# A STUDY OF THE SEA IN OLD ENGLISH POETRY

by

Mary V. Wallis

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Department of English
McGill University
Montréal, Québec.

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive study of the Old English poetic sea compares its appearance in a wide range of works, and reveals that in most of these, it has the same basic function. The sea is shown to be a bi-polar, or axial image, whose function it is to represent and often to resolve, two opposed themes. The concern of the discussion is to show how this axial sea image is manipulated within individual poems to suit their particular themes.

Two sets of opposed themes are isolated. The first is the theme of exile and the theme of movement into or escape from exile. Here the sea is a spacial image either of wilderness or of pathway. The second is the theme of apocalypse and the theme of redemption. Here signifying an event in time, the sea is discussed in terms of its life-giving and destructive powers.

Finally, a relationship is described between the sea of exile and the sea of apocalypse and redemption, with special emphasis on The Seafarer and OE Exodus as the best examples.

## RESUME

Cette étude compréhensive de la mer dans la poésie anglo-saxonne compare la façon dont elle est présentée dans une vaste gamme d'oeuvres et révèle qu'elle y exerce dans la plupart des cas la même fonction fondamentale. La mer y apparaît comme une figure bipolaire, ou axiale, dont le rôle consiste à représenter, et souvent à concilier, deux thèmes opposés en même temps. La discussion s'attache à démontrer comment cette image essentiellement axiale de la mer est traitée dans des poèmes choisis pour s'adapter à leurs thèmes particuliers.

On y distingue deux ensembles de thèmes opposés. Le premier est celui de l'exil, et du mouvement vers l'exil ou de la fuite hors d'exil. La mer exprime ici une image spatiale soit d'une vaste étendue désertique, soit d'un chemin. Le second thème est celui de l'apocalypse et de la rédemption. La mer correspond alors à une image temporelle, discutée en tant que principe de vie et principe de destruction.

Enfin, une corrélation est établie entre la mer symbole d'exil et la mer symbole d'apocalypse et de rédemption, en accordant une attention spéciale aux poèmes en vieil-anglais The Seafarer et Exodus.

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# INTRODUCTION

## i. The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Sea

Images of the sea in Old English poetry can be divided into two broad categories. Either they are images that support themes of exile, or they participate in scenarios of apocalypse and redemption. The general definition of exile found in the OED is "expatriation [or] prolonged absence from one's native land, endured by compulsion of circumstance or voluntarily undergone for any purpose."[1] For this present work, let us add to this definition the idea of being between one's native land and another place, known or not. Exile is thus defined as an expedition, forced or voluntary, between home and another destination, that may be either a much cherished goal or an unfamiliar and possibly dangerous place.

As an image of exile, the sea is most often found in elegaic verse in scenes of loneliness and despair. Alternately, it appears in poems involving a hero who majestically sails over the waves to another land where he will partake of some high and noble adventure.

[1] Oxford English Dictionary, 1971 ed., s.v. exile.

In either case, the sea is associated with exile by virtue of being between two points of reference; for example, the native country and a foreign land, or, on a metaphysical plane, this mutable earth and the eternal home in heaven.

Although many sea images in OE poetry have clear Mediterranean, patristic antecedents, the grey northern waters encircling England, shaping her history and economy, inevitably coloured the significance to the Anglo-Saxons of the patristic sea and infiltrated their own poetic expressions of the sea. The poetic sea of exile derives in particular from the sea that the traveller knows, the spacial sea of the merchant and pilgrim. To understand this poetic sea, it will be useful to consider its relation to the everyday sea that really was travelled upon. We can examine too the ways it interacts with other images in the poems to build the exile theme, and the sources, both indigenous and imported, for its various meanings.

The other class of sea images, those associated with apocalypse and redemption, turns up in OE scriptural verse mainly, but also in many poems requiring an agent that creates, renews, cleanses, purges, punishes or destroys. This sea is "the waters" that both generate life at creation and crash over the land to

herald the end of life. Frequently their task is to purge and renew sinful humanity. This sea of apocalypse and redemption is an image of an event in time, not space. Poems where it is found differ from the exile poems because they are, in general, imitative of and more dependent upon scripture or legend, and less originally Anglo-Saxon in their use of associated images, though the overall flavour of the works is decidedly Anglo-Saxon. We might think, for instance, of the OE Genesis and Exodus or Andreas, taken from scripture and legend respectively. An appreciation of the sea in these works is based less on poetic structure, associated imagery and so on, and more on the theological statements that the poems contain.

These two seas, the exile sea and the apocalyptic/redemptive one, seem quite unrelated on the surface. Yet a closer look reveals an important link. The remaining task then, for understanding OE sea imagery, is to take full measure of the especially rich visions of man's destiny that emerge in certain passages where the seas of exile and apocalypse/redemption converge.

ii. Critical Approaches to the Old English Poetic Sea

Ordinarily, the OE sea is studied as it appears in individual poems, the result being a few paragraphs about how the sea image informs the theme of a specific work. There are however, two early (1926) studies whose aim is to identify the broad characteristics of the OE sea. Kissack, in an article addressing both Old and Middle English attitudes to the sea, sees a strong pleasure in seafaring among the Anglo-Saxons.[2] He cites the OE terms for ships and kennings for the sea as evidence, and alludes to the diction of seafaring in such works as Genesis A and Elene. Kissack is particularly interested in the interplay of pagan and Christian sentiments. One conclusion that he draws is that Christianity calmed wilder pagan ideas, though in a process gradual enough that both elements, the savage heathen and the mild Christian, can be found in the poetry.[3] Kissack is likely on safe ground to say that pagan and Christian ideas together influenced the development of seafaring passages, but the implication that Christianity makes pagan seas seethe less cannot stand up to the evidence, especially from Christian Mediterranean sources, where furious seas batter the Christian

[2]R.A. Kissack, "The Sea in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poetry," Washington University Studies 13 (1926) 371-89.

[3]Kissack, p. 375.

sailor.[4] Kissack also does not address a wide enough range of OE sea passages to substantiate his claims.

The second study, by Treneer, takes a broader approach.[5] She identifies three characteristic moods of OE "sea poetry" (as she calls it): dominance of man over the elements; endurance and longing for the mead-hall; and exhaltation, as well as a "restlessness as of the sea itself."[6] Treneer compares a large number of poems. Her aim is to discuss how the sea is revealed by poets and explorers, and her approach is to isolate passages that are particularly expressive.

Wyld, writing about the leading features of OE diction and imagery, illustrates his article with a long review of the diction and imagery of seafaring.[7] Wyld notes the genuine emotion that the Anglo-Saxon poets seems to feel toward the sea, and the sense of mystery, sublimity, solemnity and sympathy that the sea could evoke.

[4]See infra, p. 48.

[5]Anne Treneer, The Sea in English Literature from Beowulf to Donne, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926).

[6]Treneer, p. 1. I have avoided using the term "sea poetry" because it implies a body of poetry that is primarily and specifically "of the sea". The sea is more often an image used to illuminate other themes or to provide a setting for the voyage or action of an otherwise land-based hero.

[7]H.C. Wyld, "Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," in Essays and Studies, Vol. 11, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925); rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. J. Bessinger and S. Kahrl, (Hamden: Archon Books, 1968), pp. 186-201.

While one concern with the OE poetic sea has been its connections with the contemporary attitude to the real sea, another has been the levels of meaning on which we are to understand it. For example, the sea of The Seafarer is thought by Greenfield and Whitelock to be a literal one over which a real peregrinus makes his way.[8] Diekstra's analysis however, suggests that the Seafarer's sea is the figural setting for the flight of the exiled soul to God.[9] Then again, Smithers views this same sea as a route for the dead, and draws on Scandinavian notions of the journey taken at death by the soul to argue his case.[10]

The sea has also been given "psychological" interpretations. Burlin for instance, draws attention to how the sea corresponds to the frame of mind that Hengest is in when he winters with Finn (Beowulf ll. 1127b-37a).[11] Related to this is Greenfield's idea of the

[8] S. Greenfield, "The Old English Elegies," in Continuations and Beginnings, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), pp. 154-7ff.

[9] F.N.M. Diekstra, "The Seafarer 58-66a: The Flight of the Exiled Soul to Its Fatherland," Neophil. 55 (1971) 433-446.

[10] G. Smithers, "The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer," Med. Aev. 26 (1957) 137-53.

[11] R. Burlin, "Inner weather and interlace: a note on the semantic value of structure in Beowulf," in Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope, ed. R. Burlin and E.B. Irving, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 82ff.

"inner weather" of certain characters that is reflected in the appearance of the sea.[12]

In 1933, Campbell, complaining of "regressive" studies of patristic influences, what he called "random shots in the direction of the Fathers," made a plea for a more systematic study of patristic literature as an adjunct to OE studies.[13] We do not learn more about a phrase's meaning by locating its occurences in earlier literature, Campbell claimed, but we do learn much about the mind that used the phrase and "how obediently it followed patristic connotation, how universally familiar it was to contemporaries."[14] Thereafter, patristic studies grew steadily in favour. Considerable attention was laid on patristic sources for the OE poetic sea, the foremost example of this being the nautical imagery in OE Exodus. Evidence from the liturgy, the Bible and apocryphal writings, and patristic literature demonstrates the close relations between the Exodus sea and themes of baptism and redemption and apocalypse and exile.[15]

[12]Greenfield, "The Old English Elegies," p. 165.

[13]J.M. Campbell, "Patristic Studies and the Literature of Medieval England," Speculum 8 (1933) p. 472.

[14]Campbell, p. 475.

[15]See select bibliography in P. Lucas (ed.), Exodus, (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), pp. 155-7, and "Introduction," pp. 51-60.

Critical emphasis then, has for the most part been either on the Anglo-Saxon attitude to the real sea, or on levels of interpretation of sea imagery, or on the study of patristic sources. The tendency has been to concentrate on individual poems or small groups of related poems, and to draw conclusions that, in keeping with the critic's intentions, illuminate the poem more than the sea.

Though many of these studies are indispensible for the present work, it is the sea rather than the poems where it appears that is our concern here. The approach differs from those previous in several ways. First, an attempt is made to put the literal sea into perspective against the poetic one by looking at the problems in comparing the two, and restating their relationship based on historic as well as poetic factors. Second, the problem of a literal versus a figural interpretation is circumvented by considering the sea's position relative to themes on any level. It will be shown that on each level of interpretation, the sea fulfills the same poetic role - that of bridging two opposite ideas. Finally, the emphasis on sources is lifted in an attempt to give a clearer view of the uniquely Anglo-Saxon conceptions of the sea. However, where it is appropriate, the contexts in which sources are used are identified.

The sea image is very broadly and unevenly scattered throughout a large number of OE poetic works. In the majority of these it is an image that points simultaneously in two opposed directions, or is the axis around which two opposite themes move in the course of the poem.[16] For example, in certain poems it signifies both a place of exile and a route into or out of exile. In others, it is an agent that can in one sweep both renew and destroy. Thus the central thesis behind our approach to the OE poetic sea is that insofar as it stands between and also points to two opposites, the sea is a bi-polar image. In other words, the OE sea can be most fully understood as an axial image, capable of meaning in two opposed directions, and also of representing a mid-point between two opposites.

The OED defines continuum as "a continuous series of elements passing into each other."[17] For several reasons, "continuum" is a useful term to use in analysing the OE sea. Because it is a line, we can place at the two ends, or poles, our two opposed themes, either exile and movement into or out of exile, or redemption and apocalypse.

[16] Axis is defined by the OED as "the pivot on which any matter turns; the straight line about which the parts of a body are symmetrically arranged; or a straight line from pole to pole or from end to end of any body," Oxford English Dictionary, 1971 ed., s.v. axis.

[17] Oxford English Dictionary, 1971 ed., s.v. continuum.

We can then extract sea passages from a number of OE poems and hang them out, as it were, along the line according to their closeness to the theme at either pole. Thus a poem such as The Wanderer, where the sea is a place of exile, is placed toward the exile end. The Elene passage where a sea crossing is made to the Holy Land (ll. 231-46a), and the sea is a road leading to a foreign land, goes closer to the pole representing movement into or out of exile. On the apocalypse/redemption continuum, we might place the creation of the seas in Genesis A at the redemption end, the Red Sea crossing in Exodus, where Israel is saved and Egypt destroyed, in the middle, and the raging seas of the Judgement Day poems at the apocalypse end.

Since a continuum implies a relationship among its elements, we can analyse our chosen sea passages in terms relative to both poles. Bi-polarity means that the sea image embraces both poles at once, though in different proportions depending on the overall theme of the poem. The question becomes one of showing how the balance between the two opposed themes shifts from one passage to the next as we move along the line, how the sea image is modified in favour of one pole or the other.

Inevitably, a few sacrifices have been required to achieve a coherent approach to the OE poetic sea. First,

the continuum, that framework upon which we are to base the analysis, is not an explanation in itself of how the Anglo-Saxons saw the sea in their poetic literature, but has been extrapolated from the evidence remaining to us. The continuum is like a display rack where we have mounted examples of the OE sea better to examine its overall structure and function.

Second, although examples are drawn from a broad range of poetry, we will concentrate on those works that have as one of their themes, exile or apocalypse/redemption. A small number of poems exists where the sea is mentioned only incidently or in other contexts.[18] These are discussed as they illustrate a particular point about the Anglo-Saxon view of the poetic sea; otherwise, they are omitted from the analysis.

Third, while we can turn with considerable confidence to patristic writings for understanding the Anglo-Saxon intellectual climate, Celtic and Germanic influences are more speculative. These latter have been downplayed, therefore, though without any doubt at some

[18] Some examples are "Maxims II" ll. 45b-7a, ASPR VI, p. 57; "Solomon and Saturn" ll. 225-9, 394-9, ASPR VI, pp. 39, 45; and "Riddles" 2, 3, and 10, ASPR III, pp. 180-3, 185-6.

cost to the validity of the conclusions.

Finally, although dates of composition are uncertain, and influences no doubt change over a period of four or five hundred years, sea passages from the entire Anglo-Saxon period are studied as a unit. Most of the extant manuscripts do not pre-date A.D. 950, and there are so few of them to work from that it is expedient for the sake of analysis to assume coherency.

# THE OLD ENGLISH POETIC SEA OF EXILE

## i. The Poetic Sea and the Real Sea

"Long is the sailor on the voyage," muses the Old English Maxims poet.[1]

> one must, however, expect something pleasant anyway, and wait for what one cannot compel. When the chance comes again to him, he comes home, if he be whole, unless the water disturb him, the sea have the ship in its hand.
>
> Lida biþ longe on siþe; a mon sceal seþeah leofes wenan,
> gebidan þaes he gebaedan ne maeg. Hwonne him eft gebyre weorðe,
> ham cymeð , gif he hal leofaþ, nefne him home gestyreð,
> mere hafaþ mundum maegðegsan wyn.
>
> Maxims I ll. 103-6[2]

It is a voice of experience this, a voice that expresses the loneliness of the seaman's life and a resignation to the capriciousness of the seas. It is not especially hopeless or fearful, but it is realistic. A man could lose life or limb out there; at any rate, it might be long before he gets home, should the seas bestir themselves to seize his craft.

[1]This and all other OE poem quotations are taken from George P. Krapp and Elliot V.K. Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record: A Collective Edition, 1931-42. Except where otherwise indicated, the translations are those of the author.

[2]Krapp and Dobbie discuss the crux in "maegðegsan wyn" (ASPR III, p. 307) and offer the explanation that it means "the ship" and is the object of "hafaþ."

Another poet has this to say:

> Now it is indeed much as if we on the sea over the icy water were voyaging in ships, over a wide ocean in our boats, conducting our vessels. That stream is perilous, of many waves, that we contend on here through this changing world; windy billows over a deep channel. Conditions were hard before we had come to land over the fierce ridges. Help came to us then and to the safe harbour led us, God's Spiritual Son, and gave us grace that we might know while on board where we should moor our ships, our old sea-steeds, fast at anchor.
>
> Nu is þon geliċost swa we on laguflode
> ofer cald waeter ceolum liðan
> geond sidne sae, sundhengestum,
> flodwudu fergen. Is þaet frecne stream
> yða ofermaeta þe we her on lacað
> geond þas wacan worold, windge holmas
> ofer deop gelad. Waes se drohtað strong
> aerþon we to londe geliden haefdon
> ofer hreone hrycg. Þa us help bicwom,
> þaet us to haelo hyþe gelaeddè,
> godes gaestsunu, ond us giefe sealde
> þaet we oncnawan magun ofer ceoles bord
> hwaer we saelan sceolon sundhengestas,
> ealde yðmearas, ancrum faeste.
>
> Christ II ll. 850-63[3]

Here is another voice of experience, but this time of a man whose travels are spiritual. The sea, in the first poem a literal place of action, is now the setting for a spiritual voyage.

One problem in studying the OE poetic sea is its relationship to the real sea. This is a problem because of the confusion that arises between the criticism of a

[3] Christ II is based principally on the concluding part of Pope Gregory's Ascension Sermon, Hom. in Evang. II, H. 19, PL 76, col. 1218ff.

culture and the criticism of its art. Poetic records are often used as indicators of culture, especially when historical documents and archeological evidence are scarce. The risk in this is that conclusions drawn from verse may assume an independence of their own, whereupon they are fed back into explications of the same poems.[4]

Reading an Old English sea passage usually gives an impression either of morose dread or wild exhaltation. Poetic expression of the sea's realities focused on both these experiences - fear and joy - making the most of their metaphoric and story-telling possibilities. Historical studies based on written documents, wrecks, contemporary ship pictures on coins and town seals, miniatures, murals and numismatics suggest however, that the seafaring Anglo-Saxons were neither completely terrified nor fearlessly euphoric.[5] In fact, they seem to have

[4] An example of this is found in A. Skemp, "The Transformation of Scriptural Story, Motive and Conception in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," M.P. 4 (1906) 423-70. Commenting on the assertion that the Saxon settlement in England brought an end to their interest in the sea, Skemp states that "the distaste for tillage and the work of cultivation noticed by Tacitus diminished, and, more important, the activity by sea, which was characteristic especially of the old Saxons, was almost abandoned. The sea gradually comes to be regarded with dread rather than with the daring and affectionate familiarity of the old rovers - a change noticeable on contrasting The Seafarer or The Wanderer, or the sea-passages in Guthlac and Andreas, with those in Beowulf." (p. 432)

[5] George F. Bass (ed.), A History of Seafaring Based on Underwater Archeology, (New York: Walker and Co., 1972), p. 182.

been a good deal more realistic and surer of themselves on the sea than either the world-weary or the jubilant verses would imply. A brief glance at the maritime history of Anglo-Saxon England will perhaps serve to restore the balance somewhat in our estimation of the Anglo-Saxon sea experience.

After the departure of the Romans from Northern Europe in the first part of the fifth century, trade activity in the Channel and on the Atlantic coast slumped and was not to recover fully for several centuries.[6] But the period from A.D. 550-750 in England saw a reopening on a smaller scale of maritime trade links with Spain, Atlantic Gaul, Ireland, Scotland, Frisia and Scandinavia.[7] There is evidence from this period of Anglo-Saxon merchants at the mouth of the Loire and at the fair at St. Denis near Paris, where they traded for wines, honey and dyes.[8] A slave trade was conducted across the Channel.[9] Clerics and pilgrims regularly took sea voyages to Gaul and sometimes

[6] A.R. Lewis, The Northern Seas: Shipping and Commerce in Northern Europe A.D. 300-1100, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 105.

[7] Lewis, pp. 119, 168.

[8] Lewis, p. 126.

[9] Lewis, p. 126. See also Peter Hunter Blair, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 290.

on to Rome.[10] By the seventh century, navigation had expanded as far as Iceland and Norway, as well as to Mediterranean Byzantium and Coptic Egypt.[11] It is important not to exaggerate the scale of sea traffic as a whole at this time, but what economic activity there was in England was maritime based.[12]

Frisia dominated the economic expansion of Northern Europe in the Carolingian period. Frisian colonies were established in York and London. Perhaps it was his observation of Frisian customs in these centres that inspired the Maxims poet to his brief description of the Frisian sailor and his wife.[13] Anglo-Saxon trade was still very active, and by the ninth century, both Anglo-Saxon and Frisian merchants were organizing themselves into guilds.[14]

[10] D. Whitelock, "The Interpretation of The Seafarer," in Chadwick Memorial Studies, Early Cultures of North West Europe, ed. C. Fox and B. Dickens, (Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 261-72. Rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. J. Bessinger and S. Kahrl, (Hamden: Archon Books, 1968), p. 449.

For medieval pilgrim routes, see O. Springer, "Medieval Pilgrim Routes from Scandinavia to Rome," Med. Stud. 12 (1950) 92-122.

[11] Lewis, p. 128.

[12] Lewis, p. 172.

[13] "Maxims I", ASPR III, p. 160, ll. 93-9.

[14] Lewis, p. 232.

Then came the Vikings. What were originally simple trading expeditions became, with time and opportunity, aggression and take-over. In general, trade faltered.[15] But the later influx of Danish colonists, with their achievements in navigation and ship construction, provided a stimulus to economic and maritime activity.[16]

As for ship-building traditions of the Anglo-Saxon period, marine historians are gradually putting a story together from the few extant pieces of evidence. It appears that a large variety of ships plied the northern waters through the Saxon period, from the painted Pictish warship, the Scandinavian cargo vessels, and the Frisian cog and hulk, to Alfred's own ships for coastal defence.[17]

When Caesar arrived in Gaul in B.C. 55, he was met by two types of vessel, the ponto of the Veneti and the Irish curragh.[18] This latter was not to fade out until wooden vessels began to replace it in the eighth or ninth century.[19] If we are looking literally at The Wanderer

[15] G. Unger, The Ship and the Medieval Economy, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1980), p. 63.

[16] H. Arbman, The Vikings, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), p. 12.

[17] Lewis, p. 47. Unger, p. 57. See also Peter Kemp, The History of Ships, (London: Orbis Publishing, 1978), p. 49.

[18] Lewis, p. 45. Kemp, p. 48.

[19] Unger, p. 76.

or The Seafarer, we might picture these men in such crafts, built of skins stretched over a wickerwork frame. Maybe it is a coracle, the smaller version of the curragh, that the Penitent is thinking of when he complains that he wishes to buy a boat for a journey he sincerely desires, but has neither the gold nor the friends to help him.[20]

Beowulf's ship is generally assumed to be modelled after a Viking longship; it is beached, for example, in typical longship fashion.[21] It is sometimes referred to as a ceol, a ship that was perfected by English ship-builders in the ninth and tenth centuries.[22] Andreas' ship is called a ceol also, and again, it is likely a longship that is being described.[23]

This short survey of Anglo-Saxon ships and shipping illustrates an enterprising maritime economy with an active ship-building tradition. It fluctuated with overall trends in northern waters, but remained the economic mainstay of England and in fact was able to boost the

[20] "Resignation," ASPR III, p. 218, ll. 96b-104.

[21] J.J. McCusker, "The Wine Prise and Medieval Mercantile Shipping," Speculum 41 (1966) p. 238.

[22] Unger, p. 77.

[23] McCusker, p. 228.

country by the tenth century into a position of considerable commercial importance.[24]

Attitudes toward the sea in Anglo-Saxon England were likely as mixed as they are today. To those who lived inland, farmers, monks, poets, the sea was perhaps an awesome fantasy. As the Seafarer would say, the happy man on land probably would not believe what it is like on a stormy sea in the grip of winter.[25] To those living on the coast, whose sons and grandsons fished and traded, as well as to those who took off across the waves, it was a fact of life. Its constant power has everywhere made it a source of lore and moral lessons. A good example is The Whale, a poem whose roots probably lie in Persia.[26] And of course, there were real hazards. Aelfric's Colloquy gives a charming description of the perils for the whaler and the merchant at sea, something that the Maxims poet quoted at the beginning of this chapter would likely have understood well.[27]

[24]Lewis, p. 305.

[25]"The Seafarer," ASPR III, p. 144, ll. 27-30.

[26]A.S. Cook, The Old English Elene, Phoenix and Physiologus, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), p. lxiii.

[27]Aelfric's Colloquy, ed. G.N. Garmonsway, (London: Methuen and Co., 1939), pp. 26-30, 33-6. See supra, p. 13.

The evidence of historians shows us a spirit in the seafaring of Anglo-Saxon England that was pragmatic and competitive. But it was almost always a coastal enterprise, except in the Channel and on the North Sea. Even there, it was a cautious journey.[28] No one, given the state of geographical knowledge of the time, was inclined to set off into the open North Atlantic, especially with a cargo of goods. Such ventures were left for intrepid Vikings, or monks mindful only of their souls.

[28] Lewis, p. 108.

ii. Wilderness and Pathway: The Poems of Exile

The tenor of the OE poetic sea is the world of history and events - political exile, peregrinations, commercial voyages and explorations. What emerges from these sea passages, however, is a metaphysical world where the concern is one's position and status in relation to God and earthly life. Not that the literal sea had no place in the meaning of the poems, but in general, the sea attracted poets who were interested not in sailing adventures as such but in mythic and spiritual navigation.

We have seen that there are two components to any bi-polar image, the two ends of the continuum introduced earlier.[1] At one end is the idea of the sea as a wilderness of exile. At the other is the sea boundary that separates home and exile. In the way that a picture of a black vase becomes with a closer look a picture of two faces looking at each other, the sea can be seen to shift within a group of poems between being a wilderness without signposts to being a frontier seen in relation to the worlds on either side. The sea wilderness is static, providing its own place of exile, while the sea frontier is associated with movement. In the latter aspect, it may serve as a path between exile and home.

[1]See supra, p. 9.

According to the demands of a poem's overall theme, one or the other of these two aspects will be emphasized. The objective in this chapter is to show the balance that is achieved between them in the following poems: The Wife's Lament, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, The Husband's Message, Andreas, Beowulf and Elene. We begin with works with themes occupying the wilderness end of the continuum, and move to those where the point of view is mainly the dynamic, boundary/pathway one. Along the way, associated images are discussed as they contribute to the significance of the sea.

The Wife's Lament is characterized by dreary immobility and poignant longing in isolation. Critical problems in interpretation have to do with a number of cruces that confuse the chain of events, and with the level of meaning which we are to apply to the poem. Greenfield argues strongly for a literal reading, in which a woman, deserted by her husband, has removed herself to another land.[2] There, she is confined on the order of her husband, who has been deceived by his kin to think his wife has wronged him in some way. Swanton believes that the poem is allegorical.[3] Jesus Christ,

[2]S. Greenfield, "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," PMLA 68 (1953) 907-12.

[3]M.J. Swanton, "The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration," Anglia 82 (1964) 260-90.

once exiled from His own land, has called His Church to live in exile in the world. Here, in a world in the last stage of decay, the Church yearns for union with Him.

Whether the sea is literal or allegorical does not affect its axial position. I have chosen Greenfield's reading to be the basis of the discussion, although the conclusions would be as valid for Swanton's.

In the initial portion of the poem, where the wilderness of exile is reflected mainly by land images (dim valleys, high, obstructive hills, brier-infested ruins), the sea is a tacit, impersonal barrier. It is the impassable boundary between two worlds:

> First my lord went hence from his people over the rolling of the waves. I had sorrow at dawn as to where in the land my lord might be.
>
> aerest min hlaford gewat heonan of leodum
> ofer yþa gelac: haefde ic uhtceare
> hwaer min leodfruma londes waere.
>
> The Wife's Lament ll. 6-8

The sea wilderness appears in the poem's last lines:

> May he be banished full [far and] wide in a distant land so that [he] my friend sit under a rocky slope frozen by the storm, my friend weary in mind, girt round with water in a sad dwelling.

sy ful wide fah
feorres folclondes, þaet min freond sitеð
under stanhliþe storme behrimed,
wine werigmod, waetre beflowen
on dreorsele.

The Wife's Lament ll. 46b-50a

Here we see the husband as the woman pictures him. Greenfield's suggestion is that this is how the wife wishes her husband to be in the hope that he will come to understand her desolation through his own experience.[4] Thus this final image of absolute exile in the centre of an ocean wilderness gives a concrete picture of the woman's psychological state, the nature of her own extremity.

These are confusing lines. But however they are interpreted, the sea-conscious critic is struck by the way the sea as avenue, over which the husband sails, becomes an impassable boundary for the wife, and then is ultimately employed as an image of wilderness to illustrate the anguish of exile.

Such bi-polar imagery appears in a weakened form in Wulf and Eadwacer. The sea image has here been reduced to a dense bog. The two images, an impassable water and an island in a wilderness, are precisely the same as in The Wife's Lament. They are explicit from the start:

Wulf is on an island, I on another; fast is
that island, surrounded with the fens.

[4] Greenfield, "The Wife's Lament Reconsidered," p. 910.

Wulf is on iege, ic on oþerre.
Faest is þaet egland, fenne biworpen.

Wulf and Eadwacer, ll. 4-5

The effect however, is visually less dramatic than in The Wife's Lament, where the movement of our point of view within the poem intensifies our perception both of barrier and of wilderness.

From The Wife's Lament we turn to The Wanderer only to find a wilderness of even greater proportions. A literal approach to this poem suggests that the man is perhaps a political exile travelling in search of a new home or hall across the Channel. We are reminded in passing of the exile of Oslac, mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle poem on the death of Edgar:

> Then too was beloved Oslac driven, an exile far from his native land over the rolling waves, - over the gannet-bath, over the wæters, the home of the whale, - fair-haired hero, wise and eloquent, bereft of home.
>
> And þa wearð eac adraefed deormod haeleð,
> Oslac, of earde ofer yða gewealc,
> ofer ganotes baeð, gamolfeax haeleð,
> wis and wordsnotor, ofer waetera geðring,
> ofer hwaeles eðel, hama bereafod.

The Death of Edgar ll. 24-8

There is debate on some of the finer points in The Wanderer, but in general the interpretation runs thus:

through the vicissitudes of life, represented in part by a real or imagined sea, a man perceives life's transience and, in his growing wisdom, realizes that the only true lord is the Lord God.

Central to the sea wilderness image is the idea of being "in between," that is, of being in the "no-man's" land between two points. Just as the Wife is between her husband's place of exile and her own home, the Wanderer is between his old home, now out of sight, and a new one not yet found. Though he is travelling, what we see is one moment of the voyage, as though it were a static point, and removed from the context of past or future homes. The man's journey, in which we would see the sea as a boundary or pathway, appears as sluggish as his own mental state.

Other details of the Wanderer's situation reinforce this sense of being "in between." One is that he has lost his lord, the focus of his devotion, through death, and there seems no early prospect of his finding another. He is divorced from any social context through losing his kin and friends, and through his exile from his community. His reticence to speak of his misery further isolates him. Much like the Wife, he is physically, psychologically and socially out of contact. Not only this, but he must cast about in the winter, normally a

non-sailing season.[5] He is in that cold and still time between nature's autumn death and her rebirth in spring.

The sea in The Wanderer has been described as "the arbitrary turmoil of mortal life."[6] But the actual sea in the poem is not really so "busy" an image as to suggest this. Life's vicissitudes are given more explicit expression in the naming of past joys that have died away. The receiving of treasure, the kindnesses of friends at the feast, all such pleasures are over. The sea signifies the emptiness of life after these wonderful signposts that give direction in life fall away. The impression at sea is like a desert: stretches of frozen waves and a few birds (ll. 46-8). All those things the man perceived as going together have come apart. An endless ocean and a snow-filled sky remain.

The imagery in the first half or so of the poem moves continually back and forth from sea to land by means of the man's memories and dreams (ll. 39-55a). The clash between reality and vision intensifies as the poem progresses. A path of exile replaces twisted gold; a chill body, the earth's riches; sorrow and sleep, the hall-joys and counsels of lord and friend. The man

[5]The custom in Scandinavia was to pass the summers on the water, and return in the fall to tend to farms or business or to indulge in a dissolute life until winter. See E. Magnusson, "Notes on Shipbuilding and Nautical Terms of Old in the North," Sagabook 4 (1905) p.236. Winter weather likely curtailed extensive sailing in English waters as well.

[6]M. Osborn, "Venturing upon deep waters in The Seafarer," Neuphil. Mitt. 79 (1978) p. 1.

then dreams of his lord, only to waken to dark waves and sea-birds, frost and hail. Finally his kin come to mind, but they too vanish. How they vanish has created some problems for critics.[7] One possible reading is to keep the literal departure of the birds but to see in the imagination of the wakening man, his kin, the secga geselden (l. 53), slipping away as the birds who disappear into the waves. In any case, it is a scene of a man on an already desolate sea being left by his last possible companions. Coming as it does at the climax of his visions, the memories of his kin, it symbolizes a complete loss of hope and an absolute despair over things earthly.

We have seen in The Wife's Lament how the balance between the two aspects of sea imagery shift according to theme. In The Wanderer, most suggestions of a sea pathway are submerged in wilderness imagery, in keeping with the overall static tone of the poem. In the image of the bird carrying a corpse across the high seas (ll. 81-2a), we see the enforced passivity of man flying in the claws of an every-moving fate. It is a flight to another world, a world of death, over the still grey frontier. Basically it is an image of boundary between this world and death's world, but the contribution it makes is to the picture of earthly dissolution, the wilderness of the nobles' fallen world.

[7] For a discussion of the identity of secga geselden, see T.P. Dunning and A.J. Bliss, The Wanderer, (London: Methuen and Co., 1969), pp. 114-5, and R.L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 144-6.

In The Wanderer, we can look directly at the waves beside us from the man's boat, or, using the image of the bird high above, we can see the sea from the sky - millions of waves leading who knows where.[8] The idea of flight across a wilderness is reinforced by the images we have just seen of birds and dream visions that disappear off into the waves to where the man himself can not reach.

Despite the ever-present sea wilderness, there is one notable movement. This is a shift in the man's attitude. Aboard his craft on a morbid sea, he takes perhaps not a giant step but at least a beginning one. The sea is where the man moves from loyalties to and grief for the merely human designs of this world to a recognition of life's transience, and faith in God as the only stable reality. Like the Wife, the Wanderer seeks respite for loss in another land, and like her, his travels only get him further into exile. But while the Wife's last image of acute isolation conveys a continuing sense of regret and despair, we see in the Wanderer a glimmer that he is rising above his gloom to faith in something beyond this world that will never fall.

[8]We should note the sea's axial position between the lands of the living and the dead. Crossing the water at death is a mythological commonplace. See H. Schetelig, "Ship Burials," Sagabook 4 (1906) 326-63. The sea burial of Scyld (Beowulf ll. 26-52) is one of the best examples in Old English verse.

The Seafarer brings us to the mid-point of the exile continuum. There is a strong overall shift in this poem from the sea wilderness to the sea pathway. Both aspects in fact play off each other by means of images that continually modify our view of the sea.

It may have already been noticed that the OE poetic sea is not very well characterized. It tends to be seen in relation to events or characters on or in it. And even here, in probably the most famous of sea passages in Old English, the sea stands not solely, or even mostly for its own sake. It is in the rearrangement of associated imagery about the core sea image that the various pictures of the sea are drawn, and it is from these pictures that the meaning of the sea emerges.

This can be seen in the opening lines of The Seafarer (ll. 1-12), where images of the sea introduce the ideas both of the wilderness and pathway. The "journeys" (sīþas) of l. 2 suggests action and movement. Immediately, the idea is sharpened and vitalized by literal details of sea-faring: the night watch (nihtwaco l. 7), the dangers of the cliffs nearby (clifum l. 8), the cold, the hunger, the ice-caked beard or face (bihongen hrimgicelum l. 17) and the bitter weather. We have an impression of intense preoccupation with the hard tasks at hand as the boat tosses along down the coast.

The cliffs give an ambivalent image. They are connected with the purposeful activity of the man, and help to define the movement of his craft as he navigates. But they seem part of the sea wilderness when we associate them with the fear and danger the man must go through. In this latter aspect, the shoreline contributes to the figural sense of how precarious are the turns that one may take in life's wilderness.

Other images reflect immobility and confinement, qualities that offset the action of navigation on a journey, and that augment the sense of wilderness detected in the rocky coastline. The oppressiveness of winter weighed the Seafarer down; his feet were bound with frost in a chill grip (forste gebunden, caldum clommum (ll. 9b-10a). There was sorrow in his heart, and hunger tore (slat l. 11) within his soul. Here the impression is of rage and anguish within confinement.

Greenfield has suggested that this type of voyage close to shore represents the man's involvement with worldly values.[9] He grieves so acutely not only over material comforts, but also over those comfortable values of the meadhall, held by the man in town, that are beginning to be called into question out on the sea.

[9]S. Greenfield, "The Old English Elegies," in Continuations and Beginnings, ed. E.G. Stanley, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), p. 155.

In the next few lines (12b-19a), the man abjectly thinks of that lucky fellow in town "to whom it happens most pleasantly on earth" (þe him on foldan faegrost limpeð, l. 13). This image of the ignorant townsman on land widens our perception of the sea to being a place not only of wilderness but also of an experience of a different kind of reality, something that sets the Seafarer off from other men.

Then the birds appear, and the man is stirred to muse ironically:

> At times I took as my entertainment the song of the swan, the gannet's cry and the music of the curlew, instead of human laughter, and the singing gull instead of the mead-drink.
>
> Hwilum ylfete song
> dyde ic me to gomene, ganetes hleoþor
> ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
> maew singende fore medodrince.
>
> The Seafarer ll. 19b-22

Next we see the image of the stormy sea beating the shore combined with the cry of the bird:

> Storms beat the rock-cliff, the ice-feathered tern responds to them. Full oft the dew-feathered eagle cries out.
>
> Stormas þær stanclifu beotan þær him stearn oncwaeð
> isigfeþera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal
> urigfeþra.
>
> The Seafarer ll. 23-25a

If we assume with Henry that there is a metaphoric relation between the birds and the soul, we can detect a hint here that though the body is oppressed, the soul remains free.[10] Prior to l. 23, the storm and cliffs, and the birds were separate and unrelated. Here they come together in a climactic statement. While the storm-beaten shore and the birds concentrate the scene, making it highly realistic, figurally, we have an image of the human soul tossing with and rising just above life's storms, crying out often and solitary between the bursts of waves on the rocks.

The man succumbs to the intensity of the scene and lapses into a lifeless statement of despair. "No protecting kinsmen could relieve the desolate heart" (Naenig hleomaega / feasceaftig fer∂ frefran meahte. ll. 25b-26). No person can soften relentless reality - a turbulent life in a rock-infested wilderness, and a soul that is partly enmeshed in it and partly, through its cry, distinguished from it.

In contrasting himself once more to the comfortable man in town, the Seafarer removes us to dry land, and the distinction between land and sea is elaborated:

> Therefore he would scarcely believe the dangerous journeys, he who has the joys of life that are experienced in the cities, proud and flushed with wine, how I, weary, often had to abide on the sea.

[10] Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, p. 137ff.

Forþon him gelyfeð lyt se þa ah lifes wyn
gebiden in burgum, bealosi-a hwon,
wlonc and wingal, hu ic werig oft
in brimlade bidan sceolde.

The Seafarer ll. 27-30

Whenever the merry-making townsman appears, it is not that the Seafarer would like to trade places with him, but that he is ignorant and unbelieving, and unaware of the sea life. The Seafarer shows that he himself is ceasing to identify with the townsman, as he realizes, in the course of the poem, that the open sea admits a man to wisdom, while the land is where he is secluded from the truth.

The next few lines represent the nadir of his experience:

> Night-shadows darkened, it snowed from the north, ice bound the ground, hail fell on the earth, the coldest of grains.
>
> Nap nihtscua, norþan sniwde,
> hrim hrusan bond, haegl feol on eorþan,
> corna caldest.

The Seafarer ll. 31-33a

The birds, we notice, have disappeared, just as in The Wanderer the man's low point was implicitly signalled by the departure of the birds into the waves. The world is enclosed in darkness, snow, hail and ice. And the sea disappears too.

It is possible that literally, the man has anchored

near land. Night-shadows, maybe from trees and rocks, hail falling to earth, and frozen ground are certainly land images. On a figural level, it is not unreasonable to suppose that with the disappearance of the now familiar sea and the birds, the man has entered completely into his own despair. His mind is for the moment not on the reality of life on the sea, but on the reality of his response to that life. Eorþan takes on an anagogic sense, representing the man's mind that is fettered in frost, able to see nothing but shadows and a curtain of snow and hail.

It is at this point of deepest desolation that the Seafarer becomes aware of the true desire of his heart: to voluntarily embrace a journey that up until now he has only bewailed. The mental vision of the land of strangers (elþeodigra l. 38) turns the sea into a pathway. The place of exile has become an escape from exile. The man's anxiety which was previously focused on the chance of being dashed to death on the rocks, is now a concern with the voyage across the waters.[11] For there is no man so courageous that he rests without fear about such a trip (þaet he a his saefore sorge naebbe l. 42). But his longing is no longer for the

[11]Taking "forþon" as "therefore" implies a causal link between the man's desire to be out on the sea, and his sense of life's anxieties.

meadhall or his kin, but for his destination.

Whether this destination is a literal country, or the furthest shores of contemplation, or a home in heaven, the significance of the sea is unchanged.[13] It is both a divide between the comfortable life of ignorance and the place where God is known, and the arena where false values must fall and wisdom is born.

These two aspects of the sea converge in the last sea image of the poem:

> Therefore now my thoughts turn over in my breast, my mind turns wide on the sea over the whales' terrain, the corners of the earth, it comes to me again eager and full of longing; the solitary flyer urges the unwary heart onto the sea, over the expanse of the ocean; so more ardent to me are the joys of the Lord than this dead life, transitory on the land.
>
> Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan;
> min modsefa mid mereflode
> ofer hwaeles eþel hweorfeð wide,
> eorþan sceatas, cymeð eft to me
> gifre and graedig; gielleð anfloga,
> hweteð on hwaelweg hreþer unwearnum
> ofer holma gelagu; for þon me hatran sind
> Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif,
> laene on londe;
>
> The Seafarer ll. 58-65a

[12]For a discussion of longunge l. 47 see Whitelock, "The Interpretation of The Seafarer," in Essential Articles, ed. Bessinger and Kahrl, p. 453; Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, p. 135; and S. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 158.

[13]The Seafarer's destination is discussed in Whitelock, "The Interpretation of The Seafarer," p. 447ff; Osborn, "Venturing upon deep water," pp. 1-6; and Smithers, "The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer," p. 151.

Diekstra and Henry have convincingly argued that the anfloga in this passage is the Seafarer's soul.[14] The sea over which the soul flies stretches to the corners of the earth. Beyond it is something that the anfloga has seen and that can be reached only by setting out on this wilderness. Diekstra illuminates this idea by drawing attention to the reverberatio, the dazzled return of the soul after its glimpse of heaven.[15] We have no indication of what exactly the anfloga saw in its flight, but Diekstra, drawing on numerous patristc antecedents, argues strongly for the patria, the celestial homeland where the soul catches a foretaste of its future bliss.

The theme of flight is amplified by suggestions of the opposite idea, that of confinement. Bondage in the clutches of the sea was a familiar metaphor to the everyday seaman. In Maxims I, for instance, the sea was described as having the ship in her hands.[16] The metaphor expands in The Seafarer. It was suggested earlier

[14]Diekstra shows that the flight of the soul themes are often connected with themes of glory in adversity, world contempt, exile and the wish for the homeland. He cites exegetical, early Christian and classical notions about the soul's nature, and such biblical ideas as the winged flight of the soul in Ps. 54:7. F.N.M. Diekstra, "The Seafarer 58-66a: The Flight of the Exiled Soul to its Fatherland," Neophil. 55 (1971) 433-6. Henry concentrates on OE instances of the bird soul, citing among others The Phoenix ll. 589-98 and such prose works as the Whitby Life of St. Gregory. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, pp. 145-9.

[15]Diekstra, p. 442.

[16]See supra, p. 13.

that the first lines of The Seafarer imply rage in confinement. The idea is that the man is fettered in this wilderness, but what does the fettering is his attachment to the allures of this world. He is confined within and by the sea of his own desires until his decision to seek God releases him and he flies free of his chains.

The wilderness sea and the frontier sea are united in the poem by the theme of glory in adversity. Adversity on the sea has two faces. One is the anguish and startling isolation of an eternal, self-imposed exile from this world. The other is the snares of this world that continually beset the one in exile, luring him back. These very tribulations, however, make the road to eternal life; it can be achieved in no other way. The wilderness that goes nowhere in this life is, at the same time, the frontier of the celestial homeland.[17]

The Husband's Message brings us to the other side of the continuum, where the sea boundary dominates the picture. On the literal level, a messenger, either a human or a personified runic message, brings to a woman (we suppose) an invitation from her husband (or her betrothed) to join him across the sea. Once there, he

[17]Diekstra discusses the theme of glory in adversity (p. 435) and cites the idea in classical writings, as well as in the works of Boethius.

urges, she will be able to participate with him in the joyous formalities of the hall. The poem can also be read allegorically in the same say as The Wife's Lament. The proposed sea voyage, in which the wife (or bride) is admonished to go "seek the sea" (mere secan l. 26), coupled with the cuckoo's sad cry (that echoes with that in The Seafarer) and the foreign land, is suggestive of the peregrinus theme. Swanton believes the messenger itself is a peregrinus figure.[18]

A relationship has been suspected between The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message, although Krapp and Dobbie argue against it.[19] No attempt is made here to decide this issue, but to clarify the function of the sea image in the latter poem, a useful comparison can be made.

In The Wife's Lament, the husband's movement across the waves is minimized to amplify the picture of the sea wilderness. In The Husband's Message, it is the sea wilderness that is minimized to enhance the image of a pathway. The sea is only for a brief moment the husband's place of exile; he was, it appears, driven by necessity (nyde gebaeded l. 40a) and made to travel the sea (sceolde

[18]Swanton, "The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message," p. 286.

[19]George P. Krapp and Elliot V.K. Dobbie, ASPR III, "Introduction," (New York: Columbia Press, 1963), p. lviii.

faran on flotweg l. 41b-42a). This and other hardships the man has overcome; the sea is now a path to reunion. The message brought over the water is one of love, or at least of hopeful affection, that symbolically unites the couple. And something quite clear and definite awaits the woman. If we were to take an allegorical approach to the poem, we could say that the vision of the Seafarer's anfloga, left so vague in that poem, has here been spelled out in concrete terms: a heavenly land of treasures, mead joys and horses. In any case, a clear destination is established on the far shore. We can think, in contrast, back to the Wanderer, casting aimlessly about for a home amidst the sea wilderness.

The Husband's message to his wife has not yet borne fruit. But the tone is hopeful, and if perhaps we were lucky enough to have the sequel to the story, the daparture of the wife to meet him in the happy land might sound very much like the embarkment of Elene to find the Cross:

> Many proud ones stood there on the shore at the Mediterranean Sea. At times, they advanced over the horse trails, one company after another, and then loaded the ships with corslets, shields and spears, mailed warriors, men and women. They let the foamy one glide over the sea, the high ship. The boat often took the blows of the waves, over the confusion

of the sea. The ocean sang. I have never heard, before or since, of a woman to lead a voyage on the sea, a fairer company. There, he who beheld the voyage, might see the craft hastening with the swells, breaking over the sea, the frolicking sea-steed, the the moving ship.

Þaer wlanc manig aet Wendelsae
on staeðe stodon. Stundum wraecon
ofer mearopaðu, maegen aefter oðrum,
ond þa gehlodon hildesercum,
bordum ond ordum, byrnwigendum,
werum ond wifum, waeghengestas.
Leton þa ofer fifelwaeg famige scriðan
bronte brimþisan. Bord oft onfeng
ofer earhgeblond yða swengas;
sae swinsade. Ne hyrde ic siðne aer
on egstreame idese laedan,
on merestraete, maegen faegerre.
Þaer meahte gesion, se ðone sið beheold,
brecan ofer baeðweg, brimwudu snyrgan
under swellingum, saemearh plegean,
wadan waegflotan.

Elene ll. 231-46a[20]

The passive stasis of exile has been replaced with an energetic forward movement across a frontier. He who beholds Elene's trip will see a ship bursting forth over

[20]It has been argued that this and other similar passages are formulaic. Diamond argues that the Elene poet availed himself of all the formulaic possibilities. He finds parallel constructions in Beowulf, among others. Refering to Elene, he states, "The old familiar kennings are brought out and used again. Since this theme [ship departure] is native to the German North, the ships are "ring-prowed," without regard to the actual facts of Roman ship design...It is as if the poet turned it on, and the traditional formulas came tumbling out, and then he turned it off, and St. Helena, having arrived in the Holy Land, goes about [her] business." R.E. Diamond, "Theme as Ornament in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," PMLA 76 (1961) p. 464.

the sea, hastening, advancing. What gives vitality to the picture is not really the sea itself, which as we have seen is rarely characterized, but the interaction among the ship, the men and the water. Mostly, in this scene of high anticipation, the ship bears the typical fearless and playful joy in adventure, but the melody of the waves, the wash of spray against the hull and the enthusiasm on board together seem a part of the propulsion.

Much the same thing can be found in Beowulf's departure from Geatland to Denmark.

> The foamy-necked boat departed like a bird over the sea, impelled by the wind, until the same time the next day, the vessel had advanced, so that the seamen saw land, the shining sea cliffs, the steep shores, the wide headlands.
>
> Gewat þa ofer waegholm winde gefysed
> flota famiheals fugle gelicost,
> oð þaet ymb antid oþres dogores
> wundenstefna gewaden haefde,
> þaet ða liðende land gesawon,
> brimclifu blican, beorgas steape,
> side saenaessas
>
> Beowulf ll. 217-23a[21]

The sea itself is not isolated for description here. Rather, it is the set of relationships among boat, men sea and shore that shift like a kaleidescope to give at the same time a progressive action and a picture of a

[21] Fr. Klaeber, ed., Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1922), p. 9.

changing setting. Boat and sea and land undergo development together. The sea is, first, waves (flota waes on yðum l. 210b) associated with cliffs (bat under beorge l. 211a). Then it is a current (streamas l. 212b) and an action of water against the sand. (sund wið sand l. 213a). In the passage quoted, it becomes a sea of waves (waegholm) away from shore but in association with the wind and connected to the boat in flota famigheals. At last, land is sited, and the sea once more becomes linked with cliffs (brimclifu, saenaessas).[22] The sea is not an immobile board over which a boat moves like a chess piece; the diction here and in Elene make it part of the very movement, just as in certain earlier poems, it was a part of the exile's stasis.

The idealized vision of a legendary, if not mythic, hero plunging mightily through frothy laughing seas is again realized in Andreas. If Elene's ship plays the

[22]This expands an argument of Clemoes, in which he illustrates a similar progression for the boat, from being a utilitarian thing with parts (stefn, bearm) to being a whole object (wudu bundenne) to becoming a thing of movement (fugle gelicost). "The two actions are the movement of the boat on the sea and the men's perception of the land. This journey is not a travelling through space objectively conceived...but it is a qualitative development by which the uncomplicated action of the ship is replaced by, issues in, makes directly possible, another, fuller, more significant action by the men." P. Clemoes, "Action in Beowulf and Our Perception of It," in Old English Poetry, ed. D.G. Calder, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 157-8.

waves into port under billowing sail, Beowulf on his return to Geatland seems to come to a landing from the air (ceol up gebrang / lyftgeswenced, on land stod. ll. 1912b-13). But Andreas is quite literally flown, ship and all, into Mermedonia by an angel:

> Then the Lord bade His angels bring the beloved man with joy over the rolling waves, bear him over the sea in their embraces into the Father's keeping.
>
> Þa gelaeden het lifes brytta
> ofer yþa gebraec englas sine,
> faeðmum ferigean on faeder waere
> leofne mid lissum ofer lagufaesten.
>
> Andreas ll. 822-5

We see again the asociation between sea travel and flight. Indeed we have just seen the common phrase to describe the voyage, fugle gelicost, most like a bird. Earlier it was the sea-bound man who mournfully observed the flight of the birds over the water. Or it was the soul of a man who soared above the waves to glimpse the heavenly home. Now the heroes become bird-like in the sense that they can cross boundaries, enter other worlds, meeting tests and trials to be sure, but also achieving a religious or heroic vision denied to the static man in the boat.

Elene, Beowulf and Andreas are all departing into a kind of exile, one to search, one to save and one to rescue and convert. The exile then, has been displaced onto land. The sea has become a dynamic divide between

exile and home. Thus the events taking place on the sea are minimized; the trip itself is not as important as the fact that a boundary between two worlds has been crossed. The one exception occurs in Andreas. There is a storm at sea to be overcome, and as well during this time, there is much talk among crew and passengers as Andreas' faith is measured by questions from his holy crew. Both these events, the storm and the dialogue, are intermediate obstacles to prove the mettle of the hero. Where could there be a better place for them to occur than in that space, neither here nor there, on the sea? We can recall that the Seafarer and the Wanderer were in a similar situation to Andreas'. Though not tested in half so much an exciting way, by Jesus Himself, they were forced to deal with the problems of faith and the nature of self and God when all cues for response were out of sight.

We have been studying the OE poetic sea of exile as a bi-polar image, one that bears the qualities both of a wilderness and a frontier and pathway. In The Wife's Lament and The Wanderer, the wilderness aspects of the sea were accentuated, but they did not obliterate entirely the suggestions of a pathway. In The Seafarer, a transition is apparent within the poem from a sea wilderness to a sea pathway. This transition is achieved with

images of confinement, a dangerous and wild sea, and immobility of spirit, that gradually give way to images that set the Seafarer off in high relief and give him a momentum - images of the landman, of flight, a far land and glory in adversity.

The dynamic sea pathway continues in The Husband's Message, where its prime function is to transport messages and lovers back and forth. The sea in Elene, Beowulf and Andreas develops these dynamic aspects even further - speed of travel, flight and propulsion dominate the imagery and diction. The place of exile is displaced onto land, but the sea still retains subtle hints of a wilderness, for example, in Andreas.

Our next task is to place these ideas into the context of the contemporary thought by connecting them with a major source of Anglo-Saxon sea metaphors, the writings of the Church Fathers.

iii. The Patristic Sea and the Old English Sea

The Church Fathers made frequent use of the nautical metaphor and this inevitably had an influence on Anglo-Saxon religious writings. Aelfric, for example, makes use of it in this fairly typical passage:

> The sea that the Saviour crossed signifies this actual world, to which Christ came and passed through; that is, he came to this world as a man and went through this life; he came to death, and arose from death... Rightly is this sea likened to this world, for it is sometimes peaceable and agreeable to sail upon, other times, however, it is very rough and terrible to be on. So is this world...
>
> Seo sae, þe se Haelend oferferde, getacnaþ þas andweardan woruld, to þaere com Crist and oferferde; þaet is, he com to ðisre woruld on menniscnysse, and ðis lif oferferde; he com to deaðe, and of deaðe aras ...Rihtlice is seo sae wiðmeten þisre worulde, for ðon ðe heo is hwiltidum smylte and myrige on to rowenne, hwilon eac swiðe hreoh and egeful on to beonne. Swa is þeos woruld...[1]

We can obtain a clearer picture of the nature and use of this image in Old English poetry by outlining some common features of the patristic and OE seas, and specifying some important differences as well.

To the Fathers, the dangers of the sea, its turbulence and unpredictability, made easy comparisons with the dangers to the soul that this life held. "I am no

[1] Early English Homilies, ed. R.D-N. Warner, (London: EETS, 1917), p. 182.

experienced mariner who has never lost either ship or cargo, advising those who have never known a gale," writes Jerome to his friend Heliodorus, whom he is urging to join him in the desert. He goes on:

> wrecked as I have been myself, my warnings to other voyagers spring from my own fears. On one side, like Charybdis, self-indulgence sucks into its vortex the soul's salvation. On the other, like Scylla, lust, with a smile of her girlish face, lures it on to wreck its chastity. Here a savage coast, there the devil, a pirate with his crew, carrying irons to fetter his captives.
>
> Et hoc ego, non integris rate, vel mercibus, nec quasi ignarus fluctuum doctus nauta praemoneo; sed quase nuper naufragio ejectus in littus, timida navigaturis voce denuntio. In illo aestu Charybdis luxuriae, salutem vorat. Ibi ore virgineo, ad pudicitiae perpetranda naufragia, Scyllaeum renidens libido blanditur. Hic barbarum littus, hic diabolus pirata, cum sociis portat vincula dapendis.[2]

To Gregory, the sea is that awful world of church administration, fraught with secular problems, into which he has been thrust from his quiet monastery. Near the beginning of his dialogues, he complains to his young companion Peter:

> For do you not behold at this present how I am tossed with the waves of this wicked world, and see the ship of my soul beaten with the storms of a terrible tempest? and therefore, when I remember my former state of life, I cannot but sigh to look back and cast mine eyes upon the forsaken shore.

[2]Jerome. Epistola XIV, PL 22, col. 350. Translation taken from S.L. Greenslade (ed.), Early Latin Theology, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol.5, (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 296.

> Ecce etenim nunc magni maris fluctibus quatior, atque in navi mentis tempestatis validae procellis illidor. Et cum prioris vitae recolo, quasi post tergum ductis, aculis viso littore suspiro. [3]

About three centuries earlier, Tertullian (d. ca. A.D. 220), speaking of idolatry, focused in particular upon the shoals of vice:

> Among these rocks and inlets, these shoals and straits of idolatry, faith holds her course... But once overboard, no man swims back from those depths, once struck by those rocks, no ship escapes its wreck, once sucked into that whirlpool of idolatry, no man breathes again. Every wave of [the whirlpool of idolatry] suffocates, every eddy of it swallows down into hell.
>
> Inter hos scopulos et sinus, inter haec vada et freta idololatriae...fides navigat.... Caeterum inenatibile excussis profundum est, inestricabile impactis naufragium in idololatria; quicumque fluctus ejus offocant; omnis vortex ejus ad inferos desorbet.[4]

What is most noticeable about this patristic sea is its wickedness. Busy with devils and pirates, it can threaten and harass to exhaustion the soul who travels its stormy waters. We find this wicked sea in the OE Christ II passage quoted in the first chapter.[5] It is

[3]Gregory, Dialog., PL 77, col. 152. Translation is taken from E.G. Gardner, The Dialogues of St. Gregory, (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1906,) p. 4.

[4]Tertullian, De Idololatria, PL 1, col. 772-3. Translation is taken from Greenslade, Early Latin Theology, p. 109.

[5]See supra, p. 14.

strongly suggested in The Seafarer, where the man's departure onto the high seas and his resolve to work with bold deeds against the malice of fiends (ll. 75-6) could reasonably be taken as parallel to the battle of the patristic sailor with the devils of temptation.

Augustine expands the wicked sea theme in his Enarrationes in Psalmos. Writing on Psalm 104, he says:

> But this world is as yet tossed by the waves of temptation, is as yet disturbed by the tempests and storms of tribulations and heavings: yet this is our road. Let the sea threaten, and swell with waves, and be pregnant with storms; this is our road, the Wood is granted for us to sail in.
>
> Hoc autem saeculum adhuc tentationum fluctibus quatitur, adhuc tempestatibus et procellis tribulationum et tumorum turbatur: hac tamen itur. Minetur licet mare, et tumeat fluctibus, procellasque parturiat; hac itus, datum est nobis lignum in quo navigemus.[6]

Here Augustine has included the idea of the sea road. It is the road of all mankind, exiled from the Garden after Adam's fall, but more particularly it is the road the faithful Christian takes in his exile from the world of man. What will protect the Christian, of course, is the wooden ship of the Church. Still on Psalm 104, Augustine comments:

[6] Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, PL 37, col. 1380. Translation is taken from J.H. Parker, Saint Augustine's Expositions on the Book of Psalms, (London: F. and J. Rivington, 1853), p. 131.

> Let us keep watch on the Wood; even in the water, even on the waves we are safe: let not Christ sleep, let not faith sleep; if He hath slept, let Him be awakened; He will command the winds; He will calm the sea; the voyage will be ended, and we shall rejoice in our country.
>
> Vigiletur in ligno; etiam in aquis, etiam in fluctibus tuti sumus: non dormiat Christus, non dormiat fides; et si dormierit, excitetur; imperabit ventis, placabit mare; finietur via, gaudebitur in patria.[7]

The ship of faith, the ship of the Church, is the sole means of surviving the tempestuous and tempting billows. With Christ as Pilot, no danger is too great. Blown, as Tertullian would have it, with the very Breath of God in our sail, no harm will befall us.[8]

There are two problems with strictly applying this source of sea imagery to the OE poems of sea exile. One is that there is no ship/Church in which the Anglo-Saxon exile can be protected. The patristic sea passages imply a relatively passive leaning on Jesus to lead the ship, and the emphasis is on grace undeserved though freely given. In the OE poems, most notably The Seafarer, the seaman forges ahead alone. If a boat is mentioned at all, it is the man himself, not Christ, who must steer. Perhaps there is a hint in The Husband's Message, if we take the passage allegorically, of a ship that removes the faithful to Christ:

[7]Augustine, PL 37, col. 1380. Translated in Parker, p. 132.

[8]Tertullian, De Idololatria, PL 1, col. 772.

> Board the ship, so that south from here you may find your husband over the sea-path, where your Lord lives in hopes of you.
>
> onsite saenacan, þaet þu suð heonan
> ofer merelade monnan findest,
> þaer se þeoden is þin on wenum.
>
> The Husband's Message ll. 27-9

Otherwise, it is will-power and faith, and not only a sturdy ship/Church that will get a man home.

The other problem with comparing this sea to the OE sea passages of exile is that while the former seethe with snares and devils, the latter are notable for their emptiness. The idea of a sea of wickedness is understated. The seas in The Wife's Lament or The Wanderer, for example, give no hint of being particularly evil. Rather, they are arbitrary and disinterested. The condition of the Wanderer is not that he is subjected to waves of temptation so much as it is that he is faced with the bald fact that life is slippery and perishable, and that he must now cope with this realization. Only in The Seafarer is there the suggestion that "out there" where the man is heading are a multitude of evils.

The patristic sea is relatively well defined. It is outlined by savage coastlines and the far shore of virtue, and is brimming with tangible evils. We have already noted the rocky coastline of The Seafarer, and

the suggestion that it may refer to the trappings of this world to which the man is still attached. The Wanderer too has a storm beating on the coast (þas stanhleoþu stormas cnyssað. l. 101). This context is quite different from the fearsome dashing of waves against cliffs that threaten the patristic mariner and the Seafarer. Coming as it does after the Wanderer's realization that men have fallen, and buildings lie ruined, the sea is ceaseless fate thudding away, as indifferent to crumbled civilizations as to mead-hall joys.

Furthermore, unlike the Fathers, who emphasize the wonderful coming into port of the happy soul, the Wanderer makes very little of where he is to go. In The Seafarer as well, although a vision of the patria is achieved, it is the setting out, not the coming home, that commands the imagery:

> The world revives; all these urge the heart
> of the eager-minded man, of him who thus
> purposes to travel far on the sea.
>
> woruld onetteð;
> ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne
> sefan to siþe þam þe swa þenceð
> on flodwegas feor gewitan.
>
> The Seafarer ll. 49b-52

Returning a second time to the Fathers, directly to Jerome this time, we hit upon another kind of sea.

"Be not credulous," warns Jerome in his letter to Heliodorus.

> Be not over-confident. The sea may be as smooth and smiling as a pond, its quiet surface may be scarcely ruffled by a breath of air, yet the great plain has its mountains. There is danger in its depths, the foe is lurking there. Stow your tackle, reef your sails, fasten the cross of the yardarm on your prow. Your calm means a storm.
>
> Nolite credere, nolite esse securi. Licet in modum stagni fusum aequor arrideat: licet vix summa jecentis elementi spiritu terga crispentur, magnos hic campus montes habet. Intus inclusum est periculum, intus est hostis. Expedite rudentes, vela suspendite. Crucus antenna figatur in frontibus. Tranquillitas ista tempestas est.[9]

This is the sea that deceives. Augustine warns of it too, in De Beata Vita. Certain sailors, he tells us, are deceived by the false appearance of the sea.

> [They proceed] out on the deep and venture to journey far away from the homeland, which they often then forget. Since a wind which they consider favorable has accompanied them ...they joyfully and eagerly enter the extreme of wretchedness, because a most treacherous calm weather of pleasure and honors entices them.
>
> Alterum vero est eorum, superiorique contrarium, qui fallacissima facie maris decepti, elegerunt in medium progredi, longaque a sua patria peregrinari audent, et saepe ejus

[9] Jerome, Epistola XIV, PL 22, col. 350. Translation from Greenslade, Early Latin Theology, p. 276.

> obliviscuntur. Hos si nescio quo et nimis latente modo a puppi ventus, quem prosperum putant, fuerit prosecurus, penetrant in altissima miseriarum elati atque gaudentes, quod eis usquequaque fallicissima serenitas voluptatum honorumque blanditur.[10]

Overconfidence and pride, and blind love of worldly pleasure are the snares in the still calm waters. The idea comes up in the OE Dicts of Cato: "Do not put your trust in peaceful water,...often still water breaks the foundation." (Ne truwa þu no smyltum waetre,...oft stille waetre staðu breceð.)[11]

Augustine's image of the sailors idle in the calm waters, unaware of the peril in which their souls lie, is parallel as well to the townsman in The Seafarer. Such a man blithely makes merry, deceived until it is too late.

Connected with still waters are deep waters. Osborn discusses the metaphor of the two seas - the waters close to shore and the open sea.[12] The latter

[10] Augustine, De Beata Vita, PL 32, col. 959. Translated in Aurelius Augustine, The Happy Life, ed. Ludwig Schopp, (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1939), p. 41.

[11] R.S. Cox, "The Old English Dicts of Cato," Anglia 90 (1972) 1-42.

[12] M. Osborn, "Venturing upon deep waters in The Seafarer," Neuphil. Mitt. 79 (1978) p. 4. Osborn cites Cassian's Preface to the Collations as one source of this idea (PL 49, col. 479). There we read of the move from the lesser task in a small boat near the harbour, to the greater one out on the open sea.

is a dangerous place. The Dicts of Cato mention it twice:

> Be restrained in what you have; it is safer in a little ship on a little lake than in a big ship on a great sea.
>
> Beo gehealden on ðaem þe ðu haebbe: unpleolicre hit bið on lytlum scipe 7 lytlum waetre, þonne on micclum scipe 7 micclum waetre.
>
> Begin so that you are within your means, for it is more prudent to row by the shore than to sail on the sea.
>
> Ongin þaet þe to onhagige, for treowlice is be staðe to rowenne þonne ut on sae to seglianne.[13]

And we have already heard the Seafarer speak with some apprehension of the open waters. But, against the sage advice for the ordinary man, he makes for the big seas, keen to tackle the dangers that await him there.

We come across yet another kind of sea in Augustine's De Beata Vita. Having just described himself as "in the mists" in his early philosophical studies, the saint declares:

> I was led astray, with my eyes toward the stars sinking into the ocean. [Then] the Academics steered my course amid the waves, while my helm had to meet every wind...And now, I have come to this land; here I have learned to know the North Star, to which I entrusted myself.
>
> in errorem ducebar, labentia in oceanum astra suspexi...At ubi discussos eos evasi

[13] Cox, "The Old English Dicts of Cato," pp. 8, 13.

> maxime trajecto isto mari, diu gubernacula mea repugnantia omnibus ventis in mediis fluctibus Academici tenuerunt....Deinde veni in has terras; hic septentrionem cui me crederem didici.)[14]

Here we have a glimpse of a search for wisdom and understanding that has gone astray. Without arguing for any direct relation between this passage and The Wanderer, (Campbell's cautionary phrase "random shots in the direction of the Fathers" makes itself heard) it is possible to find several parallels between the two pieces.[15] First, both men hold wisdom to be of great value. Augustine seeks it in study, the Wanderer in experience: "For a man cannot be wise until he has had his share of winters in the world" (Forþon ne maeg weorþan wis wer aer he age / wintra dael in woruldrice. ll. 64-5a). Both men are at sea in a wilderness of perplexity. Augustine was led astray by his books, while the Wanderer's condition arises out of his allegiance to what he now finds to be transient. Both recognize that one will always be lost unless one finds the Eternal Guide.

And so both men end by putting their trust in God. Now the respective sea images veer off in different directions. Augustine comes to port in the land of God;

[14]Augustine, De Beata Vita, PL 32, col. 961. Translation taken from The Happy Life, ed. Ludwig Schopp, p. 47.

[15]See supra, p. 7.

the Wanderer we leave out on the sea, where he has begun to overcome his grief and find security in God. To Augustine, land represents security; for the exiled seaman, it is a symbol of ignorance. Security comes to him by means of a shift in attitude while he is at sea, and is not concretized in a land image.

If we continue to read Jerome's letter to Heliodorus, we come upon a brief reference, tucked in among a heap of sea metaphors, to the desert.

> At last my discourse is clear of the reefs; at last this frail bark has passed from the breakers into deep water. I may now spread my sails to the breeze; and, as I leave the rocks of controversy astern, my epilogue will be like the joyful shout of mariners. Oh desert, bright with the flowers of Christ! Oh solitude...oh wilderness...Sweet it is to lay aside the weight of the body and to soar into the pure bright ether.
>
> Sed quoniam e scopulosis loci enavigavit oratio, et inter cavas spumeis fluctivus cautes, fragilis in altum cimba processit, expandenda vela sunt ventis, et quaestionum scopulis transvadatis, laetantium more nautarum, epilogi celeuma cantandum est. O desertum Christi floribus vernans! O solitudo...O eremus...Libet, sarcina corporis abjecta, ad purum aetheris evolare fulgorem.[16]

This driest of images is an important clue to understanding the OE poetic sea. The desert has much to recommend it both as a wilderness and as a pathway. We need only think of the OE Exodus (to be discussed in a

[16] Jerome, Epistola XIV, PL 22, col. 350. Translation from Greenslade, Early Latin Theology, p. 276.

subsequent chapter) to see how fruitful a merging of desert and sea can be.

Like the sea, the desert held a number of meanings to the men who lived amid its barren wastes. It was seen, first of all, as the natural domain of devils, an obvious parallel with the patristic and with certain OE seas. These desert demons had an interesting way of behaving. An example comes from Athanasius' Vita Antonii, discussed in Chitty's book, The Desert a City. We find that the desert saint had to first gradually cast out the temptations of his own thoughts, "until the demons, expelled from within, began to attack him from without, even as Satan in the wilderness attacked the Lord into whom he could find no entry."[17] A remarkably similar thing appears in The Seafarer. The man first has to deal with his own inner desires, his longing for kin and meadhall, and all those things that draw him back to the illusory security of land. Having survived the depths of his grief, and conquered his internal demons, he sets out now to do battle with the fiends on the high seas, the external foes. In this context, we could perhaps see the Wanderer as having gone only half the distance. He is in the process of

[17] D.J. Chitty, The Desert a City, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 3.

being purged of his melancholy and craving for this world, but he has not set off to confront the terrors of the high seas.

The desert was also seen to bestow a joyous life upon its inhabitants, many of whom extolled its wild beauty. We have just observed Jerome's enthusiasm for the desert bright with Christ's flowers. To Anthony, a monk out of the desert was like a fish out of water.[18] Could we suppose that the Seafarer's enthusiasm for his journey, so different from his earlier gloom, is related to the idea of true joy in the wilderness where the soul seeks and is sustained by God?

Not to be overlooked is the other image Jerome employs in his delighted commentary - that of casting aside the body's weight and soaring upwards toward God. Flight to the Father and redemption from out of the wilderness are, once again, closely connected to the imagery of wilderness and pathway.

The desert is, finally, a place, like Augustine's sea, where there is a search for understanding and wisdom. Jerome tells of John the Baptist in the desert searching into the reason and nature of things, and keeping himself for Christ's coming.[19] It is this same

18 Chitty, p. 6.

19 "Homily 75," in The Homilies of St. Jerome, transl. Sr. Marie Liguori Ewald, The Fathers of the Church Series, Vol. 2, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1966), p. 123.

expectation and search for wisdom in God, and this study of "the nature of things" that we witness in the ocean desert of The Seafarer and The Wanderer.

We have been able to isolate a number of comparisons and contrasts between the OE sea and the patristic one. The idea of the "sea of life" is common to both, but the presence of evil and animated wickedness upon the waters is emphasized less in the Old English material. The sea road or pathway appears both in patristic and OE works; however, the mariner in the latter is more likely to go off in his own boat, using his own power, while the patristic mariner steadies himself aboard the ship/Church with the community of the saved and lets Christ man the helm. Even the Wanderer, while he puts his faith in God as the only true guide, remains by himself in his boat.

Although patristic and Anglo-Saxon seafarers long for their destination in the happy land, the latter seem more attracted to the idea of setting off into exile than their Mediterranean counterparts, whose visions are of a joyous landing in a safe port.

We find in both literatures the still and deep waters, and the deceptively calm ones would seem also to have been a readily understood metaphor for blind

ignorance of the Truth. The search for wisdom on the waters is also found in Old English and patristic writings, the former in connection with life experiences, the latter with study. The desert itself is not directly connected with the OE sea, except in Exodus, but we can see analogues in its associated images - evil and temptation, flight, joy in solitude and wisdom.

# THE OLD ENGLISH POETIC SEA OF APOCALYPSE AND REDEMPTION

The OE poetic sea of exile, where people travel, or get lost or shipwrecked, is a spacial image. The sea to which we turn now is one having a temporal rather than a spacial significance, a mythic, though often very literally taken sea that washes through history from creation to apocalypse. The continuum for this sea has at one pole the waters of generation and creation, and at the other, those that purge or destroy. This apocalyptic/redemptive sea has the same bi-polar qualities as the exile sea. Suggestions of destruction appear in the life-giving sea, and of renewal in the destructive one. Once again, our aim is to study not only sources, structure and functions of this sea, but how in each poem the two opposing poles are balanced.

An overview of the creation of the sea itself opens the discussion. The generative principle inherent in the sea is dealt with, and in particular, the OE Genesis accounts of creation and the Flood and the symbolism of baptism. At the next point on the continuum the sea is a pivot between creation or renewal and destruction. In this connection, we examine those OE poems that present typological events forshadowing the Apocalypse, namely

the Genesis A Flood story and Exodus. Andreas, though it cannot be construed as typological, does contain in its legendary events of the voyage to Mermedonia and the flooding of that city, imagery of apocalypse and redemption, and therefore is included in the discussion. We then look at the sea as it was literally expected to behave at the Last Judgement, glancing as we do at the demise of the sea itself at that time. Here our concern will be the Judgement Day poems. Finally, at the far end of the continuum, where the sea is associated with ongoing destruction, we touch briefly upon the relationship between the sea and hell.

Many Church Fathers held the sea in special veneration not only as an instructive metaphor for the Christian life, but also as a work of creation of the utmost beauty and utility. Basil, for example, had a deep appreciation of the sea's "fair sight" although he believed that it was its usefulness that was the most pleasing to God.[1]

Ambrose shared with Basil this keen sense of the loveliness and utility of the sea. In one of his most frequently quoted nature passages, Ambrose listed

[1]C.J. Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1967), p. 193.

several of its virtues. The historian C.J. Glacken summarizes these:

> It gives rain to the land; and it is the lodging place of rivers (hospitium fluviorum), the source of rain (fons imbrium). It is a wall against the dangers of war, a barrier against barbarian fury. Along its shores are the alluvial soils, deposited by the rivers flowing into it. It is a source of taxes and a means of livelihood at harvest failure through trade and commerce, and in other ways.[2]

What is the origin of this wondrous source of all that is good? Bede, following Isidore, tells us that the seas, along with heaven, earth, trees and animals, was formed in six days out of the formless matter, or Chaos.[3] The distinction between the Chaos and the created sea is important because the Biblical term for Chaos is, in fact, "the waters."

> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters.
>
> Genesis 1:2

[2]From Ambrose, Hexameron, PL 14, col. 139, 141-2, cited in Glacken, p. 196.

[3]Bede, De Natura Rerum, PL 90, col. 189. There was of course, a long tradition, both Christian and classical, dealing with the idea of the formless matter.

The OE Genesis A uses sea imagery even more explicit to refer to the Chaos:

> Black perpetual night covered the sea far and wide, [covered] the dark waves. Then the bright spirit of the Lord of heaven was borne with great power over the land.
>
> garsecg þeahte
> swearte synnihte, side and wide,
> wonne waegas. Þa waes wuldortorht
> heofonweardes gast ofer holm boren
> miclum spedum.
>
> Genesis A ll. 117b-21a

Doane clarifies wonne waegas in his textual notes.[4] The term refers to the unformed hyle, the sea/earth/abyss that takes part in the darkness of Chaos. It is clear that what distinguishes the created sea from the waters out of which the whole of creation was to condense was the latter's state of undifferentiation.

After light was separated from darkness, and day from night, the Lord divided the waters (holmas, l. 146b) and placed the firmament between. (Genesis A ll. 146b-153).[5] On the third day, the waters, which until now

[4] A.N. Doane, Genesis A: A New Edition, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 233.

[5] The idea of waters above the firmament was a radical departure from classical theory, and caused considerable confusion among the Fathers. They took the biblical text literally, but varied in their ideas about the nature and purpose of the waters. See J.K. Wright, The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades, (New York: American Geographical Society, 1925), p. 58.

had encompassed and covered the land, were separated from it (gesundrod waes lagu wiþ land ll. 162-3a). What follows gives a tantalizing insight:

> he [the Lord] set the waves in their right course, the wide flood and fettered
>
> Gesette yþum heora
> onrihtne ryne, rumum flode,
> and gefetero
>
> Genesis A ll. 166b-8a

This is an unfortunate place for the manuscript to break off. The Exameron Anglice helps a little to fill in the gap:

> The sea he placed, as it still lieth, within the earth in its circumference; and although it is broad, and bent anyhow, and wonderfully deep, it nevertheless even so dwelleth in the bosom of the earth within its boundaries.
>
> þa sae he gelogode swa swa heo liþ git
> wiþinnan þa eorþan on hyre ymbhwyrfte
> and þeah þe heo brad sy and geby(e)ged gehù
> and wundorlice deop, heo wunaþ eall swa þeah
> on þaere eorþan bosme binnan hyre gemaerum.
>
> Exameron Anglice ll. 181-5[6]

What is clear from these passages is that the sea has been restrained under God's control. The origin of this idea may be very ancient. In Coptic and Ethiopian liturgies for blessing baptismal water, God is said to

[6] Exameron Anglice, ed. and transl. S.J. Crawford, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), p. 47. The translation is that of S.J. Crawford.

have "created heaven and enclosed the sea." Father J. Daniélou, in The Bible and the Liturgy, states:

> here we have a trace of the primitive myth of creation as being a victory of God over the Dragon of the sea, Leviathan, a myth which the narrative of Genesis has eliminated, but of which the Bible shows other traces.[7]

Some OE poetry implies not so much divine control over the seas such as between victor and vanquished, as a synthesis of God's will and the sea's action. This complementarity is suggested for example, in the words describing the flood in the Genesis A Noah, willeburnan (l. 1378) and willflod (l. 1412). There are, moreover, numerous examples of the power inherent in God's Word to move the sea. In Solomon and Saturn, the Word, or Pater Noster, is the bringer of the flood (flodes ferigend l. 80). In Andreas, the statue that, at the order of God through the saint's mouth, releases the flood upon the Mermedonians, is, as Andreas loftily tells it, the stone whereon God made His Word known, the Ten Commandments (ll. 1511b-12).

The most important concept issuing from creation accounts of the sea has to do with the life-giving or generative quality of the sea. The Bible relates that

[7] J. Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 75.

from the created waters came forth "the moving creature that hath life" (Genesis 1:20). The Genesis A account is missing, but the Exameron Anglice tells us that on the fifth day,

> out Lord created out of water alone all the fishes in the sea and in the rivers, and all that creepeth in them, and the great whales after their kinds; and also all kinds of birds, likewise from water.
>
> On ðam fiftan daege ure Drihten gesceop
> of waetere anum (one) ealle fixas on sae
> and on ēauum and eall ðaet on hi(a)m cryp ð
> and ða mycelan hwalas on heora cynrynum
> and eac eall fugolcynn eall swa of waetere.
>
> Exameron Anglice ll. 239-43[8]

From the concept of a life-giving sea arises one of the fundamental elements in the theology of baptism: the birth of the new man from the waters. Daniélou maintains that the first type of baptism is the primitive waters of Genesis, the Chaos.

> Here we have an eschatological typology in which the first creation is presented as the type of the new creation which is to be accomplished at the end of time.[9]

Sanctified at creation by the Holy Spirit in His passage over "the face of the deep," the waters came to signify

[8] Exameron Anglice, ed. and transl. Crawford, pp. 51-2.

[9] Daniélou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 72.

the water of baptism, from which the second creation, - the new man - is born. Daniélou again:

> As sinful humanity in the time of Noe was destroyed by a judgement of God in the midst of the water, and one just man was saved to be the first-born of a new human race, so in Baptism, the old man is annihilated by means of the Sacrament of water and the man who comes out of the Baptismal pool belongs to a new creation....The analogy of the primordial waters with the waters of Baptism is, then, one aspect, which is fundamentally biblical, of the parallelism between the first and second creation.[10]

If it is axial, an image has significance in terms of two opposed poles, the expressions of which are balanced in favour of the poet's theme. It is plain in the account of Noah that the sea's creative face depends upon its ability to destroy, an idea we will come back to later. But we have also seen that tucked away in God's confinement of the created seas is an allusion to His defeat of the sea beast Leviathan.[11] The awful powers of the serpent are cause for no small warning. "Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up," God tells Job. (Job 41:10b-11a).

It appears that a link exists between the dragon of the sea, the serpent Satan and the flooding waters

[10]Daniélou, p. 77.

[11]See supra, p.68.

of an uncontrolled sea. In Isaiah we read that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (57:20). A passage in Revelation makes an association between Satan and a flood. John tells us that when the Devil serpent, cast forth from heaven onto earth, makes for the woman in the wilderness, "the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (12:15). The sea has, it seems, been connected with the discord that man, corrupted by the serpent in Eden, brings upon his race. An OE gnomic passage suggests this very idea. The sea is the metaphor for the raging power of evil that resides within man, and must be confined:

> The storm often brings in the sea, the ocean in stormy seasons; fiercely they start to the land, the dusky waves hastening afar off; yet may it stand fast. The walls shall hold against them; the wind is common to both. As the sea is serene when the wind wakes it not, so peoples are peaceful when they have settled an issue; they sit in secure circumstances and hold with comrades then.
>
> Storm oft holm gebringeþ,
> geofon in grimmum saelum; onginnað grome fundian
> fealwe on feorran to londe, hwaeþer he faeste stonde.
> Weallas him wiþre healdaþ, him biþ wind gemaene.
> Swa biþ sae smilte
> þonne hy wind ne weceð;
> swa beoð þeoda geþwaere, þonne hy geþingad habbaþ,
> gesittaþ him on gesundum þingum, ond þonne mid gesiþum healde.
>
> Maxims I ll. 50b-7

At the turn of the century, Müllenhof put forward a hypothesis, which remained popular for some time, that Grendel and his mother were sea-monsters and, on a mythic level, the gods or demons of the North Sea at the time of the spring equinox. "Grendel," Müllenhof stated, "is really identical with his mother, who likewise is only a personification of the depth of the sea."[12]

This idea has been generally discounted, and there is no intention here of resurrecting it. But it is of interest to note the parallels between Müllenhof's conception and the ancient myths of a struggle with Leviathan. The struggle between Beowulf and Grendel's dam in the depths can be seen as an apocalyptic battle of the saviour/god with Leviathan, or Müllenhof's sea-god, who lives in the ocean but who rises up from his watery confinement to attack the world with evil.[13]

But at the Last Judgement, the floods, we shall see later, will rise again and the confining walls will not avail:

[12]Müllenhof's hypothesis is cited without references in W.W. Lawrence, "The Haunted Mere in Beowulf," PMLA 27 (1912) p. 210. A review and bibliography can be found in Wülker, Gründriss der angelsächs. Litteratur, (Leipzig, 1885), p. 257ff. See also Karl Müllenhof, "Der Mythus von Beowulf," Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, pp. 419-41, and W.W. Skeat, "On the signification of the monster Grendel in the poem of Beowulf; with a discussion of ll. 2076-2100," J. Phil. 15 (1886) 120-31.

[13]This hypothesis raises the question of whether the mere is the sea. Lawrence grapples with the inconsistencies in the mere's geography in "The Haunted Mere in Beowulf, pp. 208-45. See also W.S. Mackie, "The Demons' Home in Beowulf," JEGP 37 (1938) 455-61.

> The hills shall melt and the high cliffs,
> that had shielded the earth before against
> the sea, firm against the floods, strong
> and steadfast, pillars against the wave,
> the encircling waters.
>
> Beorgas gemeltaþ
> ond heahcleofu, þa wiþ holme aer
> faeste wiþ flodum foldan sceldun
> stiþ and staeþfaest, staþelas wiþ waege,
> waetre windendum.
>
> Christ III ll. 977b-10a

Meanwhile, the malignant force lurks within the deep, and deep within the hearts of men.

With ever more ominous hints of the sea's power to plague mankind, we come to a point on the continuum where the waters are as destructive as they are creative. Here, however, we find a destructive sea in the service of God, rather than as a challenge to order.

Caie has fashioned the phrase "apocalypse in small" to refer to a sudden event during which God cleanses the world from the deep sin into which it has fallen.[14] An apocalypse in small, such as the Flood, is both a "preview" of the Last Judgement, and a step towards its conclusion. Its function is to destroy the evil-doer and return the righteous man to a pristine new world.

There is important sea imagery in three apocalypses in small in OE poetry. One is the Flood of Genesis A,

[14] G.D. Caie, The Judgement Day Theme in Old English Poetry, (Copenhagen: Nova, 1976), p. 96.

which we have already inspected in connection with the life-giving sea. Another is the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea in the OE Exodus. The third is the brief sea crossing and flood episodes of Andreas.

Two concepts emerge from an overall view of these works. The first we have already dealt with - the idea of an old and a new creation that runs parallel to that of the old man transformed by baptism into the new. The other is the ship/Church theme.

The fertility of this theme escaped neither the Fathers nor modern scholars, much attention having been lavished upon it from both quarters. Daniélou believes the idea to have originated in Jewish apocalyptic literature, but he adds that the Greek notion of the state as a ship piloted by the king influenced the growth of the idea in Christian times.[15]

Its development in exegesis took several directions. Basically, the ship represented the Church as a means of salvation. Whoever was not aboard was not saved.[16] Once aboard, one's position in the Church, say, a saint or a married person, was apt to be compared with some part of the ship, the rigging, for example, or the sail.

[15] J. Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), p. 61.

[16] See for example, Tertullian, In Idololatria, PL 1, col. 774. "He who is not in the ark is not in the Church." (Quod in arca non fuit, in Ecclesia not sit.)

Thus the great ship, often with Jesus at the helm, and all the members in their proper stations, surged forth through life to salvation.

A theme that runs alongside this one and appears in some of the poems here is the delivery of a wrecked or endangered ship from a tempestuous sea. No longer a place of refuge, the ship is in peril and must rely on some holy deliverer, usually Jesus, who can still the storm and navigate to a safe port.

"The ark," says Bede, "signifies the Church, that floats in the waves of this world." (Arca enim ista Ecclesiam significat, quae natat in fluctibus mundi huius.)[17] Noah's ark in Genesis A seems in all ways, as safe as a church." Its names suggest an impermeable, home-like enclosure: ocean-house (geofonhusa l. 1321) sea-chest (merecieste l. 1317) and sea-house (merehus l. 1303). Mention is made of the bitumen (eorðan lime l. 1322) used to waterproof the hull, that Bede in his exegesis of the biblical passage explains as signifying patience and continence of body and soul.[18] Finally, God Himself secures the faithful inside by locking the ark with His own hand (ll. 1363-65). Each is in his place, secure in the expectation of salvation. For those outside (þa beutan beoð ll. 1354a) there is no hope.

[17]Bede, In Pentateuchum Commentarii Genesis, PL 91, col. 222.

[18]Bede, col. 225.

Let us compare this solid ship/Church with the vessel that Andreas and his companions take to Mermedonia (ll.135-537). Implicit here are both the endangered ship and the ship of the Church. With their craft momentarily imperilled in a storm, Andreas bids his men to be calm, and reminds them of that great Helmsman who hushed the waters of Galilee. The message is clear - faith in Jesus Christ will bring the storm-wracked ship to safety.

Later during the storm, Andreas' men are given the option of debarking. They staunchly maintain their willingness to stay with their leader, and unwittingly, with Christ the Pilot. Though they perceive danger on the sea journey, they know that their safety and their salvation is on board.

> [the heroes] would not agree to leave their beloved teacher at the ship's prow and seek land for themselves: Where shall we turn, lacking our lord, sad, without goodness and bound in sins, if we desert you?"
>
> Þafigan ne woldon
> Þaet hie forleton aet lides stefnan
> leofne lareow ond him land curon:
> "Hwider hweorfaþ we hlafordlease,
> geomormode, gode orfeorme,
> synnum wunde, gif we swicaþ Þe?"
>
> Andreas ll. 402b-7

The same ideas of a protective ship/Church and an imperilled one can be found in OE Exodus. The desert

turns into a sea, as the Israelites become sailors (saemen l. 105) and the Egyptians, landmen (landmanna l. 179, ingemen l. 190). The distinction between the two echoes that in The Seafarer between the man at sea and the townsman.[19] But in fact, a ship never is described in Exodus. The idea begins on an amorphous level and stays there. The Church is really the Israelites who move within a group of landmarks that shift with the action in such a way as to represent a ship and, sometimes, a sea.

One of these landmarks is the cloud pillar, an image effectively used to convey the ship/Church theme.

> Wise God had covered the passage of the sun with a sail, so that men did not know the mast-ropes, nor could they see the sailyard, (or) by any skill how the greatest of tents was fastened.
>
> haefde witig God
> sunnan siðfaet segle ofertolden,
> swa þa maestrapas men ne cuðon,
> ne ða seglrode geseon meahton
> eorðbuende ealle craefte.
>
> Exodus ll. 80b-4

Images of the sail and the tent are often juxtaposed in Exodus. The items are similar in texture and their billowy appearance, and of course, a tent is an apt image for a desert story. The representation of the cross in the sailyard was common in exegesis. In fact,

[19] See supra, pp. 33, 35.

the ship itself, insofar as it was built of wood, symbolized the cross.[20] Even when the ship became identified with the Church, the mast remained a cross symbol.[21] The impact of the cloud pillar as a sail/cross metaphor is amplified by the tent image which suggests an enclosure, and hence, the Church. The cloud pillar unites the two images: the sail/cross and the tent/Church.

The landscape in Exodus, or more properly, the seascape, also suggests the protective walls of the Church: "The waves make the water into a fortified wall. (Yð up faereð ofstum wyrceð / waeter on waelfaesten. ll. 282-3a)" The sea's walls are, paradoxically, protection against its own rage. No ship is mentioned in this passage, but the impression is of a group of people who are shielded from apocalyptic destruction by walls controlled by God through Moses. The parallel with the bitumen-lined walls of the ark, blessed by God and steered by His agent Noah, is quite clear. In the womb-like protectiveness of both "ships" lie suggestions of the new man's gestation within the body of the Church, and his

[20] Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, p. 66.

[21] Berkhout suggests that holmwudu, Dream of the Rood ll. 90-4, a word commonly emended to holtwudu (wood on the hill) be interpreted as mast, presupposing the ship/Church. The source of the image, he believes, is lignum maris, on which the faithful travel to the patria. C. Berkhout, "The Problem of Old English Holmwudu," Med. Stud. 36 (1974) 429-33.

eventual rebirth.

Another aspect of the ship/Church theme is the notion of what we might call a "magical craft."[22] We have discussed the sense of flight in the voyages of Beowulf, Andreas and Elene across the sea from home to exile.[23] In our present works, we can detect a similar lightness or buoyancy, if not outright flight, in the movement of the protective ship. For example, Noah's ark, the best of ships, is lifted up by the waters (faer seleste flod up ahof l. 1419) and guided over the land (ofer widland l. 1412) by God's Word. What gives the ark a magical quality is the special status it has by being blessed by God Himself, and that with a word, God guides it. Its very movement upward, over the land, atop the water and under the clouds (wolcnum under l. 1392), over the sea-rim (ofer holmes hrincg l. 1393), is suggestive of flight.

One effect of sailing and ship imagery in Exodus is the sense of a smooth gliding movement of the Israelites through the desert, rather than the laborious march that it probably was.[24] We can imagine the cloud pillar

[22]For the mythological importance of the magical craft, see M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. 107ff.

[23]See supra, pp. 44-5.

[24]E.B. Irving, "Exodus Retraced," in Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope, ed. R.B. Burlin and E.B. Irving, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 214.

lifting the travellers' faces towards itself, making the journey to the Promised Land almost an ascension.

Moreover, the connection between the cloud cover and a sail brings to mind the idea of being blown across the desert. Generally the sail of the ship/Church represented the Holy Spirit; it is a small step from this to conceive of God "putting the wind" in the sail of the Israelites.[25]

Paired with the idea of flight is, once again, the imagery of confinement.[26]

> None of the company [the Egyptians] there came home, but the troop was locked in from behind with the waves.
>
> herges to hame, wyrd mid waege. ne waer aenig becwom ac behindan beleac
>
> Exodus ll. 456b-8a

A later line suggests that the evil ones were bound by their own sins in their demise. "The company was fettered fast in death. (Maegen waes on cwealme faeste gefeterod l. 469b-70a.)" Those who were once captors are now the captives. The sea, the instrument of God and the destroyer of evil, will fetter those ill elements that fettered men's souls, releasing them to "fly" to the Promised Land. Similarly in Andreas, we read that the wicked Mermedonians put "fetters, bonds of torment"

[25] P. Lucas, Exodus, (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), p. 49.

[26] See supra, pp. 32, 38-9.

(clommum belegdon, witebendum ll. 1560b-1a) upon Andreas the good, whereupon the seas flooded up to destroy the chain-wielding mob.

The most magical of all is the vessel, with its crew, on which Andreas and his men travel to Mermedonia (ll. 471-98a). While Andreas and the others sleep, this craft, gliding like a bird (fugle gelicost l. 497), with divine helmsman and crew, is taken by angels over the sea, through the lyftgelac to Mermedonia. This event connects with the idea of the ship/Church that is both saved from peril itself and offers the only security to its passengers, and to the themes of movement into exile that we discussed earlier.[27]

Leaving this and the other wonderful ships behind, but staying with Andreas, let us turn to a variant of an apocalypse in small that takes place in Mermedonia. Newly healed from the tortures of the fiendishly wicked Mermedonians, Andreas address one of the pillars in his prison wall. If Noah was a relatively passive figure at the Flood, and Moses worked his miracles with God's firm guidance, Andreas seems almost to assume the divine powers himself, ordering the pillar on God's behalf to disgorge a flood. Complementing the flood as destroyer

[27]See supra, pp. 41-6.

and punisher, a fire overspreads the city to prevent the now terrified people who try to flee to mountain caves. The choice is put to them: let Andreas go and accept his God, or drown and burn. The Mermedonians give in. The flood is called off by Andreas, who walks in triumph (without even the help of a rod) on dry ground through the waters that open before him (ll. 1579b-87a). This walk suggests the soon-to-be leader taking the rejoicing company on the verge of conversion, through to redemption. But immediately, an abyss opens to swallow the flood waters, gulping down the fourteen most sinful Mermedonians. Their resurrection, brought about by Andreas, whose powers seem to grow greater with every passing moment, is clearly undeserved. Their fate, Andreas points out to the crowd, was simply "according to their deeds" (be gewyrhtum l. 1611). But through Andreas' prayers for God's grace, the doomed ones are lifted again to life.

Andreas has an eccentric configuration of apocalyptic and baptismal imagery in its sea passages. The symbolism of the saint's walk through the waters as he brings the people to redemption is weak compared with the whole company of Israelites marching through the towering protective walls that will close with such tumult of the Egyptians behind. And the disappearance of the waters into the abyss associates the water with

the punishment of hell. It is Andreas' prayers, not rebirth in water, that bring God's grace and forgiveness upon the fourteen.

We notice that the sea is becoming more closely associated with destruction and doom than with life and rebirth. For on leaving Andreas and the punitive waters in Mermedonia, we come to a sea whose main purpose is destructive and apocalyptic.

Although the Church attempted to put all eschatological material on an anagogic level, the sea of doomsday held, in the popular view, a significance no less literal than the traveller's sea did in the eyes of the merchant or sailor. From the sixth century onward, there had been a growing fear that the world really was coming to an end. Blickling Homily X, for instance, instructs the trembling listener:

> May we then now see and know and very readily understand that the end of this world is very nigh; and many calamities have appeared and men's crimes and woes are greatly multiplied; and we from day to day hear of monstrous plagues and strange deaths throughout the country that have come upon men.
>
> Magon we þonne nu geseon and oncnawan and swiþe gearelice ongeotan þaet þisses middangeardes ende swiþe neah is, and manige frecnessa aeteowde and manna wohdaeda and wonessa swiþe gemonigfealdode; and we fram daege to oþrum geaxiaþ ungecyndelico witu and ungecynelice deaþas geond þeodland to mannum cumene...[28]

[28] Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century, ed. and transl. R. Morris, (London: EETS, 1880), First series, p. 106

Monstrous plagues and strange deaths. The popular imagination was haunted by omens of apocalypse. Blickling Homily VII lists seven signs of Doomsday, among them noise, clouds and rains of blood, darkness and a rampage of stars through the sky.[29] The sea provided a few terrifying portents too.

God forbade any future flood after He destroyed the earth in Noah's time. But the livid seas remained a terrible reminder of the coming End, and many OE sea passages reiterate this scene. Some examples are found in the OE Exodus. The death of the Egyptians is meant to evoke the Apocalypse, with the raging sea (mere modgode l. 459) that tumbles over the victims recalling Blickling Homily VII, where the seas will devour the earth.[30] The break-up of walls, in this case the sea walls, and the bloody waters are further signs.[31] The flood over dry land, an omen given in Matt. 24:39, appears in the drowning of the Egyptians (lagu land gefeol l. 483).

A passage in Solomon and Saturn speaks of this same event, and also the terrible din of the Apocalypse:

> Immediately it will be seen when the wave is let to flow over all the land; now it will leave its course forever, when the time comes that it hear the doomsday din.

[29] Blickling Homilies, p. 91.

[30] Blickling Homilies, p. 92.

[31] Lucas, Exodus, p. 133. See Isa. 25:12, Rev. 8:8.

> Sona bið gesiene, siððan flowan mot
> yð ofer eall lond, ne wile heo awa ðaes
> siðes geswican, sioððan hire se sael cymeð,
> ðaet heo comes daeges dyn gehiere.
>
> Solomon and Saturn ll. 323-6

And Judgement Day II, recalling a passage in Luke (21:26) where the roaring of the waves makes men's hearts to fail for fear, speaks of the din of Noah's flood (ll. 201-3). Blickling Homily V moreover, reminds that one of the joys of heaven is that there will be no more sound of the sea.[32]

The seas may rise and crash, but in the end, they are no match for the Doomsday fires. The waters themselves, as a part of creation, must also end in the Apocalypse. This is explicit in Revelation:

> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
>
> Revelation 21:1

Passages from Christ III tell how it will be:

> The dark fire's heat, the black flame, will seize all three together, the seas with their fish, earth with her hills, and heaven with its bright star.
>
> se swearta lig, saes mid hyra fiscum,
> eor an mid hire beorgum, on upheofon
> torhtne mid his tunglum, Teonleg somod
> þry um baerneð þreo eal on an
> grimme togaedre.
>
> Christ III ll. 966-70a

[32] Blickling Homilies, p. 65.

As the waters flowed before, whirling floods, then in the firebath the sea-fish shall die, cut off from the ocean; every miserable sea creature shall die, water shall burn like wax.

Swa aer waeter fleowan,
flodas afysde, þonne on fyrbaðe
swelað saefiscas; sundes getwaefde
waegdeora gehwylc werig sweltað,
byrneð waeter swa weax.

Christ III ll. 984b-8a

The presence of fish points to the generative, nurturing quality of the water.[33] It was, after all, out of the water that "the moving creature" was brought forth. The death of fishes then, symbolizes the end of life; indeed the burning of the sea indicates the end of even the source of life.

In a cyclical view of mythic time, the Apocalypse would bring in the original primeval Chaos, or the primordial waters of Genesis 1:2, and a new creation would begin. What remains after the Christian Apocalypse is not Chaos, but a new heaven and a new paradisal earth. The sea is gone. This is because all those things that the sea symbolizes, the home of created life, the diabolical evil that besets us, the wilderness of the spirit that we saw earlier - all these things will no longer be. "Then," as Augustine puts it, "there will be no more of this world, no more of the surgings and restlessness of human life...which is symbolized by the sea."

[33]Daniélou, Primitive Christian Symbols, p. 59.

(Jam enim tunc non erit hoc saeculum vita mortalium turbulentum et procellosum, quod maris nomine figuravit.)[34]

A mere glance at the Judgement Day poems shows to what extent the tyrannical Doomsday fires have assumed the potency that the floods carried earlier in history. Theologically, the flood is a type of the fire, both pointing to it and being fulfilled in it. Poetically, the flood is a metaphor for the fire - both elements have the same figural task: to purge the good and destroy the wicked.

Augustine names two phases in the process of redemption.[35] The first is the resurrection of the soul. This occurs during a man's present life, is based on faith and signified in baptism. This first resurrection is one of mercy, made possible through Christ's death on the cross. Thus are men absolved of their sins and given access to the Kingdom of God. The second resurrection is a time of judgement. At the end of the world, a man's soul and body are reunited and judged according to his earthly deeds. Those who have, through baptism, proclaimed their faith in Christ, are purged of their venial sins through the fire and ascend to heaven.

[34]Augustine, De Civitate Dei, PL 41, col. 682. Translation taken from M. Dods, The City of God, (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 716.

[35]Augustine, PL 41, col 682.

Those who while they lived never confessed the faith, are tossed into eternal punishment, the dreaded second death.

Anyone reading this, even half-asleep (as Augustine would say) cannot fail to see the parallels between the baptism of the first resurrection and the judgement of the second, and the imagery of flood and fires. But even though these two figures, deluge and flames, are both typologically and metaphorically related, they are also quite distinct in what they signify. The Flood is associated with destruction and purgation, and also with God's mercy in baptism; the fires are also destructive and purgative, but their role is not mercy but judgement.

With this in mind, we can turn to Judgement Day I, where the dominant image in the first lines is the flood that will sweep the earth and destroy mankind. "It shall happen that water will flow, a flood over the earth; the life of everyone will be at an end." (Þaet gelimpaþ sceal, þaette lagu flowe∂, / flod ofer foldan; feores bi∂ aet ende / anra gehwylcum (ll. 1-3a).

The flood at Judgement Day is an unbiblical event, but before we are long into the poem, the waters recede and the fire begins to rage in the orthodox fashion. Caie argues that the poet begins with this flood detail because his real goal in the poem was the repentence of

the individual man now. "The poet," says Caie, "is more concerned with the purgative function of the terrors of doom on the individual. Just as the Red Sea water and the waters of baptism destroy the evil and cleanse the righteous, so also will the "water" of Apocalypse."[36]

Perhaps this statement oversimplifies. Does Caie underestimate the distinction between fire and flood? Baptismal waters destroy evil within the individual, with the expectation that he will now undertake a spiritual voyage during the remainder of his earthly life. The apocalyptic waters on the other hand, destroy evil men and punish the righteous for whatever venial sins they have committed during life.

Later in the poem, the cross is seen as the goal to which the man eager for glory is moving (rincas aet þaere rode l. 105). The cross at Judgement Day is also unbiblical.[37] It is always, though, a symbol of the sacrifice made by the perfect Christ for imperfect man. It is also symbolic of His victory over death, a victory that becomes, through baptism, possible for all as the way to escape the second death. The man's journey to the cross, rather than being something that will happen at Apocalypse, in fact rings truer in the poem if one is speaking of a spiritual journey during life.

[36]Caie, The Judgement Day Theme, p. 95.

[37]Caie, p. 113. It is not an uncommon idea, however.

The two unbiblical elements of this poem, then, the flood and the cross at Judgement Day, can be seen to suggest the grace and cleansing that are possible in this life. They are viewed against a backdrop of the apocalyptic terrors in store for those who do not avail themselves of God's grace. Caie is correct, it seems, in his conclusion that the poet's concern is "to stress the paramount importance of immediate repentance which is necessary to avoid the terrible fate of the sinners at Doomsday,"[38] But what brings the point home is the poet's use of symbols that distinguish "the terrible fate," Augustine's judgement and second death, from the mercy and redemption of the soul that can be gotten now.

So far, we have considered the sea of creation, associated mainly with life-giving and the rebirth of the new man through baptism, and explored the Apocalypse and apocalypses in small where the sea's redemptive and destructive powers are balanced. Finally now, what of the relationship between the sea and hell?

Tertullian warns those who leave the ship/Church when it sails the sea of life that they will perish in the depths.[39] Gregory, commenting on Christ's image of

[38]Caie, p. 97.

[39]Tertullian, De Idololatria, PL 1, col. 772.

the man with the millstone around his neck being thrown into the sea (Matt. 1:42), advises that the millstone is this world and man's life and toil, and that the bottom of the sea is the doomed one's end and last judgement.[40] But more often, hell is portrayed without sea imagery as a place underground, or even under the sea. We are given occasional glimpses of the Sea of Hell, but this seems not to be the same thing as the earthly sea. There are, for instance, no storms, or snarling waves and menacing shoals. Instead, there are many standard features of Hell.[41] An OE homily on the Lord's Day describes the Sea of Hell visited by St. Paul and Michael the Archangel. There were found the seven bitter waves: snow, ice, fire, blood, adders, smoke and stench.[42] The Vision of St. Paul, in Blickling Homily XVII, is a picture reminiscent of Grendel's mere, of black cliffs overlooking water from a height of twelve miles. On the cliffs hang the black souls of the wicked, tormented with devils before they fall down into the dark waters of damnation.[43]

[40]Gregory, King Alfred's West-Saxon version of Gregory's Pastoral Care, ed. H. Sweet, (London: EETS, 1871-2), p. 31.

[41]A detailed search for ideas on the relations between the sea and hell is beyond the scope of this paper.

[42]Old English Homilies, ed. R. Morris, First Series, (London: EETS, 1868), p. 43.

[43]Blickling Homilies, p. 209.

Elsewhere, the sea is employed as a simile for hell. We read, for example, in a conversation between the devil and a holy recluse, Thebaid, about what hell will be like. Picture, says the devil, a man hung upside down from a tree over a cliff to be persecuted by all the evils of the earth, "and all the sea clashing beneath him, with all the terrors that the sea brings forth" (hine ealle se-yðan nioðan cnyssende waeron mid eallan saebrogan, ðe he forð brinð). The man would bear this gladly for a thousand years, he continues, to escape going to hell. As for hell's noise, it will be as if the ocean itself were lined with fire and iron and hammered by countless men.[44]

Sometimes, the sea is given hellish aspects to heighten its sinister qualities or suggest the idea of a descent into hell. The demons out on the Seafarer's sea, or the sea monsters that Beowulf must grapple with after his contest with Breca (ll. 529-89) are examples. And if we wish to take the mere in Beowulf as the sea or an inland extension of the sea, then we should note the added dimension it gains through the poet's use of hellish imagery. The waters that flame up nightly, the gore and serpents, and the underwater caverns so

[44] Printed and translated in J.M. Kemble (ed.), The Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis, (London: The Aelfric Society, 1863), p. 84.

strangely lit, where Beowulf faces Grendel's mother, are all suggestive of some demonic underworld.

While hell has in some works been placed in the sea, or the sea has been used as a simile for hell, or the sea has been "decorated" to suggest hell, the literal visions of hell and of the sea have not very much in common. One reason may be that while hell is a phenomenon of eternity, a place, like paradise, out of chronological time, the sea of apocalypse and redemption is still within time. It signals events, and when time itself is over, the sea passes away too.

We have followed the apocalyptic/redemptive sea from its creation at the beginning of time to its role and eventual end at the close of time. As the primordial waters, it stands for birth, hope and renewal. The created seas are important in imagery of chaos and order. Either God must vanquish and control the sea's destructive forces, or He Himself uses the sea's power to realize His plans to purify and reorder man and the fallen world. The sea may also represent the fury of the uncontrolled man or society.

The predominant nautical image in OE apocalypses in small is the ship of the Church, floating atop an ocean that destroys evil and purifies the new man. The ship may be either a safe vessel of the Church, or a floundering

craft badly in need of salvation. We find variations of these images in Andreas, Exodus and the OE Genesis A Noah. The ideas of magical flight and of confinement are closely allied with ship/Church and sea images. In fact, these two seem to have been with us throughout the entire study, beginning with The Wife's Lament and The Wanderer.

The eschatological significance of the apocalyptic/redemptive sea has more to do with its role as a herald than as an agent of final destruction. For the seas must end in the Apocalypse, burned out by the scorching flames. This is congruent with the roles of the first and second resurrection. The first is signified by the merciful and purifying baptismal waters; the second by the tyrannical and judgemental fires.

Finally, we have seen that the sea and hell were kept quite distinct as far as a literal understanding went, but that one frequently borrowed the other's imagery.

## TIME AND SPACE:
## THE SEA AND THE APOCALYPTIC MOMENT

Can a connection be found between the Old English seas of exile and apocalypse/redemption? To answer this question, let us turn to a theme isolated by Caie in his study of the Judgement Day poems. Caie argues that the theme of Christ III is the spiritual judgement of man that takes place during life. The Last Judgement, he believes, was seen by the Anglo-Saxon poets and homilists on Last Things as a continual process of judgement throughout life.[1] There was still to be a manifestation of that judgement at a specific time, the Millenium, which would inaugurate the spiritual Jerusalem, but the reality of the judgement was in the present.[2] Thus the Christian could be said to be living in the apocalyptic moment, "the time when the transformation to eternal glory could take place."[3] This is why the Judgement Day I poet, concentrating on this "ever-present apocalyptic moment," exhorts the audience to repent now.[4] No distinction is made in

[1] G.D. Caie, The Judgement Day Theme in Old English Poetry, (Copenhagen: Nova, 1976), p. 84.

[2] Caie, p. 85.

[3] Caie, p. 72.

[4] Caie, p. 103.

this poem between the endedaeg of the individual and the domesdaeg. The present moment is what counts, because after death, nothing can be changed. As we saw earlier, after death is a time for judgement, not mercy. "At a time in the future, ordained by fate," states Caie, "the holocaust will come, but the destiny of the individual is not ruled by that point in time, but by every moment in the present."[5]

Returning to the OE poetic sea, I propose that exile at sea is the spacial representation of the apocalyptic moment. That is, every step made by those who seek God in the wilderness is an apocalyptic conquest within the soul of the evil that binds man to this world, and a release of the newly purified man onwards to redemption. As an analogy, let us turn back to Augustine's notion of the first resurrection.[6] This, it will be recalled, is the resurrection of the soul that occurs in this life, is based on faith and signified in baptism. Baptism is the soul's resurrection through the destruction of Satan's power to pervert it. It is the end of the individual's exile from God, by his reception into the Church in this world, and his assurance of salvation after death. More significantly however, baptism inaugurates a spiritual journey through

[5] Caie, p. 112.

[6] See supra, p. 88.

the remainder of the individual's life. During this journey, he must continue to "be baptized;" that is, he must exercise his baptism in every action. Baptism transforms the basis for decision, establishing a new set of criteria for action, a new frame of reference. It can therefore be compared to the Seafarer's decision to shift his point of view to the eternal God and move out onto the sea with a new purpose. Thereafter, he, like the one newly baptized, will continue his life in exile on the waters where he will restate his commitment (his "baptism") each time he renounces evil.

The new vantage point that comes with one's realization that this world is vain and transient, and that one's only hope lies along the hard road to God, is denied to the townsman. Once one makes the discovery, one is no longer on land; one is at sea and in peril because the decision must be made whether to cling to the land and perish on the rocks or undertake the open waters that loom up so inscrutible. In any case, never can the man return to the townsman's blissful ignorance.

The sea of the Seafarer (and to a lesser extent of the Wanderer) does not just represent the transient, vagarious world, empty of eternal value, where we are exiled from God, though this is what we see near the start of the poem. What gives the sea its crucial twist

is that it becomes the place that expresses both the necessity and the freedom of choice that accrues from recognizing one's true condition. The sea is where man finds himself when he sees that his destiny depends entirely on his own choices. The sea is at the same time full of fiends and evil, and empty of everything but icy waves. It harbours all the fortune, all the events around which a man must mould his destiny, but in its emptiness, it reveals the universe of possibilities for action that he may take.

In Solomon and Saturn, it is explained by Solomon that each man has with him two spirits (þonne hine ymbegangaþ gastas twegen l. 487), both of whom advise him in their respective ways. Shippey, commenting on this passage, states, "Men are left free to choose, and decide according to their strength of mind; on their deathday, they will know the result of that choice (when it will be too late)...The road to victory, according to Solomon, is strength of mind, wisdom, and making the right decision."[7]

Small wonder that the Seafarer is leery. Uneasily, he wonders what is in store for him, what tests will appear before him. Yet the freedom he has achieved in removing himself from this world makes him keen and

[7] T.A. Shippey. Old English Verse, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1972), p. 66.

ready for the voyage. He is intimidated but excited nevertheless by the possibilities that the sea affords his soul.

"Therefore the thoughts of my heart are urging," the Seafarer affirms, "that I myself [will] try the high currents, the tossing of the salty waves." (For þon cnussað nu heortan gehohtas, þæt ic hean streamas, / sealtyþa gelac, sylf cunnige; ll. 33b-35). Osborn and Greenfield both see this passage as a transition point, where, in an involuntary exile, a voluntary decision is taken "of my own accord" or "for myself" (sylf).[8] It was suggested earlier that one difference between Anglo-Saxon and patristic mariners was that the former tended to go out on their own power, while the latter leaned more on the Divine Helmsman.[9] Possibly the word sylf suggests this assumption of responsibility for one's own destiny. In both The Seafarer and The Wanderer, the door to salvation on the sea has been opened by the men's realization of earthly transience, but it is the Seafarer who sees also that it is he himself who must forge through the waters to achieve it.

Later in the poem, the sea is portrayed rather as a battlefield where, as we have seen, the man will perform

[8] S. Greenfield, "Min, Sylf and Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer," JEGP 68 (1969) p. 212. M. Osborn, "Venturing upon deep waters in The Seafarer," Neuphil. Mitt. 79 (1978) p.3.

[9] See supra, p. 52.

brave deeds against the foes. In these deeds lies the exercise of his choice, and at each point where he decides against the devil, he will work a small apocalypse, vanquishing the evil and propelling himself on to his heavenly goal. Perhaps this is why Judgement Day I is placed in the Exeter Book along with the elegies - a journey such as that of the man to the cross is really, like the Seafarer's voyage, a series of apocalypses on the level of the individual.

The Seafarer's activity will be, in a sense, heroic - a lifelong series of correct decisions that will overcome destructiveness, evil, and chaos upon the waters, and bring about a reestablishment of order.[10] We might even view the heroic exploits of Beowulf as exemplifying the life that the Seafarer aspires to. Though Beowulf dies finally, beaten by the dragon, his stance remains heroic and unswerving to the end. Death, the inescapable price of the first sin, will take the Seafarer too one day, but after it, like Beowulf in his hill-top grave, he will rest peacefully over and untouched or untroubled by the waters.

In the OE Exodus, the Israelites' journey is an exile under Moses' divinely aided leadership. The most terrifying point of this exile comes when they are

[10]Alvin Lee discusses the "persistent idea [of] redemption and heroic activity as a restoration of an originally ideal order of Creation" in The Guest Hall of Eden, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 67.

caught between the Red Sea and the advancing Egyptian army. For the space of an entire night, the Chosen People lie in peril between the men of Pharaoh and the water (Haefde hydfara nihtlangne fyrst, / þeah ðe him on healfa gehwam hettend seomedon, / maegen oððe mere-stream ll. 208-10). A comparison can be made here with the complete despair that the Seafarer experiences at his lowest point in the dark night waters, fettered in morbid hopelessness. The choice however, is clear. Descent into the sea offers hope of redemption; any other action brings certain death.

Just as the Seafarer must face evil upon the sea, so must the Israelites. Lucas illustrates that the Israelites enter the sea as an army going into battle. The Christian, he goes on to say, approaches baptism as a soldier fighting off an assailant.[11] Is it not reasonable in this context to admit Vickrey's argument that a battle did take place between Israelite and Egyptian in the sea, just as a battle was to occur between the Seafarer and the fiends?[12]

[11] P.J. Lucas (ed.), Exodus, (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), p. 117.

[12] J. Vickrey, "Exodus and the Battle in the Sea," Traditio 28 (1972) 119-40. Farrell, on the other hand, argues that the Israelites are saved by faith and obedience, and not by a direct struggle with evil. R.T. Farrell, "A Reading of OE Exodus," RES n.s. 20 (1969), p. 401.

In The Seafarer and Exodus, exile and redemption/apocalypse are both required for the other. Redemption cannot be achieved unless one is first of all conscious of one's exile in this mundane life from the eternal heavenly home, and second, undertakes another exile from this world and heads back to God as far as is possible in this life. The only way out of exile is redemption, while redemption requires exile.

There are two major ways in which the themes of exile and the apocalyptic moment are intertwined in the poems we have been looking at. These are the juxtaposition of geographical images with apocalyptic themes, and the suspension of our normal time boundaries; a juggling, in other words, of images of space and time.

A good example of the use of geographical position to represent the moment of apocalypse is in the OE Genesis A Noah. At the height of the flood, the ark is poised between the clouds and the rim of the sea (wolcnum under / ofer holmes hrincg ll. 1392-3a). Noah is "in between", in a no-man's space on the water, neither on earth nor in the new world. His position symbolizes the precise moment of destruction and redemption.

In Exodus, the Israelites are enclosed, during the Red Sea crossing, by a fortified wall of sea water.

(waeter on waelfaesten l. 283a). This womblike place in the sea represents spacially the same turning point. In fact, a number of transformations occur at this crucial juncture. The Egyptians, who took their treasure wrongfully from Joseph, lose it finally in the sea. The Israelites gather their booty on the Red Sea shores after the crossing (ll. 585-90) and are thereby reunited with what is rightly theirs. With it, they will go on to build a just and holy nation. In addition, the Israelites, once protected by the cloud pillar, and then by the sea walls, are now, on land, to be protected by the law, which they receive once they are are out of the water. And while order and law are reestablished when the land is reached, and the Israelites are no longer sailors (Folc waes on lande; l. 567b), chaos, symbolized by the Egyptians, has been returned to its proper place, the sea. Land and sea, order and chaos, lawfulness and lawlessness have been put aright.

Certain other sea passages attempt to alter our perception of time so that we will recognize that the events taking place are not bound by our mundane chronometry. Instead, they exist in cosmic time (from which we have been exiled here on earth), where apocalypse and redemption have their reality and into which the spiritual exile must thrust himself to attain redemption.

A passage in Exodus mentions an open expanse of land that will henceforth be covered by the sea (fage feldas, þa forð heonon / in ece tid yðe þeccað ll. 287-8). What is implied is that men have never trodden the bottom of the sea before and never will again.[13] We have, then, a place, the sea floor (sae grundas l. 289) revealed only once in time. The absolute finality of apocalypse is suggested in this one-time glimpse of a geographical place. This gives the same "now or never" sense that appeared in the Judgement Day poems. This moment is unique; one's destiny depends upon it.[14]

In Andreas, the vast ocean can be comprehended only by those who can transcend time, and from a point outside of time. "How can I get to that far land of Mermedonia so quickly?" Andreas wonders. He is a mere man, but the angel, he knows, can easily accomplish that, for he knows the stretches of the sea. (Þaet maeg engel þin eað geferan; con him holma begang, ll. 194-5).

The magical flight of the hero's craft across the waters to exile effectvely collapses time. Crossing the ocean is crossing a time barrier, so that events on

[13] Lucas, Exodus, p. 115.

[14] Exodus l. 312 describes the sea floor as grenne grund. Lucas claims it is unrealistic to have a grassy path for a sea floor, and that this may be allegorical for the Green Streets of Paradise, cited for example in Wisdom 19:7. (Lucas, p. 118). A momentary look at paradise, the Promised Land, we have seen already in the vision of the Seafarer's anfloga.

the other side have a significance beyond the mundane. It is the land where cosmic forces that pre-date time exist - the evil of a Grendel, a Mermedonian cannibal, or in Elene, a Judas Iscariot.

Another type of time symbol is found in images of the Last Days of the World. The Seafarer, The Wife's Lament, The Husband's Message and The Wanderer all have such seasonal imagery in common that points to the aging of this earth. Frequently mentioned are frost and hail, the quickening of this world as in spring with blossoming groves, beautiful plains and the cry of the sad cuckoo. "Old is this earth hall, I am filled with yearning," sighs the lamenting Wife. (Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad; l. 29). The Husband's Message urges his wife to leave "when on the edge of the mountain you have heard the sad cuckoo cry in the grove." (siþþan þu gehyrde on hliþes oran / galan geomorne geac on bearwe. l. 22-3). "The plains are beautiful, the world quickens," says the Seafarer eager for his voyage (wongas wlitigiað, woruld onetteð; l. 49).

Such imagery appears in homiletic and patristic sources in connection with the hastening of the world to its end.[15] This is perhaps one reason why it is hard to speak of levels of meanings in these poems. Wherever this imagery of the earth's last age is found in

[15] P.L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 136.

connection with the sea, the poem has, as it were, one foot in this world, the literal one that is heading toward its inevitable conclusion, and one foot in the world that opens out on the other side of the apocalypse, where the spiritual will hold sway for eternity. At each apocalyptic moment on the sea, earthly time confronts and fades into eternity.

We have been examining a kind of marriage between the OE poetic sea of exile and the sea of apocalypse and redemption. Combinations of space and time imagery join the seas, so that together, they say much more than either would alone. The characters we have been observing in the preceding poems are sailing a sea where the opposed ideas of exile and escape from exile, wilderness and pathway, flight and confinement, creation and destruction, birth and death, and salvation and damnation are resolved. The ordinary seafarer, the legendary hero, the saint, the community of the faithful, even the whole race, are poised in these poems at the interface of the mundane and the divine, the temporal and the eternal.

# ABBREVIATIONS

ASPR The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record: A Collective Record.

Vol. 1 The Junius Manuscript. ed. George P. Krapp. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.

Vol. 2 The Vercelli Book. ed. George P. Krapp. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

Vol. 3 The Exeter Book. ed. George P. Krapp and Elliot V.K. Dobbie. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

Vol. 4 Beowulf and Judith. ed. Elliot V.K. Dobbie. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954.

Vol. 5 The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius. ed. George P. Krapp. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

Vol. 6 The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems. ed. Elliot V.K. Dobbie. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1942.

PL Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina. ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857.

ASE Anglo-Saxon England

JEGP Journal of English and Germanic Philology

Med. Stud. Medieval Studies

MP Modern Philology

Neophil. Neophilologus

Neuphil. Mitt. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen

PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association

RES Review of English Studies

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De Civitate Dei. PL 41, col. 682..
Ennarrationes in Psalmos. In Psalmum CIII, PL 37, col. 1335-96.

Bede. De Natura Rerum. PL 90, col. 187-204.
In Pentateuchem Commentarii. - Genesis. PL 91, col. 189-210.

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"Genesis" ASPR I. ll. 1-1601, pp. 3-49.

Gregory [Saint]. Dialogus. PL 77, col. 152.

"The Husband's Message" ASPR III. pp. 225-7.

Jerome [Saint]. Epistola XIV. PL 22, col. 350-5.

"Judgement Day I" ASPR III. pp. 212-15.

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"Resignation" ASPR III. pp. 215-18.

"The Seafarer" ASPR III. pp. 143-7.

"Solomon and Saturn" ASPR VI. pp. 31-48.

Tertullian. De Idololatria. PL 1, col. 722-4.

"The Wanderer" ASPR III. pp. 134-7.

"The Wife's Lament" ASPR III. pp. 210-11.

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