoples, and the expanse to be gone *over* (there are 25 instances of *ofer* followed by sea words). For example, when Scyld's influence prevailed, the neighbouring peoples pay tribute to him across *hronrad;* Hrothgar, with separation from Beowulf before him, wishes that the Danes and the Geats may keep friendly intercourse across the calm sea where gannets fly; and Beowulf as a young man destroyed sea-monsters (. . . *on yðum slog / niceras nihtes* (421–22a)) and held a swimming-contest against Breca on the dreary expanse of wintry ocean (in Unferth's remark of this contest there occur sea words thirteen times in fourteen lines, and fourteen times in Beowulf's account of the same event. These variations suggest the agitation of the sea. We must add that *wæd* occurs only in this passage (508, 546, 581)). And, above all, Beowulf came over the sea to save Denmark from Grendel's devastation, and went over the sea after having carried out his mission successfully (in the descriptions of his voyages to and from Denmark there occurs the word *famiheals* (*famigheals*) (218, 1909), and in addition the total effects are very similar, and the formulaic expressions form as it were a frame for the part which intervenes between two voyages, strengthening the impression of isolation of land surrounded by the sea).

But it is not only help that comes over the sea. That is why the Danish coast-warden must keep a close and constant watch against enemies who may come any moment over the sea (*ofer lagustræte* (239), *ofer holmas* (240)). The sea is treacherous and makes unstable the relationship between peoples whom it separates. Hrothgar, in his sermon to Beowulf, mentions the surging sea (*flodes wylm* (1764)) as one of the agents which deprive men of

their power; Hengest harbours vengeance who stays in Friesland, separated from his native land by the stormy and icy sea; Hygelac went ' over the cup of waves ' (*ofer yða ful* (1208)) to Friesland on an expediton only to be killed, and Beowulf who had accompanied him swam back to his native land after the lost battle; and Swedish princes, Eanmund and Eadgils, sought refuge over the sea (*ofer sæ* (2380)), and Beowulf went with an army over the main (*ofer sæ side* (2394)) to assist Eadgils. The sea which lies between the Swedes and the Geats casts a gloom over the fate of the latter subsequent to Beowulf's death.

Though it presents an appearance of tranquility from time to time, the sea is pregnant with unknown perils, threatens mortal existence on land, and is associated with death. As described in the Proem, Scyld departed at the fated hour to go into the keeping of the Lord; his body was carried to the ring-prowed ship and laid by the mast, and then sent forth with a golden standard floating above over the sea, God knows where.

> Men ne cunnon
> secgan to soðe, selerædende,
> hæleð under heofenum, hwa þæm hlæste onfeng. (50b–52)

The barrow hiding the hoard which caused Beowulf's death lies near the sea (*wæteryðum neah* (2242b), *holmwylme neh, / yðgewinne* (2411b–12a)), and the dying hero orders his mound to be raised on the headland projecting far into the sea.

> Hatað heaðomære hlæw gewyrcean
> beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan;
> se scel to gemyndum minum leodum
> heah hlifian on Hronesnæsse,
> þæt hit sæliðend syððan hatan
> Biowulfes biorh, ða ðe brentingas
> ofer floda genipu feorran drifað. (2802–08)

The dead dragon also is, as it were, consigned to a watery grave.

Now turning to other OE poems, we find that they severally

present some aspects or other of the sea which in *Beowulf* are put together in unity. The Anglo-Saxons' fundamental conception of the sea seems to be that it is in itself unquiet (*sund unstille* (*Maxims I*, 77b)), and often brings storm:

> Storm oft holm gebringeþ,
> geofen in grimmum sælum; onginnað grome fundian
> fealwe on feorran to londe, hwæþer he fæste stonde.
> (*Maxims I*, 50b–52)

Therefore the Anglo-Saxons had to pray God for their safety on the voyage:

> Bidde ic nu sigeres god godes miltse,
> siðfæt godne, smylte and lihte
> windas on waroþum. (*A Journey Charm*, 33–35b)

and the sea as one of the causes of men's death is often mentioned; the devil seized by Juliana, for example, confesses that he submerged some people into the ocean-flood:

> Sume on yðfare
> wurdon on wege wætrum bisencte,
> on mereflode, minum cræftum
> under reone stream. (*Juliana*, 478b–81a)

and Heliseus with his band perished through the surging waves. But, above all, the sea is often symbolical of exile and separation: in *The Wife's Lament* an exiled woman suffers longing for her beloved who may live alone beyond the tossing waves; in *The Wanderer* the sea stands for the realities of this dark life which the exile is obliged to face after the daydream of his past happier days; and in *The Seafarer* a life on the ice-cold sea as contrasted with a most fortunate life on land is an isthmus between this world and the world to come, and in his heart surges the yearning for something beyond.

Finally, the sea does not always come to the fore in *Beowulf* as in *Andreas*, the " romance of the seas ", which is characterized by an

almost tenacious use of accumulated sea variations, but the sea images in the former are charged with diverse functions and have a tinge of symbolism, which is on the whole lacking in the more or less direct descriptons of the sea in the latter. Again, in *Beowulf* the sea occurs in various forms and is described in an organic relation to the whole structure of the poem.

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