WATER IMAGERY AND THE BAPTISM MOTIF IN BEOWULF

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Betty Tucker Mann, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1977

Functioning on three distinct but coexistent levels, water imagery unifies *Beowulf*. On the first level, that of conscious symbolism, Beowulf's three water adventures develop the triple immersion motif present in Anglo-Saxon baptism ritual. On the second level, that of the poet's personal unconscious, the water monsters against whom Beowulf struggles symbolize the hero's Shadow, his fallen nature in which lurk inadmissible and anarchic desires. On the deepest level, that of the poet's collective unconscious, the water monsters are symbols for the archetypal Mother to whose womb the hero of myth strives to return in order to achieve immortality by means of rebirth. Additionally, the water monsters symbolize the catastrophic result for society (the eventual fall of the Danish royal house) which is a consequence of incest present in the historical background of the poem's digressions. Spiritually strengthened by his defeat of the water monsters, Beowulf overcomes his own incestuous urges but thereafter suffers a dichotomy of the psyche which vanishes only when the dragon's venom courses through his veins. Beowulf's union with the dragon indicates that it is a theriomorphic symbol for Beowulf's--and for Christian man's--Shadow or inferior personality,
which as a result of the bite merges with his Persona, i.e., his "mask" or public personality.

Important sources for the existence of the "triple immersion" motif of baptism among Anglo-Saxons of the poet's age are Bryhtferth's Manual and Mgr. L. Duchesne's Christian Worship. Works by Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, Otto Rank, Eric Fromm, and Joseph Campbell provide support for my hypothesis regarding the symbolic incest motif latent in dreams or myths in which the dreamer or hero crosses over or goes down into the sea's depths. Moreover, within the poem itself the poet alludes to an instance of incest in the scop's song about Sigemund and his "nephew" Fitela. W. W. Lawrence believes Beowulf's story about the father who grieves for his son hanged on the gallows constitutes another reference to incest, that between Randver and his stepmother Swanhild. The incest motif is present also in the background material concerning Hrothgar, his uncle having murdered his brother, Hrothgar's father, and married his sister-in-law, Hrothgar's mother.

Unlike such critics as W. P. Ker who disparaged the poet's emphasis on the monsters, J. R. R. Tolkien perceived fifty years ago that these creatures are not irrelevancies but personifications of the malice, greed, and destruction that are the other side of the coin of heroic life. Associated as they are with water, the monsters also symbolize
a regressive incest urge which is destructive of family, tribe, and nation. And, since suppressed urges never perish, continuing to surface in other guises, although Beowulf overcomes the incest urge in his youth, it returns in a stronger form than ever in the dragon he encounters in his old age. Now, however, surrendering to the urge is no longer forbidden since it is the hero's fate to achieve individuation through a "sacred marriage" within himself of his Persona and his Shadow.

Beowulf's self-integration, following his "union" with the dragon, manifests itself in the mandala created by the twelve horsemen who, riding about his barrow, sing his praises to the four corners of the earth. This image constitutes the squared circle, a symbol of the integrated self achieved by Beowulf once he unites with the dragon in a parody of the "sacred marriage" of myth and religion.
# Table of Contents

Chapter

I. **Introduction** ......................................................... 1

II. **First Descent into the Underworld: The Sea as Mother or Matrix of the Ego** . . . . 20

III. **The Incest Motif in Germanic Heroic Literature: Its Relation to Beowulf** .......... 50

IV. **Second Immersion** .................................................. 62

V. **Third Immersion and Final Battle** .................................. 112

VI. **Conclusion** ........................................................... 167

VII. **Bibliography** ......................................................... 176
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As is natural for the descendants of mariner-folk, the sea is ubiquitous in the works of Anglo-Saxon scops, mention of it appearing in the least expected, unlikeliest of passages. Who, for instance, would expect a paean to the sea in "Azariah," a metrical retelling in Old English of the Old Testament story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who were cast into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3.19-30)? Preserved by an angel of God from the furnace's heat, the three call upon all creation to bless their Creator and Preserver. And there, in the midst of their lengthy prayer, appears their urgent desire that

bletsige þec sōdfæst cyning sēs and wætra
hea holmas haligne dryhten
domlice deop wæter and dryhtnes bibod
gEOFON-FLODA gehwyle georne bihealded
þonne mere-streamas metudes ræswum
wæter onwealcad witon eald-gecynd
þæt ær gescop ece dryhten
lagu-floda bigong leoctes hyrde
on wuniad wid-ferende
site on sunde sellicra fela
bletsien þec þa ealle ece dryhten
þurh þinne willan wuldorfaet cynnig.

seas and waters, the high waves, bless thee
soothfast King as their holy Ruler; praise
worthily and eagerly each ocean flood; deep
water and sea-streams observe the command of
their Lord and counsels of their God; the
waters roll round, keep their original course of
sea circuit, that one first created by the eternal
Ruler, the Guardian of light, on which abide,
coming from afar in their journey on the sea, many
strange beings; let all bless thee, eternal Lord,
after thine own desire, glorious King. (ll. 122-33)²

Another passage concerning the sea appears in the Old
English lyric "The Wanderer." In it the "eard-stapa"
(wanderer) wakes from a vision in which he has stood before
the gift-stool, clasped and kissed his former liege lord,
and laid hand and head on his lord's knee. At that point,

Then awakening again the lordless man sees before him
the fallow waves, seabirds bathing, the spreading
out of feathers, snow and hoarfrost falling with hail
mingled. Then are the heart's wounds thereby heavier
in sorrow for a dear one. Sorrow is renewed when
memory of kinsmen traverses his mind; he greets
with joy, eagerly looks at his comrades-in-arms. They swim on their way again; the spirit of the floating ones brings not many of known songs. Care is renewed for one who must send very frequently over the binding of the waves his weary spirit. (ll. 45-57)

"Fleotendra ferð" may be translated either as "spirit of the fleeting ones" or as "spirit of the floating ones." Sir Israel Gollancz, however, has translated the phrase as "sailor souls," which seems an apt rendition, one that apparently catches the spirit if not the letter of the passage. But if "souls" refers to the dead, then there is a problem: the Anglo-Saxons thought of the living, not the dead, as on a voyage over the sea of life.

In Christ B or The Ascension, the Anglo-Saxon poet says, for example, that

Nu is þon gelicost swa we on lagu-flode
ofor cald wæter ceolum lidan
geond sidne sæ sund-hengestum
flod-wudu fergen is þæt frecne stream.
Yða ofermæta þe we her on lacad
geond þas wacan woruld windge holmas
ofor deop gelad wæs se drohtad strong
ær þon we to londe geliden hæfdon.

Now it is most like as if we on the ocean-flood over the cold water with ships sail through a vast sea, with sea horses fare in flood-wood. Dangerous is this stream of waves limitless, on which we here toss through this weak world, windy seas over the deep way. The way of life was arduous ere we to land had sailed. (ll. 850-57)
From this passage there can be no doubt that the sea, to
the Anglo-Saxon mind, symbolized life, and the harbor
reached at the end of the voyage symbolized life after
death.

An all but inexplicable use of "holm" (sea) occurs
in yet another unexpected place in "The Dream of the Rood"
when the cross, speaking of its origin, declares

Hwæt me þa geweorðode wuldres Ealdor
ofer holmwudu.

Lo, me he lifted up, the Prince of Glory, over
other sea-wood. (ll. 90-91)

Earlier the cross had spoken of being taken by "genaman"
(strong foes) from a spot "holtes on ende" (on the edge of
the wood) (ll. 29-30). Thus the emendation "holtwudu"
(forestwood) is often offered in place of "holmwudu." But "seawood" may be perfectly correct, being meant to
be an allusion to the kind of timber hewn for the masts
of sailing ships. One of the well-known symbols of the
church is that of a ship with a cross-shaped mast safely
weathering storm-tossed seas with its load of the faithful.
Clement of Alexandria, for example, recommends that
Christians use as an emblem on seal rings a ship sailing
before the wind. Also, the nave of a church derives its
name from navis, the Latin for ship.
The sea as reality and also as symbol was a "given," something axiomatic, in the mind of Anglo-Saxon poets. Additionally, it symbolized not only life but also the collective unconscious. Of course such terminology would have been foreign to the vocabulary of a scop such as the Beowulf poet. But the concept of a common guilt shared by all men due to Adam's disobedience was thoroughly familiar to the educated Anglo-Saxon cleric, whether monk or priest, following the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in England. And, contrary to early opinion, it is very likely just such a poet-priest or scop that we are referring to when we speak of the "Beowulf poet." Of course, even if theological sophistication on the Beowulf poet's part be admitted, such an admission does not automatically prove that he was consciously using water as a symbol either of man's collective guilt or of a collective unconscious. Nevertheless, an assumption of collective guilt is tantamount to an assumption of something very like a collective unconscious wherein lurk socially unacceptable desires, wishes, and longings which, acting contrary to logic and right reason, breed out of the depths of man's being those cardinal sins which Gregory the Great wrote of in his *Moralia* and later listed as pride, anger, envy, avarice, spiritual dryness, gluttony, and lust. Priests and poets, it seems, have always been aware of
an underside or shadow aspect of man's personality, an aspect inferior to the persona or mask he assumes in his public and social relationships.\textsuperscript{11}

William Wordsworth, for example, in \textit{The Prelude}, writes of "Caverns . . . within my mind which sun could never penetrate" (III.246-47). Moreover he compounds nouns beginning with "under," such as "under-consciousness," "under-powers," "under-soul," and "under-thirst," none of which were to be found in current English dictionaries at the time Wordsworth first under them. Two other major English Romantic poets, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley, also seemed cognizant of the creative nature of the unconscious, each of them using water, cavern, and chasm imagery to symbolize this aspect of the mind. In Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," for instance, both the "sacred river" and "the caverns measureless to man" appear to symbolize the unconscious. And in Shelley's "Mont Blanc" one may find similar imagery with the deep ravine of the Arve, its caverns, and its river and falls symbolizing the "secret springs" (1. 4) of human thought.\textsuperscript{12}

Wordsworth used compounds with "under" and Coleridge and Shelley doubtless used water and cavern imagery as aids in depicting that mysterious life man meets with in dreams or in the myth of the birth of the hero, of his
descent into the underworld, and of his sacred marriage there, or, if not marriage with a goddess-figure, of his martyrdom or of his testing by and achieving atonement with a father-figure.\(^\text{13}\)

Two of these possibilities occur in \textit{Beowulf}. Testing and atonement with a father-figure takes place when Hrothgar adopts Beowulf following his testing in the battle with Grendel and his defeat of the monster. And martyrdom occurs when Beowulf dies in his self-sacrificial duel with the dragon.

The "sacred marriage," i.e., that union which takes place under the auspices of an Earth Mother goddess such as Istar or Cybele, is a "marriage" in which human actors impersonate the goddess and her son-husband. Thus, in myth frequently the supreme reward of the hero is sexual union with the goddess-mother of the underworld.\(^\text{14}\) Psychologically defined, the "sacred marriage" of the hero and the goddess signifies "the successful reuniting of an apparently hopelessly divided duality in the wholeness of a single being."\(^\text{15}\) Taking the phrase in the double significance of sexual and psychological union, then, the "sacred marriage"—or, more accurately, a parody of it—also occurs in \textit{Beowulf}; but of that I will have more to say later. Now it is time to speak of the sea and of the mythologems associated with "the child from over the sea."
Beowulf opens with the tale of a hero, Scyld Scefing, who arrives on Danish shores as an infant of unknown parentage whom some mysterious person or persons have seen fit to expose to the water in an open boat. By means of this opening the Beowulf poet stirs up a host of associations with similar heroes of religion and mythology. The earliest such hero known to scholars is Sargon the First of Babylonia. Sargon's birth history is as follows:

My mother was a vestal, my father I knew not. . . . In a hidden place she brought me forth. She laid me in a vessel made of reeds, closed my door with pitch, and dropped me down into the river, which did not drown me. The river carried me to Akki, the water carrier. Akki the water carrier lifted me up in the kindness of his heart . . . [and] made of me his gardener. In my work as a gardener I was beloved by Istar, I became king, and for forty-five years I held kingly sway.

In this passage we find the typical motifs of the kind of myth that Campbell has called the mono-myth of the hero and his adventures in the underworld as well as those of the birth of the hero: mysterious parentage, virgin conception, water journey, atonement with the father-figure Akki, union with a goddess, fruitifying of the land, and a satisfyingly lengthy reign as king. Somehow Sargon knows his mother was a vestal but is ignorant of her name—or chooses to hide it. His father is unknown, as is Scyld Scefing's. Sargon is beloved by Istar and protected by
Akki the Water Carrier. He has survived exposure on the water, and gardening is his vocation. This last, the gardener motif, reminds us of the symbolic nature of Scyld's name "Scefing" (Sheaf), which R. W. Chambers associates with man's staff of life: "When we find an ancient king bearing the extraordinary name of 'Sheaf', it is difficult not to connect this with the honour done to the sheaf of corn, survivals of which have been found in different parts of England."¹⁷

Another resemblance between the careers of Sargon and that of Scyld, as well as those of Hrothgar and of Beowulf, is their long reigns. Sargon rules forty-five years. About Scyld the Beowulf poet is rather vague, saying only that he remains in possession of the land for a long time (l. 30).¹⁸ About Beowulf the poet is more specific, attributing to him a reign of fifty winters (l. 2209). Hrothgar's long reign is implied by his having come to the throne in his youth (l. 465-66) and by his being described as "eald ond anhār" (old and very hoary) (l. 357) at the time Beowulf arrives at his court. There is doubtless some exaggeration here, for simple arithmetic reveals that if, soon after coming to his throne in his youth (l. 465-66), Hrothgar knew of Beowulf from the boy's father Ecgtheow who had at that time taken refuge at the Danish court (l. 372-73), and
if, when he arrives at Hrothgar's court, Beowulf is still in his early manhood as he must have been if he later on ruled the Geats for fifty years, then Hrothgar cannot himself have been so very old, merely somewhere between forty and fifty.\textsuperscript{19} But great age, which suggests wisdom, godliness, tradition, and the regulation of life by a valid principle (Prince or princeps), seems to be an essential part of the description of heroes who achieve royal rule (e.g., Charlemagne) in contrast to heroes like Adonis, Tammuz, and Attis who die in their youth and undergo apotheosis.\textsuperscript{20} The motif of reconciliation or atonement (i.e., to be "as one with") of son and father-figure appears in \textit{Beowulf}, then, as in the story of Sargon, not only when Hrothgar publicly adopts Beowulf but also when the poet speaks of the strong ties of affection binding Beowulf to his uncle and liege lord Hygelac.

I have dwelt on Sargon because his story appears to be the prototype of "the-child-exposed-upon-the-water" myth. Similar tales exist in Indian and Greek mythology. I shall, however, review only such tales as \textit{Beowulf} poet might have been acquainted with. The first of these is the story of Moses, whose name in Hebrew, Mosheh, means "Water-Drawer."\textsuperscript{21} Thus his name relates him to the Sargon legend as does the fact of his being exposed on water in a
basket waterproofed with pitch. His deliverance of his people and his atonement with Yahweh, the patriarchal Old Testament God, after a lengthy period of wandering with his people in the underworld of the Sinai Desert, indicate that he may be a possible analogue for Beowulf, the events of his career appearing in part as Beowulf's deliverance first of Heorot and then of his own people the Geats. That the Beowulf poet knew at least something of the Old Testament is made clear in his reference to Grendel's descent from the race of Cain (1.107).

Besides the Old Testament story of Moses-upon-the-water, there are a number of Christian variants of the infant-exposed-on-the-water myth. Two concern Judas and Saint Gregory on the Stone. Warned by a dream that her son is fated to be very wicked, Judas' mother sets the infant adrift in a box on the sea. The box washes up on the shores of the Isle of Iscariot, where a childless queen discovers Judas and adopts him as her son. 22

Saint Gregory, the issue of brother-sister incest in the story, is placed in a small boat by his mother and given into the care of the sea. Rescued and reared by a fisherman, he later enters a monastery and trains for the church. He deserts the monastery in favor of knight-errantry, saves his mother's duchy by means of single combat, marries her, and fathers children upon her. She discovers
their relation and they part. Gregory does penance by stationing himself on a rock in the midst of a lake (hence his name "of the stone") for seventeen years. There he is discovered by searchers led by God, taken to Rome, and made Pope.\textsuperscript{23} I have recited the myth attached to Gregory's birth at some length because this is the same Gregory the Great through whose initiative England was converted to Catholicism under the leadership of Augustine. In addition, his \textit{Moralia}, which showed how to arrive at the spiritual sense of scripture, became a textbook for "moral theology and biblical exegesis and exercised a profound influence on the intellectual and spiritual life of the subsequent centuries."\textsuperscript{24}

The \textit{Beowulf} poet, beginning his tale as he does with the motif of the infant-exposed-on-the-sea, gives every indication that we must be prepared to attend him with not only the physical ear and eye but with the spiritual senses as well. This being so it is important to note that the sea is widely recognized as a symbol of life. As water is second only to air as one of the basic necessities of life, such recognition is hardly a matter for wonder. Nor should it be a matter for wonder that Western man has for ages seen water as the feminine\textsuperscript{25} or maternal element of life and regarded air as the masculine or impregnating element. A corollary of this view is that
light and its symbolic equivalent gold become masculine symbols of man's spiritual side, woman's nature being considered grosser than man's because she, like the earth, nurtures the seed of life within her body.  

Man is born physically when the mother's bag of water bursts. He is born spiritually by means of reimmersion in the maternal element. That this ritual symbolizes the reaching of a higher plane in man's maturation process is indicated in the New Testament. Nicodemus, troubled by Christ's saying that he must be born again, observes naively that it is impossible that a man should enter a second time into his mother's womb. Patiently Christ explains that his language is figurative:

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

(Saint John 3.3-8)

In this passage the wind is equated with sun, light, and air as symbolic of the masculine pneuma. Water symbolizes
the material elements without which life cannot exist. Besides symbolizing the mother, water in dreams or fantasies also symbolizes the unconscious. "The maternal aspect of water coincides with the nature of the unconscious, because the latter (particularly in men) can be regarded as the mother or matrix of consciousness. Hence the unconscious, when interpreted on the subjective level, has the same maternal significance as water." Thus the baptism ritual may be viewed as symbolizing a union of opposites or as integration of the conscious with the unconscious, a fusion of ego and libido into a united whole.

Considering the prominence of water imagery in *Beowulf* as it appears in the child-from-over-the-sea mythologem and in Beowulf's swimming match with Breca, his battle with Grendel's dam, his marathon swim home from Friesland, and his battle with the dragon on the sea cliff's edge, we should expect two levels of symbolism to manifest themselves throughout the poem. There should be, that is, a conscious and objective level and an unconscious and subjective level. On the first or conscious level, water should symbolize rebirth through baptism. On the second or unconscious level, water should symbolize man's unconsciously incestuous longings for rebirth and immortality through a "sacred marriage" with the goddess of the
underworld, a mother archetype. For the sake of clarity it should be added that "mother archetype" ought not be taken to mean the hero's own mother. What is meant is the mother in a figurative sense. To this category belong the goddess of the underworld, the Mother of God, the Virgin, and Sophia, all of whom appear in myth, religion, and dream as the Good Mother. The Terrible Mother, on the other hand, may appear as a witch, siren, or ogress. Or, in her theriomorphic form, she may appear as an entwining and devouring creature such as a great fish, a serpent, or even a dragon.28
NOTES


6 See Bolton's note 91, p. 99.


9 For examples of early critical opinion that the Christianity in Beowulf is superficial see F. A. Blackburn, "The Christian Coloring in the Beowulf," *PMLA*, 12 (1897), rpt. in *An Anthology of "Beowulf" Criticism*, p. 1; Levin L. Schücking, "The Ideal of Kingship in Beowulf," *MHRA Bulletin*, 3 (1929),trs. and rpt. in *An Anthology of "Beowulf" Criticism*, pp. 35-37. For instances of later
opinion see F. Klaeber, "Beowulf" and "The Fight at Finns-
p. xlix; Marie Padgett Hamilton, "The Religious Principle
in Beowulf," PMLA, 61 (June 1946), rpt. in An Anthology of
"Beowulf" Criticism, pp. 105-06; Dorothy Whitelock, The
Audience of "Beowulf" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 3;
Bernard F. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry (Albany: State Univ.
of New York, 1959), p. 120; Edward E. Irving, Jr., Intro-
duction to "Beowulf" (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969),
pp. 1-7; Margaret E. Goldsmith, The Mode and Meaning of

10 Morton Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (East

11 Carl G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,
p. 25.

12 William Wordsworth, "The Prelude" or Growth of a
Poet's Mind, ed. Ernest De Selincourt and revised by Helen
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan," in Samuel Taylor
Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Elisabeth Schneider,
2nd ed. (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1971), pp. 120-21;
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Mont Blanc," Percy Bysshe Shelley:
Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron

13 Joseph Campbell, Hero with a thousand Faces
(Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1956),
pp. 245 ff.

14 Ibid., p. 246.

15 Jung, Alchemical Studies, tr. R. F. C. Hull

16 Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A
Psychological Interpretation of Mythology, tr. F. Robbins
and Smith Ely Jelliffe (New York: Robert Brunner, 1952),

18 Fr. Klaeber, ed., "Beowulf" and "The Fight at Finnesburg," 3rd ed. with 1st and 2nd supplements (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1950), p. 83. This is my primary source for the text of Beowulf, and line numbers in parentheses refer to this edition. Also, references to Klaeber's introduction and other scholarly apparatus pertaining to this edition will be noted simply as Klaeber and followed by the appropriate page number.


22 Rank, p. 19.


26 Jung, Symbols, p. 219.

CHAPTER II

FIRST DESCENT INTO THE UNDERWORLD: THE SEA AS MOTHER

OR MATRIX OF THE EGO

The motif of rebirth by immersion in water appears in Beowulf when Beowulf, first to Hrothgar (ll. 420-21) and then more fully to Unferth (ll. 529-81), recounts his adventures at sea during his swimming match with Breca. Since Unferth also relates a version of the match, we have three accounts of it. Unferth's account is doubly interesting because, like Cain in the Old English Genesis A, he convicts himself of the sin of envy, \(^1\) thereby making those things which are admirable about Beowulf in his version more convincing than if they had come out of the mouth of one of Beowulf's admirers. There is, too, a hint of the numinous about Beowulf's adventure as Unferth gives it, in that Unferth tells us that the length of time spent at sea by Beowulf was "seofon niht" (seven nights) (l. 517). Beowulf, himself, although disputing other parts of Unferth's account, never takes issue with Hrothgar's thyle on this point.

20
That at least some Anglo-Saxon clerics were fascinated by number symbolism is evident in Byrhtferth's Manual, where there is an extended discussion of this subject. Byrhtferth notes that three and four make seven; that three denotes the Trinity; and that four is a perfect number adorned with four virtues: iustitie, uidelicet, temperantia, fortitudines, and prudentia. An interlinear gloss in Old English gives these as "rihtwisynssee" (righteousness) (both iustitie and uidelicet being translated by this one term); "gemetgunge" (moderation); "mid strengthe" (with strength); and "mid snoternysse" (with cleverness). Byrhtferth, of course, is of the tenth century rather than the eighth when the Beowulf poet is generally held to have lived, but Anglo-Saxon learning reached its greatest height in the Age of Bede, so that any knowledge possessed by Byrhtferth about symbolism and poetic theory must certainly have been known to educated clerics of the seventh and eighth centuries since scholarly activities in Anglo-Saxon monasteries were all but destroyed following the late eighth century incursions of the Danes and their pillaging and burning of centers of learning in Northumbria, East Anglia, and the eastern half of Mercia, literacy being restored only with great effort under King Alfred. And, in fact, Byrhtferth praises Bede's knowledge of number symbolism, saying, "If any devout person is desirous of having more radiant light
cast upon his knowledge of this number, or of the others, let him open the book of the most venerable Bede which he has entitled *De Temporibus*, and soon in the first chapter he will find an adequate discussion of this subject."

Moreover, *Augustine's Doctrine*, with which Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin were familiar, advises clerics to study number symbolism as the use of numbers in the Bible "is always significant." Augustine may have derived his opinion, at least in part, from the fact that Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would possess the sevenfold blessing of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11.1-2) and that the dream vision of seven stars and seven gold candlesticks is explained by John as signifying the seven guardian angels of the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1.20).

Perhaps, however, it was merely the widespread recognition of the numinous quality of the numbers seven and eight which led the early church fathers to provide that the *elect*, i.e., the candidates for baptism deemed worthy by rulers of the church, be subjected to a week-long series of instructions, examinations, and testings of character called *scrutinies*. Actually, this week-long probing could more accurately be described, as can Beowulf's period in the North Sea, as an *octave* or eight-day trial because it began traditionally on the Sunday preceding Easter (the time of year at which baptisms in the
early church were most often administered) and was not officially concluded until the elect received confirmation drinks of honey, water, and milk in a ceremony at daybreak on Easter Sunday morning. The seventh night, commencing on Easter Eve, was called the Easter Vigil, and it was at this time that the candidates for baptism were anointed with sanctified oil by a priest, a ceremony with symbolic meaning:

The critical moment of the strife with Satan had arrived. The candidates were now to renounce him solemnly in order to bind themselves to Jesus Christ. Their senses were loosed that they might be able to hear and speak, and they were anointed with oil as athletes about to enter the arena for strife.11

These details and the following ones come from the Gelasian Sacramentary and contain possible Gallican revisions. This is important because it is Gallican details which appear most often in the "oldest Anglo-Saxon books."12 Details of this seventh century sacramentary are: The insufflation (breathing upon the forehead of the candidate) with a formulary of exorcism, signing with the cross on the forehead, and the administering of salt to the candidate. The signing of the cross is, of course, foregone by the poet. But Beowulf swims with naked sword in hand, and Næpling, "gomal ond grægmæl" (ancient and gray-colored) (l. 2682), might be construed as a type of the cross. Exorcism may be seen in Beowulf's battling
with the water monsters. Insufflation is introduced naturally in *Beowulf* at the point following the night struggle with the nicors when Beowulf describes the "windge wealles" (windy walls) of the sea cliffs (l. 572) revealed to him by God's "beorht beacen" (bright sign) (l. 570), i.e., the sun, at day's dawning. Louis Duchesne says of insufflation that it is attested by John the Roman deacon in his letter to Senarius, but this fact merely testifies to its authenticity without explaining its significance.

It is well known, however, that God, spirit, and soul are associated with air and the breath of life. In myth the wind, as well as the sun, is a masculine symbol of the "fructifier and creator," and to be born again (John 3.3-8) is to be born of the "fructifying breath of the wind," i.e., of God and Spirit. As for the administering of the salt, this custom is also mentioned by John the Deacon and perhaps stems from the Old Testament concept of salt's signifying a covenant between God and his elect (Lev. 2.13). The motif occurs in *Beowulf* as the hero swims for seven nights in the salty sea.

Beowulf corrects some parts of Unferth's account, such as the thyle's statement that Breca outswam him, Beowulf. But he does not contradict Unferth's statement that he, Beowulf, swam for seven nights, not coming ashore until the morning of the eighth day. If we accept, as does Beowulf,
the accuracy of Unferth's account on this point, it follows that the struggle with the monsters takes place not, as might be expected from the description of the baptismal scrutinies, during the seventh or final night, but on the fifth night. Maundy Thursday--counting from the preceding Sunday when Holy Week begins--occurs on the fifth night of the Easter week festival. It also marks the Eucharist or Last Supper that Christ celebrated with his followers. And it was during the night following the Last Supper that Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane struggled with himself against the temptation to retreat from his fate. It was also on Thursday of Holy Week that the church made ready to receive its new members by celebrating the Chrismal Mass at which holy oils were consecrated for use in the ceremony of initiation. The preparation assumed that the elect would succeed in overcoming the minions of Satan struggling to overthrow their souls. On Saturday or Easter Eve, at the solemn Vigil of Easter, the elect heard from the priest appropriate passages from the Old Testament. Most of these, not surprisingly, had to do with the water motif, e.g., the Creation ("the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters"), the Deluge, the Crossing of the Red Sea, the History of Jonah and the Whale, and the prediction by Isaiah of baptism ("For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty . . . my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring," Isa. 44.3).
Then, at the high point of the baptismal ritual, the presiding priest asked three questions of the elect: Do you believe in God, the father? In Jesus Christ, the son? In the Holy Spirit? Following his threefold affirmation, the initiate underwent triple immersion and was thereupon pronounced baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{16} This same triple-immersion occurs in \textit{Beowulf} in that Beowulf descends into water during the swimming match, during the struggle with Grendel's dam, and during the swim back alone from Friesland.

Preferably, dignitaries of the church presided over the baptism ritual. But the efficacy of baptism did not depend on its being conferred by a priest. "Baptism with water," Duchesne notes, "from the earliest times, had been considered valid even when conferred by a Christian layman."\textsuperscript{17}

Obviously, even the Christian layman is lacking in Beowulf's case. This problem—that of the fate of the righteous heathen who has had no opportunity to hear of Christ—is one which has long bothered the tolerant Christian.\textsuperscript{18} Are righteous heathen to be condemned to hell along with evil men? The problem was, at least inferentially, touched upon in the days of the early church by Peter's vision in which a cloth let down from heaven contains all manner of beasts, fowls, and creeping things. An angel bids Peter eat. As a pious Jew, he refuses
because the food is "common or unclean," whereupon the angel responds: "What God has cleansed that call thou not common" (Acts 10.15). Later, in this same chapter, when Peter learns of the Roman centurion Cornelius's vision from God, granted because of the centurion's alms-giving and God-fearing ways, Peter exclaims: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: / But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10.34-35).

From Peter's vision and interpretation of its meaning, it would seem to be a fair conclusion that for early-day Christians baptism was essentially a rite de passage, its efficacy dependent not so much on who administered it as on the capability of the elect to experience a rebirth, i.e., a movement away from regressive incestuous love of family, tribe, and nation onto the higher place of caritas, the brotherly love symbolized by the feast accompanying the Eucharistic celebration.

Significantly, then, the result of Beowulf's first immersion, albeit adventitious, is that in cleansing the sea lanes of monsters impeding ships and endangering the lives of mariners he is of service to mankind. Later, in seeking out Hrothgar, he is motivated not only by a desire to achieve renown but also by the will to be of service in a sphere larger than that of the merely tribal, motivation
demonstrating movement away from puerile foolhardiness toward caritas.

There is yet another detail of the early baptismal ritual probably known to the Beowulf poet which bears mentioning. This is the possible relation between Beowulf's name and the traditional blessing of the Paschal or Easter candle. Of course, in what follows, I assume, for the sake of argument, that Beowulf is a fictional creation, his name chosen for him by the poet, an assumption shared by Chambers, who, in discussing the etymology of Beowulf's name, accepts Grimm's suggestion that it means "'wolf, or foe, of the bee!'" and that this means "'bear,'" for the bear has "got a name or nickname, in many northern languages from his habit of raiding the hives for honey." Chambers adds that "Beowulf" is an excellent name for a warrior as O.E. "beorn" "warrior, hero, prince" originally seems "to have meant simply 'bear.'" Besides its being an appropriate name for a hero who "wæs moncyynes mægenes strengenst" (was of mankind the strongest in prowess) (l. 196), having "prītiges / manna mægencræft on his mundgripe" (the strength of thirty men in his handgrip) (ll. 379-80), it possesses in its first element "beo" (bee), a possible allusion to the Easter candle and, by extension, to the Virgin Mary. Duchesne says that in the formulary of
blessing connected with this candle the archdeacon called for the Divine blessing on that luminous pillar which was about to shed its radiance on the mysteries of the Christian Passover, as in the manner of old the pillar of fire had gone before the children of Israel to guide them in their wanderings in the desert. He dwelt poetically upon the elements composing it, the papyrus, which furnished the wick, and the virgin oil and the beeswax, which formed the material. Here occurred a curious eulogy of the bee, chaste and fecund like the Virgin Mother, and which in the manner of its generation furnished a type of the eternal origin of the Divine Word.21

In a note to this passage, Duchesne observes that the particular formulary concerning the bee is to be found in the supplement to the Sacramentary of Adrian which "was probably compiled by Alcuin." If Alcuin indeed compiled it, then the formulary is thereby linked to the eighth century, when Beowulf may well have been composed, and it is also linked, at least by inference, to the baptism ritual of the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon clerics of Northumbria,22 where the poem may have originated. Also, the custom of kindling fires on Easter Eve was conveyed "from the British or Irish, through the Anglo-Saxons, to the continent by missionaries of the eighth century."23 In this regard it should be noted that the Beowulf poet is especially fond of light imagery.24

In the passage concerning the rising of the sun on the sixth day of Beowulf's swim in the sea, following his
night-long struggle with the sea-monsters, the poet has Beowulf call the sun "beorht bācen Godes" (God's bright sign) (l. 570). O.E. "bācen" (sign) comes from the Proto-Indo-European stem "bha" (to shine). And in "The Dream of the Rood" the word "beacen" is used four times (ll. 6, 21, 83, and 118) as a synonym for the cross and must be understood, says Michael Swanton, as symbolizing the victorious Christ militant, the implication being that the cross, being sanctified by Christ's sacrificial death, has become as shining bright as the sun, which is God's creation and shining sign. In Beowulf's name, with its possible hint of the beeswax of the Paschal candle and in the "bācen" that shines on his triumph over the water monsters there appears a coalescing of light symbolism which indicates that Beowulf must be considered an exemplar of the archetypal sun-hero of myth and religion.

Moreover, for all the reader learns about his sex life from the poem, Beowulf is as continent as the worker bee or the most chaste of Anglo-Saxon monks. Thus the symbolism of the "bee" element in his name linking him to the Paschal candle and hence to the Virgin Mary seems, as Allen Cabaniss point out, "suggestive," the implied sexual continence of the hero bearing out the view of Klaeber and other critics, such as Gerald G. Walsh, that the poet conceived of and presented his hero as a type of the
Christ-figure. Klaeber, while proposing the view of Beowulf as a Christ-figure, notes that "we hear nothing of angels, saints, relics of Christ and the Cross, of divine worship, church observances, or any particular dogmatic points." That we do not hear of these things in a poem now widely held to be Christian in tone and coloring may well be due to the poetic theory laid down in St. Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*, the work so well known to Anglo-Saxon Latinists such as Bede and Alcuin. Augustine, advocating the figurative presentation of truth, explains that "no one has any doubt that some things are understood more readily through figures of speech, and that when something is searched for with difficulty, it is, as a result, more delightfully discovered." And in studying scripture he advises the student that "in all cases this is the method: whatever in Scripture cannot literally be related to purity of life or to the truth of faith, may be taken as figurative. . . . In regard to figurative passages, a rule like the following shall be observed: what is read must be diligently turned over in the mind until an interpretation is found that promotes the reign of charity." Because of the changes wrought by time, many even among the educated of the twentieth century lack the familiarity with scripture given only by close and constant
reading of it. We should not, however, because of our own unfamiliarity with scripture underestimate the ability of Christians of an earlier age to understand scriptural and sacramental allusions. "The very process 'of relating to the scriptural text, cost what may, all the thoughts which life can suggest in its infinite variety of vicissitudes, may seem to us like a paradoxical wager which appears to succeed only through the subtlety of the commentator. We seem not so much to wonder at \textit{tours de force} like these as to be disconcerted by them," observes De Labriolle of this modern attitude of ours.\textsuperscript{35}

Yet another reason for believing that the poet may very well have known what he was doing in setting at seven the number of nights Beowulf spent swimming in the North Sea is that the qualities associated with Christ-likeness and the four virtues cited of the number four, one of the two making up seven, the other being the trinitarian three, agree with Beowulf's characterization as it is developed in the poem, a matter I shall touch upon at more length later on. In Beowulf's own account of his swimming match with Breca, he notes that he and Breca swam with "swurd nacod" (naked swords) (l. 539) in hand to defend themselves from "hronfixas" (whale-fish) (l. 540). The sword with its handle and often elaborately jeweled and gold-worked hilt has long been a symbol of both the
cross and of the word of Christ: "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. 1.16), says John of his vision of Christ. Beowulf also wears a "licysyrce" (body-sark) (1. 550) comparable to the loricar or breast-plate in the hymn In Te Christi attributed to Columba, the Irish missionary under whose leadership northern England was Christianized during the sixth century. In this hymn it is Christ who is the Christian's loricar, that is, his spiritual protection. Further, St. Patrick's Lorica is, according to its Preface, "a loricar of faith for the protection of body and soul against demons and men and vices." Gildas also uses this same trope with a similar meaning.

As for the reference to "hronfixas" (whale-fish), the whale is Leviathan in Job and is a symbol of the magnitude of God's generative powers: "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?" God demands of Job (41.1). At other times, though, the whale is associated with both the serpent and dragon, well known designations for Satan. "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isa. 27.1; see also Job 26).
The ambivalence of such symbols as the sword and the whale in biblical passages is self-evident. Clement of Alexandria disapproved of any weapon's being used as a Christian symbol since to be a Christian is, at least theoretically, to be committed to peace. And yet, as Michael D. Cherniss points out, the cross in "The Dream of the Rood" is described and at times personified in ways much like that used in describing and personifying the sword in Old English heroic poetry, and Christ himself is associated with the sword in the Apocalypse and in Christian iconography, as is God in the passage from Isaiah. And the whale plays a prominent role as the instrument of Divine Providence in the Book of Jonah and the Middle English "Patience," where it swims up out of the abyss as ordained by fate and receives Jonah from the hands of the sailors into its waiting throat (ll. 247-52). On the other hand, in the Old English version of Physiologus, the whale is Satan, the great deceiver, who lies motionless so that mariners encamp on his back, fearing no danger, and then plunges them into the sea's depths, drowning them. Thus the whale as a symbol is ambivalent, and in the Book of Job appears as a manifestation of God the All-Fruitful in a form exemplifying "the crudest conceivable force in nature," remarks Jung, adding that God parades "his power
and omnipotence forcibly before Job's eyes. God is as Behemoth and Leviathan: the fruitfulness and abundance of Nature, the overwhelming danger of unchained power. . . . This God, so the poet gives us to understand, has simply shown his other side for once, the side we call the Devil, and let loose all the terrors of Nature upon the unfortunate Job. In Job, then, we see God at work as both creator and destroyer, and it is this god-imago which, as a complex of an archetypal symbol of natural forces, dwells in man's collective unconscious. And yet, Leviathan, with its arresting intimations of the theriomorphic or animal nature of Jehovah, Jung adds, is as one with Christ, the mild god of light whose symbol is not only the lamb but the fish.

The sea, Leviathan's dwelling place, is personified by Leviathan, and thus both are symbols of the unconscious from whose depths, Jung explains, "the surge of instinct is projected outward as a mounting flood to destroy everything that exists." Such a flood is good if it is so that "a new and better world may arise from the ruins of the old." But if, as in Beowulf's case, the hero is the protector and conserver of his society, then the flood had much better be calmed and the monsters of the deep overcome and slain.
When, therefore, Beowulf in his "golde gegyrwed" (gold adorned) coat of mail (l. 553) is attacked by a "fæondscapa" (hostile fiend) (l. 554), the mention of gold, of the depths of the sea, and of the sea-monster signifies that on one level we are being presented with an archetypal sun-hero and his testing in the underworld. Joseph Campbell observes that the usual person is more than content to remain in the domain of the daylight world of normal life. Like Jonah in the Old Testament and in the Middle English "Patience," or like Columbus's sailors, who trembled at sailing beyond the horizon of the known world for fear of "the fabled leviathan, mermaids, dragon kings, and other monsters of the deep," the average man must be driven and urged on like a child. Nearly always associated with light and with gold as a sign of the divine energy animating and sustaining him, the archetypal hero, on the other hand, so far from requiring to be driven into adventure, actually goes forward eagerly to meet it, actively courting the tests and trials imposed by the patriarchal principle in his desire for atonement or reconciliation with it, this patriarchal principle symbolizing, as Eric Fromm points out, "the supremacy of the law of the state over ties of blood." Thus Beowulf out of sheer youthful bravado enters into the dangerous swimming match on the North Sea against Breca:
And on this same level, the literal one, Beowulf concludes his adventure triumphantly. Chivalrously he stays near Breca in the beginning, although he could easily have left his friend behind:

\[\text{Nō he wiht fram mé}
\text{flōdypum feor flēotan meahte,}
\text{hrāpor on holme, nō ic fram him wolde.}\]

No whit more quickly on water, far on the floodwaves, might he swim from me, nor would I from him go. (ll. 541-43)

But then darkness, storm, and a rough sea combine to drive the friends apart, and Beowulf must descend into the depths and overcome a "mihtig meredēor" (mighty seabeast) (l. 558). For Gregory the Great the north wind which here drives the two men apart signified the "entire temptation of the ancient enemy Satan which acts in the mind," in contrast to the south wind which signified the "warmth of spirit of the faithful mind." Later, despite their attempts to devour him, Beowulf slays "niceras nigene" (nine monsters) (l. 575) and leaves their corpses floating in the foam of the waves (l. 566). Having cleared the sea
lanes of these dread monsters, his mission in the under-
world accomplished, Beowulf now sees day dawn: the sun,
"beorht bēacen Godes" (the bright beacon of God) (l. 570)
sines forth upon him, the sea calms, the land appears, and
the hero returns once more into the upper world.

On a level other than the literal one, what might
this adventure in the watery underworld of nature signify?
In the nineteenth century, Müllenhoff held that Beowulf
was to be interpreted mythologically, with Grendel
"representing the stormy North Sea of early spring, flood-
ing and destroying the habitation of men, till the god
rescues them, and Grendel's mother representing the
depths of the sea."51 That Müllenhoff's theory does not
satisfy present-day critics is shown by its eclipse in the
twentieth century.52

Besides ignoring the folk- and fairy-tale analogues
and motifs in the poem, the view of Müllenhoff's followers
that a "pestilential swamp" is the ultimate villain
(Grendel) and the "wind" (Beowulf) the ultimate hero of
the poem,53 is displeasing because of its abstractness.
To turn away from the human to forces of nature is to
turn from the specific and interesting to the abstract and
boring. It is in himself, as is only natural, that man
is most deeply interested. Jung, who understands this,
says of myths that they "are first and foremost psychic phenomena which reveal the nature of the soul." Thus, nature in myth symbolizes the "unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes conscious only by projection—that is, mirrored in the events of nature." To believe otherwise is to misread the thrust of man's poeticizing and fictionalizing efforts in myth and religion. This thrust normally is inward-directed (towards the self) rather than outward-directed (towards the cosmos or non-self). To think that mythological heroes are nature symbols is to get the process backward. Psychologically speaking, the sun, for example, regarded symbolically, is "the archetype of transcendent wholeness—the self," as is, also, the Christ-imago, who, as a hero and god-man, functions as "ruler of the inner world, i.e., of the collective unconscious."

The nature mythology of Müllenhoff and his followers has gone out of fashion, then, because, due to the work of Frazer, Freud, Jung, and their host of followers, we have come to understand more clearly than ever before that man by his very nature projects himself upon the cosmos. The universe he sees is only partly a replica of itself; its other parts are "compounded of elements derived from himself."
This self-centeredness being a given in human nature, the maternal significance of water symbolism is, according to both Freud and Jung, undeniable. Freud holds that "a large number of dreams often accompanied by anxiety and having as their content such subjects as passing through narrow spaces or being in water, are based upon phantasies of intra-uterine life, of existence in the womb and of the act of birth." Jung adds that

the projection of the mother-imago upon water endows the latter with a number of numinous or magical qualities peculiar to the mother. . . . In dreams or fantasies the sea or a large expanse of water signifies the unconscious. The maternal aspect of water coincides with the nature of the unconscious, because the latter (particularly in men) can be regarded as the mother or matrix of consciousness. Hence the unconscious, when interpreted on the subjective level, has the same maternal significance as water.

It would not do, of course, to apply such interpretations too literally or too concretely. When Beowulf dares darkness, cold turbulent waters, and the monsters that live in the North Sea, it does not mean that he is seeking to possess his mother or has sought such a thing. Rather, it may be taken to mean that prior to his accepting the challenge of adventuring on the sea with Breca, he has been unable to detach his libido from the mother-figure symbolized for him, perhaps, by Hygd, his Uncle Hygelāc's wife, and, thus, has been backward in "developing his individuality
and his reason." The poet himself tells of the low esteem in which the Geats held the youthful Beowulf:

Hēan wæs lange, swā hyne Gēata bearn godne ne tealdon, nē hyne on medobence micles wyrþne drihten Wedera gedōn wolde; swyþe (wēn)don, þæt he sleac wēre, æþeling unfrom.

He was long despised since the Geats' sons accounted him not good, nor on the meadbench would the Weder's lord give him much of worth; many thought that he was slothful, a feeble prince. (ll. 2183-88)

This passage echoes the "male Cinderella" motif of fairy and folktale origin. Chambers, too, notes that "the hero of the Bear's son folktale is often in his youth unmanageable or lazy," as does Klaeber, who says that this "commonplace story of the sluggish youth" standing alone in striking relief to Beowulf's later glory "is not very convincing" in view of Beowulf's mentioning at the time he introduces himself to Hrothgar that

Hæbbe ic mērpa fela ongunnen on geogope.

I have undertaken many great deeds in my youth. (ll. 408-09)

Klaeber sees the notion of a sluggish youth being added as an awkward afterthought to the youthful Beowulf's
characterization in order to bring him closer to the typical hero of a great epic poem.66

Awkward may well be the correct designation for this rather late revelation of Beowulf's lackadaisical youth. It is also suggestive when considered in conjunction with the idea of a boy tied, as it were, to his aunt's apron strings. Once Beowulf's sloth and feebleness are seen in this light, it becomes clear why his libido must be detached from the mother-imago by means of his entering the water and being reborn into the community of men.

Water in the place of the mother and light in the place of the father, i.e., the "lēoht ǣastan . . . / beorht bēacen Godes" (light from the east . . . / God's bright sign) that dawned on Beowulf on the morning of his sixth day at sea, serve to free Beowulf's libido from the tabooed incest tendency; offer it a new gradient, i.e., service to humanity; and thereby channel it into the higher spiritual form of love, i.e., caritas.

Jung asserts that the "basis of the 'incestuous' desire is not cohabitation, but, as every sun myth shows, the strange idea of becoming a child again, of returning to the parental shelter, and of entering the mother in order to be reborn through her."67 Since such a return is not possible, the individual struggles to overcome his desire for it; and, in the process of the struggle for
self-realization, the creative imagination is stimulated, and the libido becomes by degrees spiritualized. "That is why," Jung concludes, "religions exalt this procedure into a system," as we may see in the New Testament in the dialogue between Christ and Nicodemus concerning the necessity of man's being reborn symbolically from water and the spirit (John 3:4 ff.).

One might object that there is in the poem no evidence that Beowulf's libido was ever misdirected toward him mother since she is notable only for her almost complete absence. We know of her only that she was the daughter of King Hrethel of the Geats (l. 374-75). Incestuous desires need not necessarily, however, be directed toward the mother's *propría persona*. They may also be directed, as I have already mentioned, toward a mother-imago such as that provided by Queen Hygd, wife of Beowulf's uncle and liege lord, Hygelāc. Hygd, as queen and as wife to the man who stands in place of a father to Beowulf, is, in effect, a surrogate mother for Beowulf even though the poet emphasizes her youth by telling us that she is "swīpe geong" (very young) (l. 1926). Before discussing the relationship between Beowulf and his Aunt Hygd, however, we shall need to look more closely at certain other incest motifs present in the poem and its background material as well as at Beowulf's second descent into water in the course of his pursuit of Grendel's dam.
NOTES


3 Ibid., 200-01; translations of Old English words not found in Klaeber are from J. R. Clark Hall's A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, 4th ed., supplement Herbert D. Meritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), and from the Glossary to W. F. Bolton’s An Old English Anthology (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966).


5 Ibid., p. 216-33.


7 Byrhtferth, p. 227.

8 Bernard F. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry (Albany: State University of New York, 1959), pp. 21, 69, 78, 46. For further discussion concerning number symbolism during the period of the late Roman Empire see Morton W. Bloomfield's The Seven Deadly Sins (Lansing: The State College Press, 1952), p. 61; for an interpretation other than mine of the number symbolism contained in the passages concerning Beowulf's swimming match with Breca, see Lewis E. Nicholson's "The literal Meaning and Symbolic Structure of Beowulf," in Classica et Mediaevalia, 25 (1964), 175-78. In this article Nicholson, placing the happenings in Beowulf in an Old Testament antediluvian setting, relates the numbers five, seven, and eight to the week of creation as well as to Holy Week, Christ's resurrection, and baptism on Easter Sunday morning.

10Ibid., p. 315; see also Bloomfield, p. 61.

11Duchesne, p. 304.

12Ibid., p. 99.

13Ibid., p. 296, n. 1.


15Ibid., p. 225; see also John 3.8.


17Ibid., 337.


19Ibid., p. 10.

20Ibid., pp. 365-66.

21Duchesne, p. 253.

22Anderson, p. 234.

23Duchesne, pp. 250-51.


Klaeber, p. xlix.

Walsh, pp. 46-47.

Huppé, pp. 35, 46.

Ibid., p. 10.

Ibid., p. 19.

De Labriollle, quoted by Huppé, p. 19.

The Irish Liber Hymnorum (London, 1898), I, 133-36, quoted by Huppé, p. 77. See also Nicholson, p. 175, who believes that "the armor (ll. 550-53) in which Beowulf swims is not a further proof of his extraordinary strength,
as a naturalistic interpretation would have it, but his protection (cf. Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11-13).

37 Huppe, p. 77.

38 Ibid.


43 Jung, Symbols, pp. 55-56.

44 Ibid., p. 116.

45 Ibid.


48 Campbell, p. 78.

50 Gregory the Great, quoted by Huppe, p. 85.


52 Kissack, pp. 372-73; see also Chambers, pp. 46-48.

53 Chambers, p. 46.


55 Ibid.

56 Jung, Symbols, p. 323.

57 Ibid., p. 368.


59 Jung, Symbols, p. 219.


62 Chambers, p. 65.

63 Klaeber, p. xiv, n. 3.

64 Ibid., pp. 207, xxvii, n. 6.
66 I cid., p. xvii.


68 I cid., p. 224.
CHAPTER III

THE INCEST MOTIF IN GERMANIC HEROIC LITERATURE:

ITS RELATION TO BEOWULF

Like the Greek dramatists Aeschylus and Sophocles, Germanic scops were fascinated by the tragic results of incest within the royal families of their ruling houses. Incest is, of course, forbidden in Leviticus 18.6-18 by a blanket injunction against any man's cohabiting with near kin, including those kin by marriage. The ban includes brothers- and sisters-in-law, step-fathers and -mothers, step-sons and -daughters, and nieces- and nephews-in-law. Even before their conversion to Christianity, pagan Germanic tribes evidently shared the abhorrence felt by Hebrews and Greeks toward incest.

This abhorrence is shown by the fates dealt out to those guilty of transgressing the taboo. That the Beowulf poet was conversant with such tales is evidenced by his allusions to them. Of course, most of the examples of incest that follow are not told in Beowulf, but they are to be found in Beowulf's analogues. Moreover, many of the characters connected
with these tales either appear in *Beowulf* or are alluded to by the poet, and the poet and his audience would certainly have known their histories. For example, the scop who celebrates Beowulf's defeat of Grendel recalls the tale of Sigmund and Sigmund's son-nephew Fitela, although the scop delicately refers to Fitela merely as Sigmund's "nefan" (nephew) (l. 881). The tale, as it appears in the *Volsunga Saga*, contains what Carl G. Jung calls the "syzygy," i.e., that kind of coupling which represents "the two halves of the totality formed by the royal brother-sister pair." From the tension of the incestuous relationship of Sigmund and Signy is born the "divine child" Fitela, who, like Siegfried (if, indeed, the two are not the same), is a symbol of the unity of self in alchemical literature as well as in Jungian psychology, performing even greater feats than his father. It should be noted that the motif of father atonement appears in the Sigmund-Fitela relationship, Sigmund subjecting Fitela to tests which have killed two of Fitela's-half-brothers before accepting him as his follower and comrade-in-arms.

Also of interest in the Signy-Sigmund story are the Terrible Mother and the Siren motifs, combined with the motif of magical shape-changing. Signy, determined to
revenge herself on her husband, King Siggeirr, for his murder of her father and all her brothers except Sigmund, sacrifices her two oldest sons for revenge on Siggeirr. She sends them, once they are old enough, to join the outlawed Sigmund. He tests each in turn, finds him unworthy, and slays him. Signy, exchanging shapes with a sorceress, joins Sigmund, seduces him, and bears his child, Fitela, who when old enough joins Sigmund, passes all his tests, and has many adventures with him, including that of shape-changing into a werewolf. Later when Sigmund and Fitela come to take vengeance on Siggeirr, Sigmund wishes to spare Signy's two youngest children by the king; but Signy orders that these innocents be slain along with their father. Incest and child-murder are not, however, without their psychological penalties. Once certain that she has obtained her revenge on King Siggeirr, Signy bids her brother and son farewell and walks into the flames of Siggeirr's fired hall, joining in death her husband, small sons, and Siggeirr's court.

Another story of incest is alluded to indirectly by the Beowulf poet when he mentions King Eormenric (l. 1201), who, like Mark of Cornwall, sends another to court a wife for him, his son Randver. Randver, slyly encouraged by Eormenric's evil thyle Bikki, wins the love of his father's
young wife, Svanhildr, for himself. Through Bikki's betrayal the guilty pair are found out and condemned. Randver hangs on the gallows, and Svanhildr dies trampled by wild horses. Lawrence says that "the poet of Beowulf apparently remembered the death of Randver and the gallows" in the lines

Swā bip geōmorlic gomelum ceorle
tō gebīdanne, ðæt his byre rōde
giong on galgan; bonne hē gyd wrecce,
sērigne sang, ponne his sunu hangē
hrefne tō hroþre, ond hē him helpe ðe māg
eald ond intrōd ðēnige gefremman.

So it is painful for an aged man to live to see that his child might ride young on the gallows; then he may a lay recite, a sorrowful song, when his son hangs to the raven as solace, and he may not him any help, old and feeble, afford. (ll. 2444-49)

though "he makes no mention of the bright-eyed-Swanhild, trampled to death beneath the hoofs of wild horses."6

In the person of Hrothulf, who appears only peripherally in Beowulf as a shadowy presence seated by Hrothgar (ll. 1162-65), the poet has brought into his poem a Polyneices character, a man born of incest, who, after Hrothgar's death, slays Hrothgar's son and seizes the Danish throne.7 Hrothulf is the son of Hrothgar's brother Halga, and Halga's own daughter, Yrsa. A roving sea raider, Halga in his youth rapes Queen Olof and then deserts her. Returning to Olof's land years
later, Halga discovers a lovely young shepherdess, takes her away with him, and makes her his wife. Queen Olof journeys to Denmark to reveal to Yrsa, Halga's young wife, the secret of her parentage, a secret which Yrsa then reveals to her father Halga, who nevertheless desires Yrsa to continue as his wife. When she refuses, the king takes to his bed.  

The story of Queen Olof, Halga, and Yrsa provides yet another instance of the Terrible Mother as well as of the incest motif. Queen Olof degrades her daughter to the lowest of social levels and takes pleasure in revealing to her, too late, that her marriage is incestuous. Halga's moral and mental collapse in face of the truth and his subsequent retreat to bed demonstrate the validity of Jung's observations about the regressive nature of incestuous love affairs, the psychic danger they pose for the adult. Even when Yrsa leaves him, returns to Queen Olof, and later marries King Athils of Uppsala, Halga cannot forego his unnatural love, but, deserting his kingly post, goes to visit Yrsa in her new home. There, fighting against overwhelming odds, he is slain by Athils' thanes.  

Unlike the hero of Beowulf, Halga never learns to put the city (public duty) in the place of his incestuous love for his daughter. The uncontrolled, misdirected
libido with its strong bent toward infantile attachments, Jung notes, "is a crippling limitation for the adult; whereas attachment to the city, a symbolic substitute for the mother-image, fosters his civic virtues and at least enables him to lead a useful existence. In primitives the tribe takes the place of the city."  

In contrast to Halga, Bjorn, father of the hero Bothvar Bjarki, who played a role at Hrothulf's court similar in certain ways to that played by Beowulf at Hrothgar's court, is made of sterner psychic material. While journeying, Bjorn's father, the king, leaves his kingdom in the hands of Bjorn's young stepmother Hvit. Hvit attempts to seduce Bjorn, suggesting that since the king is away she and Bjorn should share the king's bed as well as his authority. Bjorn strikes her, attempting to drive her from his presence. Suddenly displaying a witch's powers, Hvit returns Bjorn's blow with a wolf-skin glove. At this point we are reminded of the dragon-skin glove carried by Grendel, a magical glove into which he was wont to stuff his victims so that he might feast on them later. This glove, Beowulf tells Hygelāc, was one made "deofles cæftum ond dracan fellum" (with a devil's craft and of a dragon's skin) (ll. 2085-88). Hvit's glove also possesses magical powers, transforming Bjorn at once into a savage bear. Now Hvit is revealed
as a Circe-like witch, one who is, as Bjorn later reveals to his sweetheart Bera, "the worst of trolls." This troll motif establishes another link between the tale of Bjorn and that of Beowulf since the fact that Grendel and his dam live in a cave beneath the water indicates that they, too, are trolls. Bjorn also warns Bera that she should by no means allow herself, once he has been killed in his chthonic form by the queen's huntsmen, to be forced by Hvit to eat of his flesh. Bera, however, proves powerless to disobey the queen when the time comes, so that we find cannibalism as a motif in both tales, Bera eating of Bjorn's flesh and Grendel and his dam eating the Danes they capture and kill.

Bjorn's death is revenged by Bothvar, one of the triplets fathered by Bjorn upon Bera. As Beowulf kills Grendel's dam, so Bothvar kills the troll-queen Hvit, his step-grandmother. Bothvar, however, carries out his vengeance with shocking brutality, battering and torturing Hvit as he kills her by degrees in a highly public fashion, taking action in defiance of his grandfather's wishes. Beowulf, on the other hand, kills Grendel's dam in a fair fight after nearly dying himself at her hands, killing her at last only by means of the intervention of Divine Providence:
Bothvar's brutality is matched by that of Hialto, his friend and companion-in-arms at the court of Hrothulf. Hialto, bedded with a harlot when he hears the din of battle from the direction of Hrothulf's court, rouses for action. The harlot inquires of him how old a man she ought to marry in the event of his demise. Hialto bids her approach and then without warning slices off her nose, a startling piece of sadism reminiscent of Bothvar's torturing to death of his step-grandmother. The harlot and would-be adulteress are not held in high esteem in Germanic tales descended from the heroic age, cruel and unusual punishments being their lot. Beowulf's chivalry, shown in his stripping himself of all man-made weapons so as not to have an advantage over Grendel and in killing Grendel's dam in a fair fight, stand out in striking contrast to the sadism evident in the pagan tales which make up the body of literature from which the Beowulf poet garnered the details required to provide an authentic-seeming backdrop for his own tale.
One last example of the incest theme in heroic literature concerns Hrothgar's stepfather Ingialldus. Ingialldus, according to the Skjoldunga Saga, killed his brother Healfdene, the father of Hrothgar and Halga. Ingialldus then married his brother's widow, Sigrida, the mother of Hrothgar and Halga. Hrothgar and Halga survived in hiding and, when grown, avenged themselves by burning King Ingialldus to death in his own hall. Sigrida, the boys' mother, now Ingialldus's wife, chose to die in the fired hall rather than come out to her sons. In after years Hrothgar attempted to allay the hatred felt for him by Ingialldus' son, Ingeld, by giving his daughter Freawaru to Ingeld in marriage. But marriage could not permanently end the feud, and Beowulf, speaking of Ingeld's people to Hygelāc, predicts the future treachery of the Heatho-Bards towards the Danes (11. 2064–69). Earlier in the poem, the poet, speaking in his own voice, alludes to the destruction by fire of Heorot in the course of the Dane-Heatho-Bard conflict, saying of Heorot that it

heātowylma bād, laðan līges; ne wæs hit lenge þā gēn, þæt se ecghete ābumsweorant after wælnīdte wæcnan scolde.

awaited the battleflames, hateful fire; nor was it yet long after the hostility that the sword-hate should waken between son-in-law and father-in-law. (11. 82–85)
Examples such as these, i.e., of Halga and Yrsa, Signy and Sigmund, Randver and Svanhildr, and Ingialldus and Sigrida, demonstrate the tragic results of fratricide and incest, or, as in the case of Bjorn and Hvít, attempted incestuous seduction. A prominent feature in the material on which the Beowulf poet based the historical background of his epic poem, the incest motif is a muted but discernible evil lurking in the dark just outside the circle of light cast by the scop's bright song in praise of the Creator and the blaze of light illuminating Heorot. And, as we shall see later, Beowulf himself will be tempted to play Claudius to his nephew's Hamlet.
NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 358.


7 Ibid., p. 76.

8 Garmonsway, p. 153.

9 Ibid., pp. 154-55.

10 Jung, Symbols, p. 213.

11 See Lawrence's comment on "Bjark" (the little bear) and its striking resemblance to "Beowulf" (bee-wolf or bear), p. 78.

12 Garmonsway, p. 97.

14 Garmonsway, p. 168.

15 Ibid. pp. 125, 130-38.

16 See Klaeber's note to 11. 82-85 on pp. 129-30.
H. Munro Chadwick argues against the theory that the *Beowulf* poet owes a debt to *The Aeneid* by asserting that a "much more plausible case could be made out for deriving *Beowulf* from Homeric poems, especially *The Odyssey". But even the similarities between *Beowulf* and *The Odyssey*, he says, can better be explained as "purely accidental coincidences such as one could find between almost any two narrative poems" composed by poets "depicting types of life with which they were familiar."

It is not my intention to enter into the controversy over possible literary influences on the *Beowulf* poet, although I believe that Tom Burns Haber has made a good case for his thesis that there are striking parallels between *The Aeneid* and *Beowulf* in phraseology, theme, and motif. Whether, having taken to heart and soul the Latin *Aeneid* and the Greek *Odyssey*, the *Beowulf* poet consciously copied from then, or whether all three...
poets, Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon, shaped in a similar vein material arising out of man's collective unconscious and present everywhere since it is inherent in the thinking process, answering as it does basic human needs and forming "the matrix out of which literature emerges both historically and psychologically," the results in certain places in the three epics are remarkably alike.

The motif of the hero's descent into an underworld is, for example, present in each of the poems, appearing first in Book Ten of The Odyssey when Circe describes to Odysseus the voyage he must take to reach the House of Hades:

Now so soon as thy vessel has traversed the stream of the Ocean,
Where is a shore rich-soiled and copses of Persephoneia,
Poplars soaring aloft and willows widowed of fruitage,
Beaching her there on the strand of the eddying current of Ocean,
Press thou forward thyself to the mouldering mansion of Hades.
Into the Acheron here red-flaming Phlegethon poureth,
And Cocytus, a channel that leads from the Stygian water,
Rocky ravine connecting the two loud-thundering rivers.

Odysseus, following Circe's directions, sails to the very limits of the world, finally coming to the land of the Cimmerians and a city "Shrouded in darkness of mist and of cloud, since never upon them / Glorious Eêlios looks down with his radiant daylight" (XI.15-16). Continuing past this city of perpetual night, Odysseus comes at length
to the entrance of the underworld which Circe had described.

Having made landfall after a similar voyage into the unknown, Aeneas, directed by the Cumaean sibyl, plucks the golden bough from an oak set in the midst of the ancient forest of Avernus and bearing it as a talisman makes his way to a

cavern deep with yawning jaws
Enormous, stony, screened by a gloomy lake
And shadowy woods: no winged thing could fly
Unscathed above it, such the baleful breath
That from the opening rose to the upper air.
(VI.294-98)

From this cavern's mouth the priestess and Aeneas plunge into the underworld. Just inside the cavern they pass through a chamber wherein stands a giant elm in whose thick leaves Empty Dreams make their home. Monsters, many of them female (e.g., syllas, gorgons, and harpies), impede their way. Aeneas presents his sword's edge to the swarm, whereupon the sibyl tells him they are but phantoms. The road leads ever downward until it reaches an enormous abyss spewing forth water and mud into Cocytus, one of the rivers of Hades mentioned by Homer.

In Beowulf, also, one finds a forbidding landscape surrounding the approach to the underworld of Grendel's cavern. Hrothgar explains to Beowulf that gorges, bluffs, dangerous trails, and ice-covered trees make the way there
difficult and that travelers have seen the remarkable sight of fire burning in the water at night. So dreadful is the place that even the hart pursued by hounds will give up its life before venturing into the water of the mere.

There are, of course, enough differences between these Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon descriptions of the path leading into the underworld that Chadwick may well be right in asserting that no direct literary influence exists between the classical worlds of Homer and Virgil and the barbarian world of the Beowulf poet. In such a case, similar handling of similar material tends to support Jung's hypothesis that all men possess in common a collective unconscious in which lurk archetypes for such concepts as an underworld, its landscape, and its denizens.

Since literary influence cannot be proved or disproved, I shall, therefore, confine myself to noting the most interesting of the similarities and the differences between the accounts of the three poets. Homer's underworld is beyond Oceanus on a waste shore, not far from a city of night. There is no city of night in Virgil's account, nor is there one in Beowulf, and the underworlds of these last two poets are not far from the haunts of men. Virgil's is in the heart of Italy; the Beowulf poet's is but a mile from Heorot, though bluffs and gorges make the trip there tortuous. Virgil and the Beowulf poet, unlike Homer,
emphasize the abyss motif. On the other hand, striking similarities of details in the settings of each poem's underworld exist. For example fiery rivers—or water with fire burning on it, sinister trees and dark groves, rocks and boulders fill the landscape in all three poems. Father atonement occurs in all three poems. And the Terrible Mother as witch, fury, or troll-wife is present in each.

Taking first the water and fire motif, we find that Circe, giving directions to Odysseus, says that Phlegethon lies near the "mansion of Hades" (X.512). Phlegethon, of course, means "burning" or "blazing," and thus we are presented with the idea of a River of Fire in the Greek underworld. Virgil apostrophizes this same river in a prayer: "Ye deities, whose empire is of souls! / Ye silent Shades, --Chaos and Phlegethon! / . . . Be it lawful that I speak what I have heard" (VI.325-28). Here and elsewhere in Book Six, Virgil seems to be hinting at being an initiate into one of the mystery religions of his age, one that is neoplatonic and dualistic in outlook, conceiving man's spirit to be a "bright flame of unmixed heavenly air" (VI.932) encased in a body frequently corrupted by fear, desire, sorrow, and even joy, the soul being held captive in the "prison dark" (VI.917) of the material flesh. One may readily understand how Christians believing in baptism and in hellfire could feel an affinity with Virgil, the poet who held that sinful
souls "beneath a waste of waters from their guilt are cleansed, / Or purified by fire" (VI.926-27).

In *Beowulf*, Hrothgar tells Beowulf that Danes journeying by night have seen a wondrous sight at Grendel's mere--"fyr on floede" (fire on the flood)--and that the mere is so deep that "nō þæs frōd leofac / gumena bearna, þæt þone grund wite" (no one of the children of men so wise lives who the bottom might know) (ll. 1366-67). Like Tartarus, Grendel's mere appears to be bottomless. And as in the Christian underworld there is a place in Virgil's where the wicked must undergo punishment to cleanse themselves of sin. Ringed by rock, battlements, and a flaming torrent bearing boulders that thunder and rave, Tartarean Phlegethon, the Burning River, surges about Virgil's hell (VI.680-93). Virgil's belief in purgation by fire and then reincarnation for purified souls rather than eternal life in a heaven above the skies must have made Christians assume that although the poet had lacked the opportunity to know Christ, he, like Cornelius the Centurion told of in Acts, was one of the worthy heathen to whom God had granted the grace of special insight. Hrothgar's so-called sermon to Beowulf after the Geat has returned in triumph out of the depths of Grendel's mere sounds many of the notes struck by the sibyl as she explains to Aeneas who it is who must suffer the cleansing fires of Tartarus:
Here those who cherished hatred, during life, 
Toward their brothers; or who lifted hands 
Of violence against their parents; those 
Who 'gainst their clients schemed and practised fraud; 
Or those who brooded o'er their hoarded wealth, 
Selfish and solitary, nor dispensed 
A portion to their kin, --the largest crowd 
These formed; or those who for adulterous crimes 
Were slain; or fought in wars unjust, nor feared 
To violate allegiance to their lords: 
These all await their doom. (VI.755-65)

Warning Beowulf against allowing his triumph over 
Grendel's dam to inflate his ego excessively (i.e., against 
assuming the "mana"personality of the archetypal heroª), 
Hrothgar details the possible consequences of the hero's 
identifying himself totally with the mana persona. First 
Hrothgar gazes upon the hilt of the magic sword (the one 
brought back by Beowulf from the mere) whereon is written 
the story of the flood which had slain the giants' kind, Cain's 
descendants who were estranged from God. Then the old king 
begins his homily by praising Beowulf, saying that he must 
have been born better than other men. Due praise having 
been given to the hero, the old man holds up for scorn the 
Scylding Heremōd, who proved to be a scourge to the Danes:

Brēat bolgenmōd beodgennaτas 
eaxlgesteallan,  bēo bæt hē āna hwearf, 
mēre bēoden mondreamum from, 
þæah be hine mihtig God mægenes wynnum, 
eafebūm stepte,  ofer ealle men 
forð gefremede.  Hwæpere him on ferhhe grēow 
brōsthord blōldreow;  nalles beagas geaf 
Denum æfter dōme.
In an angry mood he destroyed his table sharers, his nearest friends, until he departed alone, the great prince, from the joys of men, although mighty God, with the joys of power had exalted him in strength and [over all men] advanced him. Yet in his soul grew a bloodthirsty heart; he gave no rings to the Danes according to desert. (ll. 713-20)

Leaving the subject of Heremōd but continuing to dwell on the sin of pride, the king next speaks more generally of the pitfalls awaiting the hero who loses his humility:

hím on innan oferhygda dæl
weacēt on wrīdēt; þonne se weard swefēt,
þincēt him tō lýtel, bāt he lange hēold,
gytsat gromhīdig, nallas on gylp select
fætte bēgas.

within him a deal of overpridefulness grows and buds; then the guardian sleeps. . . . It seems to him too little what he long has held; fierce-minded he covets, gives not in his pride rich rings. (ll. 1740-50)

Both the pagan Virgil and the Christian Beowulf poet rank pride and covetousness as sins which destroy the soul, blackening it so deeply that purification by fire is necessary. As for the brother-hate mentioned by Virgil, the Beowulf poet, always aware of the sin of fratricide, has Beowulf relate to Wiglaf the tragic consequences of such hatred or rivalry when Beowulf tells the story of his Uncle Haethcyn who had, perhaps by accident but more likely by design, let fly an arrow that had slain his brother Herebeald.
Haethcyn by means of this hunting accident commits four of the crimes listed by the sibyl as requiring purgation by fire: he murders his elder brother; he betrays his overlords (brother and father); he slays a member of the comitatus (brotherhood of warriors); and he injures his father by sending him prematurely to his grave. For Hrethel

\[
\text{mid ðære sorhge, þē him tō sēr belamp,}
gumdrēam ofgeaf, Godes lēocht gecēas;
eafērum læfde, swa dēct eadig mon,
lond ond lēodbyrif, þa hē of life gewāt.
\]

with that sorrow, when pain befell him, gave up the joys of men, chose God's light; to his offspring he left, as does a prosperous man, land and native city when he departed from life. (ll. 2468-71)

Besides the River of Fire motif, the Sinister Tree or Grove motif appears in all three heroic epics. Tree imagery occurs in Circe's description of the "copses of Persephone, / Poplars soaring aloft and willows widowed of their fruitage" (X.509-10). The poplars here mentioned may be of the kind that can grow even in the crevices of rocky slopes such as the one bordering Hades. Poplars and willows are closely related, and a tree that becomes "widowed" of its fruit before it can mature is an appropriate symbol for the sterility of Hades.

Virgil also has trees of a sinister nature in his underworld. Before proceeding into the depths, Aeneas
and the sibyl sacrifice to Persephone in "shadowy woods" on the verge of a "gloomy lake" not far from a "cavern deep with yawning jaws" (VI.294-97). Hell-hounds appear as a result of the ritual. Aeneas must use his naked sword to clear them from the path before he and the sibyl can proceed into the cavern. Once inside they pass through the entrance hall, in the center of which is the huge elm amid whose branches abide "Empty Dreams" (VI.249), a trope clearly allegorical in nature.

Considering Homer's symbolic and Virgil's allegorical use of trees and groves, it is interesting that one of the most impressive descriptions in Beowulf is that by Hrothgar of the forest-clad ridges, wolf-retreats, and cliffs surrounding Grendel's mere:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nis pæt feor heonon} \\
\text{milgenearces, pæt se mere standest;} \\
ofer pæm hongiæt hrinde bearwas \\
wudu wyrðum faest water oferhelmd. \\
\end{align*}
\]

It is not far hence, a mile's measure, that the mere stands; over it hang frost-covered groves, a wood fixed firm by its roots overshadows the water. (ll. 1361-64)

From the foregoing it is clear that the tree and sinister grove appear in all three epics. Virgil introduces allegory in making his elm-tree the Tree of Empty Dreams. Homer and the Beowulf poet, in contrast to Virgil, are content to allow the sinister aspect of their groves to speak for itself.
The hounds in *Beowulf* which pursue the hart to the verge of the mere in Hrothgar's description of the place (ll. 1368-71) appear not at all in Homer. But they do seem reminiscent of the hound-shapes, howling and just visible in the shadows which materialize on the scene in Virgil's Sinister Grove following the sibyl's invocation of the goddesses Hecate, Gaia (Earth Mother), and Proserpina. These hounds belong to those daughters of Gaia known as the Eumenides, i.e., the "Kindly Ones," as the Furies are euphemistically designated by those desiring not to offend them. Gaia bore the Furies from drops of blood which fell upon her at the time Cronus castrated Uranus. Thus it is the duty of the Furies to avenge crimes of parricide and perjury. The motif, therefore, is that of the murder of blood-kin, a motif which appears throughout *Beowulf*.

Grendel and his dam, for example, are of the race of Cain, who committed both fratricide and perjury, first slaying Abel and then lying about his deed when questioned about it by God (Gen. 4.9). Also, the "heorot" (stag) pursued by the hounds in Hrothgar's description of the mere appears in the name of Hrothgar's great mead-hall Heorot (l. 78), a hall Hrothgar has built in a spirit of vainglory, desiring it to be the mightiest such hall (as the Tower of Babel was to be the tallest) any man has ever heard of (l. 70). Not mentioned by the poet but
doubtless well known to his audience, one of the reasons a new mead-hall is needed is that the old one had been fired by Hrothgar and his brother Halga when they had burned to death their Uncle Frothi and their mother, his wife (see above, pp. 55-56). Thus the "hounds" who pursue the "hart" might be taken as figurae for the guilt gnawing at Hrothgar's conscience. Of course this guilt was incurred as Hrothgar was carrying out his duty to avenge the slaying of his father by his uncle. But the blood ties still remain between uncle and nephew and mother and son, ties which at the very least must have caused conflicting emotions in Hrothgar's breast. Here we find in Anglo-Saxon poetry the Orestes motif, the duty to avenge the death of one's blood-kin necessitating the slaying of other blood-kin.

Such bloodbaths within the family cannot be contained once they begin, Hrothgar being slain later on by his own first cousins, Raereas and Frodo, the sons of his murdered uncle. Hrothgar's homily can therefore be seen as hard-won self-knowledge gained from tasting the bitter spiritual fruits of his slaying of members of his own family. And it may well be this blood guilt on his part which accounts for God's allowing Grendel, a descendant of Cain, to possess Heorot by night. Once Beowulf has slain Grendel, the hall is said by the poet to have been cleansed or "purified": 
Had then purified, he who before had come from afar, wise and strong of soul, Hrothgar's hall, saved it from malice. (ll. 825-27)

Further on, the poet has Hrothgar explain how, by means of armed might, he had secured himself from all mortal enemies so that he held none of them of any account (surely any Christian in the poet's audience would have at this point perceived in Hrothgar's attitude the sin of pride), but then

Lo, for that a reverse came to me in my country, grief after merriment, from the time when Grendel became my old adversary, my invader; I for that visitation have constantly borne great sorrow of soul. (ll. 1774-78)

Hrothgar, naturally enough, does not accuse himself of being tainted with the blood of his kin. Instead he speaks in rather vague terms of having secured himself by means of sword and spear against aggression from other tribes. The Beowulf poet, subtle and indirect, brings up the subject in regard not to Hrothgar but to his thyle, Unferth, by having Beowulf charge cryptically that Hrothgar's chief adviser
is guilty of the murder of his brothers (ll. 587-88), a sin, says Beowulf, for which Unferth will suffer damnation in hell.

There has been considerable debate as to why the "saintly" Hrothgar keeps a man guilty of fratricide as his counsellor. Possibly Beowulf's charge was understood by the poet's audience as an allusion to Hrothgar's own guilt, a matter it would have been indecorous for Beowulf to have touched on overtly since he was Hrothgar's guest, obligated to him for hospitality and protection.

Considering the Cain motif present in the poem, it is interesting to note J. R. R. Tolkien's belief that the monsters are not peripheral but central to Beowulf and that the dragon "approaches draconitas," i.e., approaches "a personification of malice, greed, destruction." Tolkien declares that in the early part of the poem Grendel is "a real counterpart to the dragon." If Tolkien is correct, one might well conclude that Grendel, a descendant of Cain's brood of unholy giants and monsters, symbolizes human fratricidal tendencies and outright murder. Though Hrothgar can make himself secure from other men by means of sword and spear, he cannot use such weapons against the enemy within, the enemy against whom material weapons are of no avail, the enemy personified by Grendel whom

Ænig ofer earþan Þrenna cyst.
gutbilla nœn grētān nœlde.
not any battle sword on earth, the choicest of iron, would touch. (11. 802-03)

Only Beowulf, free from all taint of fratricide, can free Heorot from the terror of Grendel's reign by night.

Consonant with the psychic landscape of blood strife symbolized by Grendel is the landscape surrounding the mere. In analyzing Augustine's influence on Old English poetry, Bernard Huppé observes that "literary description for its own sake--mere-rhetoric--is antithetical to the true purpose of Old English Christian poetry. . . . Description must be read for its symbolic import." Another who argues for a symbolic reading of descriptive details in Beowulf, especially in regard to the "hrinde" (frost) on the Sinister Grove hanging over Grendel's mere is D. W. Robertson. Like Huppé, Robertson believes that "when a work by an obviously accomplished mediæval poet does not seem to make sense on the surface, one must look beneath the surface for the meaning." Discussing the grove in Beowulf, Robertson points out that frost and ice are well-known traditional symbols of Satan. The ice-covered grove, Robertson explains, marks the "chill of cupidty of the evil garden as opposed to the warmth of Charity in the good garden." Huppé, speculating in a similar vein, cites an Old English discussion of the passage in Genesis in which God walks in the Garden of Eden when its air has been cooled by the evening breezes.
The writer, perhaps Bede, asks: "What is the meaning of the breeze of evening except that the more fervent light of truth has left and the coldness of its guilt grips the sinful soul. Now he lies stupified in the shadows of sin as in the cold of the breeze . . . because he has followed the shadow. He has lost the heat of charity and has abandoned the sun and hidden himself within the shadows of his inner cold." Here the Old English writer has anticipated Jung's vocabulary in designating the disobedient sinful aspect of Adam's personality as the "shadow." The Good Garden, of course, is Eden before the fall. The evil one is Eden after its transformation following man's fall. That Grendel and his dam are of the race of Cain doubtless made the parallel of the Sinister Grove in Beowulf with the Evil Garden that came into being as a result of Adam's disobedience all but inevitable in the minds of the Beowulf poet's audience of courtly Christians and educated clerics.

A possible objection to Robertson's interpretation is that to explain the ice of the grove over the lake as signifying cupidity alone is to narrow the Beowulf poet's art down to mere allegory. Bede's exegesis of the cold at the heart of the sinful man is more subtle and hence more satisfying in that it does not tie itself down so straitly to one meaning only. With the wider latitude afforded by
symbolism, one may view Grendel as emblematic of the Shadow or inferior aspects of the human personality, those aspects from which spring all the crimes and cruelties men are guilty of toward one another.

Thus the gloomy, shadow-filled grove overhanging the mere with its frost-coated limbs is the artistically fit setting for Grendel, an archetypal imago from the collective unconscious of the brutal and vicious. Why it is thus appropriate is explained by Jung, who tells us that "the forest, dark and inpenetrable to the eye, like deep water and the sea, is the container of the unknown and the mysterious. It is an appropriate synonym for the unconscious." Moreover, the one who wanders in or lives among the trees of the Dark Forest of the unconscious is profoundly unconscious of himself: "He is one of the 'sleepers,' the 'blind,' or 'blindfolded,' whom we encounter in the illustrations of certain alchemical treatises. They are the unawakened who have not yet integrated their future more extensive personality, their 'wholeness,' or, in the language of the mysteries, the ones who are not yet 'enlightened.'" Water, as Jung points out, also symbolizes the unconscious, and of it there is much in each of the three heroic epics. In The Odyssey Homer, like the Beowulf poet, envisions the world of dry land as placed like a jewel
in the watery setting of Oceanus. It is Odysseus' task to venture across Oceanus to the wasteland on the edge of the world where perpetual night blankets the region of Hades. According to Circe's directions, four rivers bound Hades: Phlegethon, Acheron, Cocytus, and Styx. Odysseus will know he is near his goal when he comes to a rock close by the meeting of these four rivers.

Virgil's underworld also has a watery entrance, situated as it is on the edge of a lake of black water. Virgil mentions the same four rivers alluded to by Homer but adds more description. The Styx, for example, becomes marshy and is designated as "the Eumenides' forbidding stream" (VI.457). Hell is girded about by Tartarean Phlegethon, the Burning River, an appellation bringing to mind Hrothgar's description of Grendel's mere as a place where travellers have seen fire burning on the water at night (11. 1365-66). Although water is, in general, held by Freud, Jung, and Fromm to symbolize the unconscious, the Phlegethon as described by Virgil possesses masculine energy. Described as torrential, it is said to "rave" and to whirl rocks about like chaff (VI.684-85). Fusing feminine and masculine symbolism as it does, the Phlegethon here seems to stand for self-consciousness, the realization of the dark forces in one's being; for it is this river which defines the area where evil passions are purged.
from man's guilty soul. "The nature of consciousness is expressed by analogies with light," Jung remarks, adding that beginnings "lie at the bottom of the sea in the darkness of the unconscious." Elsewhere he points out that the Greek for "bright, shining" has as its root the Indo-European *bhale which means "to bulge, swell." Thus there is evidently male phallic imagery underlying and linking the idea of light and fire to the concept of male potency, energy, consciousness, and power, just as the maternal waters containing the fetus within the darkness of the female body link the idea of water, darkness, and groves to the concept of feminine intuition, passivity, unconsciousness, and blind acceptance of one's fate.

Used in connection with Aeneas, such fusing of male and female symbolism seems to mean that, led by the Anima (a projection of his suppressed feminine intuition) figure of the sibyl, the hero moves from a state of psychic darkness or ignorance about himself (symbolized by the dark groves and the dark of Hades itself) to a state of enlightenment (symbolized by the lighted regions of the Home of the Blest). For, upon Aeneas' arriving in Elysium, Anchises, Aeneas' father, initiates his son into the mysteries surrounding the ritual purification of the soul preceding its rebirth into another body.
Cumaean sibyl is revealed as the priestess and prophetess of Apollo, the god associated with light, rationality, and reason, all considered to be "masculine" qualities in contrast to the intuitive abilities supposedly possessed by the female.

In Beowulf the motifs of the sea, fiery river or fire upon water, and dark lake also occur. The lake or mere, linked by its outlet to the sea, is fed by a waterfall. The stream, falling from a cliff into the lake, creates great turbulence, similar to that of Virgil's Phlegethon, down below where the water rises in agitated waves; mists are borne aloft and obscure the surrounding region; and mysterious fires burn on the water, terrifying observers. Moreover, the lake is said to be bottomless, no man (before Beowulf) having plumbed its depths. Its surroundings match the lake in awesomeness. Hrothgar, describing the area to Beowulf, tells the young Geat that Grendel and his dam inhabit a badlands made up of wind-swept bluffs accessible only by dangerous paths leading to a place where

```
fyrgenstr'am
under næssa genibu  niper gewiteð,
flöd under foldan.
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Dær mæg nihta gehwæm nɪtʊndor seon,
fyr on flöde.
```

a mountain stream flows downward under the mists of the bluffs, the flood under the earth. . . . There every night a dire wonder may be seen--fire on the water. (ll. 1359-66)
The wasteland aspect of this wild country, fit only to be inhabited by wolves and such creatures as Grendel and his dam, is reminiscent of the wasteland described by Circe to Odysseus. The Beowulf poet, though, fills out his description by suggestive touches not found in Homer. He calls his wasteland a "digel lond" (secret land) and "wulfhleopu" (wolf retreat) (ll. 1357-58) and adds details such as "windige næssas" (windy bluffs) (l. 1358) and "frēcne fengelād" (dangerous fen path) (l. 1359). These, plus the dark lake, the cliffs, the gorge implied by the waterfall, and the turbulence of the water, are reminiscent of the passage in Virgil in which the Fury, Alecto, after stirring up war between the Italians and the Trojans at Juno's behest, goes to ground in the Gorge of Ampsanctus, a ravine dark with woods and compassed about with cliffs from one of which falls "tumultuous, a torrent echoing / Across the rocks in twisting eddies" (VII.744-45). And, just as in Beowulf, associated with Virgil's gorge are a cavern and an abyss giving entrance into the underworld.

As in both Virgil and Homer, the Beowulf poet's underworld is near the sea. On the way to the mere Beowulf slays a sea beast similar to those he had battled during his swimming match with Breca. The place where the sea-beast is killed is said by the poet to be "on þām holmclife" (on the sea-cliff) (l. 1421), as if he intended
to emphasize the link between the sea and the mere, a link he underscores later by twice calling Grendel's dam a "brimwylf" (she-wolf of the sea) (ll. 1506, 1599). Not far from Aeschere's severed head, the party of Geats and Danes comes upon

wyrmcynnes fela,
sellice sædæcan sund cunnian,
swyłce on næshleodum nicras licegan,
dā on undermæl oft bewitigæt
sorhfulne stād on seglæde.

Summe Geata leod
of flānbagean fōeres getwærde,
ȳtgewinne, ðæt him on aldre stōd
herestræl hearda.

many of the worm-kind, strange sea-dragons, exploring the deep; also lying on the headland cliffs were water-monsters which during the morning time undertake a perilous journey on the sail road. . . . With his arrowbow the chief of the Geats separated one of the monsters from life, from wave struggling, so that the hard warshaft stuck up in its vitals. (ll. 1425-35)

Here Beowulf's slaying of one of the "nicoras" reminds us of his slaying of the nine water-monsters earlier during his swim on the North Sea, and the mention of "sea-dragons" foreshadows his fight with the firedrake. Thus the nicors, Grendel and his dam, who live not far from where the nicors are spotted, and the dragon are all linked in this one passage by means of association with water. As for the mere itself, it is apparently near the sea, because immediately after slaying the nicor, Beowulf begins preparing to
"sund cunnian" (make trial of the deep) (l. 1444) in his search for Aeschere's slayer.

Once Beowulf descends into the water, the miraculous reenters the tale. If his swimming in a coat of mail with sword in hand on the North Sea for nearly eight days stretches belief, descending into a lake for "hwīl dæges" (a day's space) (l. 1495), as Beowulf does in swimming down to Grendel's cavern, goes beyond the extraordinary into the supernatural.

Yet it is clear that Beowulf is not meant to be characterized as possessing godlike powers. He is a man like others, different only in the degree to which he possesses unusual strength. The length of time given by the poet, then, evidently has some significant symbolical aspect to it, an aspect which becomes clear (at least to those acquainted with their scripture) when the watchers up above observe the surging waves of the lake become "blōde fāh" (stained with blood) (l. 1594) at the time when Beowulf down below has slain Grendel's dam and then struck Grendel's head from its corpse: "Da cōm nōn dæges" (thereupon came the ninth hour of the day) (l. 1600) observes the poet, and the Danes, concluding that Beowulf is dead, desert the mere, leaving the Geats to grieve for their lord. It was, of course, at the ninth hour that Christ died on the cross (Matt. 27-46; Mark 15.34-37; Luke 23.44-46). Moreover, the ninth hour is
one of the three times during the day singled out by early Christians as appropriate for prayer because three hours are "indicated in the Acts of the Apostles, where we see the disciples gathered together for prayer at the hour of **t i e r c e** when the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost; St. Peter goes up to the roof of the house to pray at the hour of **s e x t** before partaking of his meal; and, finally, the apostles Peter and John enter the temple for prayer at the hour of **n o n e**. "

It is also at **n o n e** that the unconverted Centurion Cornelius has the vision in which an Angel of God appears and tells him that his prayers have been heard by God (Acts 10.3). And, of course, when the water of the mere becomes blood-stained just at **n o n e** it is because down below where Beowulf has been struggling for his life, God—or his Angel—has just intervened to raise Beowulf back on his feet from his helpless position under the she-wolf's short sword:

> ond hālig God
gewēold wīgsigor; wītig Drihten,
rodera Rædend hit on ryht gesæd
ydælīce, syptan hē eft astod.

And Holy God controlled victory; the wise Lord, Ruler of the heavens, easily decided the outcome with justice when Beowulf stood again. (ll. 1553-56)

Analyzing Beowulf's battle with Grendel's dam, H. L. Rogers contends that Beowulf errs in carrying a sword into
the fray. Contrasting Beowulf's struggle against the she-wolf with his earlier one with Grendel himself, Rogers points out that Beowulf disdains to use a sword against Grendel because Grendel does not use one. But, "in the second fight Beowulf uses a sword, whereas in the first he trusted in his mægen and in God; this contributes to his difficulties." Hrunting, loaned to Beowulf by Unferth, fails against Grendel's dam. When Beowulf throws it aside, Rogers says in effect, the poet's comment that this is what a man should do means that Beowulf was wrong to go into battle with a man-made weapon. The narrative, however, does not bear out Roger's interpretation. The poet's comment doubtless is meant to apply to Beowulf's determination in the context to trust in his "strenge" (strength) (l. 1533) and in his powerful "mundgripe" (handgrip) (l. 1534). Nevertheless things become more, not less, desperate for him after he casts Hrunting aside since, in the ensuing wrestling match with the sea-wolf, he wearies, falls, and winds up with the she-monster astride him, her "seax" (short sword) (l. 1545) at his breast. What saves him is his corslet of chain mail, his byrne. An attentive reading shows that Beowulf's helm and coat of mail are at least as significant throughout the battle as the sword Hrunting.

The poet, for example, devotes four lines to describing the hero's war-corslet—how broad and gleaming it is, how
subtle the smith's work in decorating it, and how well able it is to protect its wearer from the malicious clutch of a wrathful foe. The helm also comes in for its share of praise: it is splendid, richly ornamented, and possesses lordly bands and boar images which will prevent any battle-sword from biting through its protective armor (ll. 1441-44). When the she-wolf emerges from her cavern and takes Beowulf in her hostile grasp, it is the faithful corslet which prevents her from thrusting her claw-like hands into his breast (ll. 1501-05). Again, when she takes Beowulf prisoner, she is said to carry the "hringa þengel" (prince of rings or mail-clad prince) (l. 1507) into her lair, description highlighting the corslet's rôle in the action. Finally, when Hrunting fails, and Beowulf lies helpless under the she-wolf, it is the byrne which saves him:

pæt gebearef fœore,
wid ord ond wid ecge ingang forstōd.
Hæfde ðæ forsōtod sunu Ecgþeowes
under gynne grund, Gēata cempa,
emne him headobyrne helpe gefremede,
herenet hearde, -- ond hālig God
gewōld wīgsigor.

it protected his life against point and against edge—withstood entry. He might have perished then, the son of Ecgtheow, under the spacious ground, the champion of the Geats, had not the war corslet, the hard warnet, afforded him help—and holy God controlled victory. (ll. 1548-54)
The poet's mention of God in the same passage with the mail corslet may be meant as a reminder of the verse from Ephesians in which brothers in Christ are commanded to "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (5.11). If God were not displeased with Beowulf's earlier wearing of helm and corslet and carrying of sword during the swimming match episode, there seems to be no valid reason to suppose He wished Beowulf to abstain from armoring himself prior to his descent into the mere.

The chief difference between the accouterments carried by Beowulf in the course of the two adventures is that during his second immersion in water, Beowulf bears not his own sword but that of Unferth, a fratricide. And Hrunting, despite its keen blade and beautiful adornment, is unsuitable for Beowulf because it has been put to a heinous use--brother-murder. As a weapon baptised with the blood of a man's brother it cannot be that "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6.17) and is, therefore, useless to Beowulf in his struggle with the she-wolf, an agent of the powers of darkness.

In The Odyssey and The Aeneid, in contrast to Beowulf, there is little mention of Odysseus and Aeneas wearing armor into the underworld. They do carry swords; but these
are used only in warding off insubstantial shades. Only in *Beowulf* are the providentially provided sword of giant's make and the mail corslet and helm vital, being means, as they are, of saving the hero's life.

Even so, without God's intervention, the hero would have failed in his task. For the poet's light imagery makes it clear that Grendel's dam is one of the minions of Satan, the Prince of Darkness. Once Beowulf has, with God's aid, regained his feet, seized a huge sword from the wall, and struck the sea-hag's head from her shoulders, a marvelous light suddenly shines out, filling the fire-lit cavern with its contrasting light, just as if the "rodores candel" (candle of the sky) (l. 1572), the sun, had broken through the cavern's roof, dimming into insignificance the hellish red glow of the fire on the sea-wolf's hearth.

There is nothing like this marvelous light in Homer's underworld. Instead there exists a Cimmerian darkness, mist, cloud, and continual night, so that Odysseus' mother, addressing him after drinking blood from the sacrificial offering, asks, "My child, how came thou here, to the gloom and the shadows?" (XI.155). When, on the other hand, Aeneas passes from one section of the underworld into that part where his father is, darkness is vanquished as he enters the rosy light of the "blessed groves of peace" (VI.796). And the Grove of Peace, lit with its own sun and moon and stars, reminds us of
the peace that descends upon the scene following Beowulf's successful struggle with the nicors and with Grendel's dam, a peace associated by the poet with "beorht bēacen Godes" (God's bright sign) (l. 570) and with "rodores candel" (the candle of the sky) (l. 1572), i.e., with the sun which is frequently associated in punning fashion with Christ, God's Son.

Just as there is little or no light imagery used in connection with Homer's underworld, neither is there any use of the baptism motif one finds in both The Aeneid and in Beowulf. Before Aeneas passes from the regions of Tartarean darkness fitfully lit by the fire of purgation into the brilliant world of the Blest, he sprinkles himself with fresh water (VI.792), an act which in context is undoubtedly one of ritual purification. And Beowulf undergoes immersion three times, each occasion having something of the extraordinary or supernatural about it. On the first occasion he swims for an extraordinary length of time--almost eight days. On the second he is immersed under water for a supernaturally long period--the length of a day. On the third, he swims an extraordinary distance--all the way back from Friesland to Geatland.

Moreover, just as Aeneas advances in enlightenment following his ritualistic act of self-baptism, Beowulf, too, shows an
advance in spiritual growth at the time of his second immersion. When swimming with Breca, Beowulf, as he himself states, was performing a boyish act of daring following a boasting match with his young friend. Beowulf's admission corroborates rather than refutes Unferth's charge that Beowulf has been guilty of "wlence" (pride) and "dolgilpe" (crazy boasting) (ll. 508-09). The clearing of the water lanes of sea monsters occurs more as a chance result than out of any intention on Beowulf's part to serve humanity.

By the time of the second immersion, however, Beowulf has matured. He comes to Denmark intending to aid Hrothgar and the Danes by slaying the monster who has made Heorot uninhabitable at night. Besides having the chivalrous intention of relieving Heorot of its monstrous visitant, Beowulf is concerned about those he knows, far and near, as he is arming for battle on the mere's edge. In the event of his failure to return alive out of the water's depths, Beowulf asks that Hrothgar shoulder the responsibilities which the Geat had assumed for kin, followers, and new-found friends, to act in the place of a father toward him and of a guardian toward his thanes. Beowulf also recollects his duty to his prince, requesting Hrothgar to send to his uncle the treasure with which Hrothgar has gifted him as a reward for his slaying of Grendel. Finally, he swears to win glory or die in the attempt (ll. 1474-91).
No longer a callow youth, Beowulf pauses to consider the consequences of his death were it to occur. He is not overcome by fear but feels concern for what might become of his companions were they left alone, leaderless in a strange land. He places them under Hrothgar’s protection. He is also mindful of his duty to his liege lord and requests Hrothgar to send his prizes home so that Hygelac may have the benefit of them, may know that Beowulf did not fail entirely in his quest, and may understand that as Beowulf’s uncle and overlord he is being generously compensated for the loss of a thane and a kinsman. Here Beowulf shows himself mindful not only of his own renown but of Hrothgar’s and of the social convention requiring that Hygelac be duly paid for the loss of his champion.

Beowulf is even mindful of Unferth, although Unferth had earlier belittled his prowess in relation to Breca’s. Even more significant a sign of maturity is Beowulf’s addressing Hrothgar as "lōofa" (beloved) (l. 1483), an epithet that seems strange until we recall that this is part of the apostolic greeting, for Paul, writing to Timothy, begins, "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (Tim. 1.2). Beowulf goes on to charge Hrothgar with the task of taking over the place of a father in discharging all the responsibilities enumerated by Beowulf. The motif
of father-son atonement is here given special emphasis, perhaps because Beowulf is on the brink of descending to
give battle to the Good Father's opposite, the Terrible
Mother, Grendel's dam, the "she-wolf of the sea."

In The Aeneid, also, there is strong emphasis on
father-son atonement. Drawing near his goal in the
underworld, Aeneas reaches the Elysian Fields and sees
his father Anchises hastening to meet him, arms out-
stretched, tears coursing down his cheeks. "And have you
come at last?" Anchises cries. "Has the pious / love that
your father waited for defeated / the difficulty of the
journey?" (VI.908-10). Here one is reminded of that
passage in Luke, one of Christ's parables, in which a
father welcomes back his Prodigal Son: "While he was
yet at a great distance, his father saw him and had
compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him"
(15.20). Whether influenced by Virgil or by Saint Luke
or merely expressing the universal emotion of parental
love, the poet's handling of Hrothgar's farewell to Beowulf
is remarkably similar in tone to both the above. Hrothgar
kisses Beowulf, throws his arms about Beowulf's shoulders,
and weeps (11. 1870-72), having previously called him
"leofa Beowulf" (beloved Beowulf) (1. 1854) and made him
a present of twelve more gifts of great value, a gesture
meant to enhance Beowulf's prestige and standing at home.
Unlike Aeneas and Beowulf, Odysseus finds no father-figure to embrace in or on the verge of the underworld. And his meeting with his mother is, in contrast to the scene of that with Aeneas' father, relatively unemotional. Until she drinks the blood offering, Odysseus mother is silent, neither looking at nor speaking to her son, although it was her grief over his absence that had brought about her death (XI.142-43). But even before Odysseus began his journey to the underworld he had encountered Hermes, a manifestation of the Wise Old Man figure of dream and fairy tale. And it is Hermes who gives him a magic talisman which protects him from Circe's spells. Later, when he has overcome his enemies and been reunited with Penelope, Odysseus goes to see his father Laertes. Thinking to test him, Odysseus tells his father that he has met Laertes' son in a far land. Whereupon Laertes begins to weep and to beg the supposed stranger for news of his son, clutching dust and ashes and showering them "over his white-haired head, while groanings incessant he uttered" (XXIV.316-17), until Odysseus turns sorrow and grief into gladness by revealing himself to his aged parent. Of course father-son atonement occurs immediately.

It is evident that heroes of epics have in common a strong feeling of atonement with the Father, coupled with a comparatively weak attachment to the mother. The feeble
nature of the hero's bond with his mother is probably a symbolic indication that his inappropriate incestuous longings have been sublimated in the course of his adventures.

The necessity for the breaking or weakening of the hero's tie with his mother and the strengthening of that with his father is hinted at in the figures who appear to him in or on the brink of the underworld. Concerning the apparition of Jocasta, Odysseus remarks:

"Next was the mother of Oedipodes, fair Queen Epicaste, She who a horrible deed with a mind unconscious committed, Wedding her son, who had taken the life of his sire and thereafter Married her; then to the world all suddenly heaven revealed it." (XI.272-75)

The motif of mother-son incest appears also in The Aeneid when Aeneas sees Phaedra, the queen who fell in love with her stepson, Hippolytus, committed suicide after being rejected by him, and left a note falsely accusing him of her rape. Aeneas discovers her in the Fields of Mourning, where

. . . those whom tyrannous love with cruel blight Has wasted, in secluded paths are hid And sheltered round about by myrtle groves. (VI.546-48)

The incest motif in Beowulf occurs in Hrothgar's background in the incestuous marriage of his mother Sigrethr with his paternal uncle, Frothi. The story of Sigrethr, Hrothgar's ill-fated mother, lends itself quite
naturally to the Terrible Mother-motif manifested in Beowulf's encounter with Grendel's dam.

The witch, also a form of the Terrible Mother, appears in *The Odyssey* as Circe, who after transforming his men into animals attempts to do the same to Odysseus (X.318-20). In *The Aeneid* the Terrible-Mother motif appears when Aeneas sacrifices to "the mother of the Eumenides and her mighty sister, a black lamb; / Also a barren cow, Proserpina, to thee" (VI.307-10). These three are evidently a triad of goddesses, Gaia (Earth Mother), Venus (heavenly goddess of love), and Proserpina (goddess of death and of the underworld). Their usual manifestations are as Hecate, Demeter, and Persephone, i.e., as hag, mother, and maiden.

Virgil's substitution of Gaia for Hecate in the Triad is significant, as is the substitution of Venus for Demeter. As Aeneas' "mother," that is, as the Good Mother from whose "ambrosial" hair a divine odor breathes (I.525-26), Venus appears in the triad in Demeter's place because Virgil apparently wished to attribute higher, more refined spiritual powers to her than those ordinarily felt to belong to the goddess of fecundity. Gaia or Earth Mother is another matter. According to myth Gaia is utterly amoral, having united with her own father, Air, to produce Tartarus, the Furies, Giants, Terror, Anger, Strife, Lies, Vengeance, etc.30
As sisters possessing opposing qualities, Gaia and Venus are fitting symbols for the dualistic philosophy of the Neo latonism one encounters throughout The Aeneid, finding it more especially in the section devoted to an exposition of Anchises' doctrine of enlightenment with its emphasis on the "celestial origin" of man's essence, his "fiery" soul of necessity inhabiting "gross" and "perishable" flesh (VI.193-95).

As Gaia or Earth Mother's offspring symbolize man's baser emotions, so Grendel and his dam symbolize correspondingly evil emotions, being as they are the progeny of the "eotenas" (giants), Cain's descendants. Grendel is himself an "eoten" (giant) (l. 761). And his dam, who is not otherwise explicitly described, is part giantess and part animal, a giant "brimwylf" (sea-wolf) (l. 1506). So characterized she must be considered to be huge and "idese onlīcnes" (in the likeness of a woman) (l. 1351) but possessed of ichthyoid as well as lupine qualities, a composite, that is, rather like Virgil's physical characterization of Scylla, granddaughter of Gaia and Tartarus and daughter of Echidna, who by her son incestuously begot the sphinx. Helenus describes Scylla to Aeneas as having the form of a maiden in her upper parts. Oddly enough, Grendel's dam is also compared by the Beowulf poet to a maiden: "Wæs se gryre læssa / efne swā micle, swā bid mægpa cræft, /
wīggryre wīfes be wēpnedmen" (The terror was less by just so much as is the power of maidens, the war terror of a woman, in comparison with that of an armed man) (11. 1282-84). Scylla's lower parts are like those of a whale with dolphin tails growing from wolves' bellies. Further, Scylla lives in a cavern on a rock-girt sea coast from whence she reaches out to suck ships to their destruction (III.538-41), posing a danger to mariners just as do the nicors who inhabit Grendel's mere.

Grendel's dam seems by comparison to Scylla relatively human. Yet she possesses like Scylla the characteristics of a monstrous female, being part human as well as part fish and part wolf. She is also linked with the nicors, the sea monsters who share the mere with her. Moreover, whether or not Grendel's dam bore him, as Echidna did the sphinx, as the result of an incestuous union, an unnatural monther-son relation is inferrable if for no other reason than the bestial nature shared by the two monsters and their extreme isolation in a lake at the bottom of wind-swept cliffs whose crevices are fit only for wolf dens. On this point, that of paternity, the *Beowulf* poet has Hrothgar remark darkly that though his countrymen call the outcast "Grendel," they know not what "dyrna gāsta" (hidden demons) (1. 1357) fathered him. Grendel, in other words, cannot recite as can a respectable warrior, the
names of father, overlord, and nation, as Beowulf does when he introduces himself to Hrothgar's coast guard:

"We synt gumcynnes Geata lēode
ond Higelaces heordgeneatas.
Wæs mīn fæder folcum gecypped,
æbele orfruma, Ecgēow haten."

"We are of the race of the people of the Geats and Hygelac's hearth companions. My father was well known to people, a noble chieftain called Ecgetheow." (ll. 260-63)

Of unknown paternity, Grendel keeps to the lonely moors and invades Heorot only by night. If challenged by some member of society to give an account of himself, if we suppose him capable of speech, still he could have nothing to say for himself, being as he doubtless is the result of that kind of union which mixes the generations inextricably, the son becoming his own brother-uncle so that the family, instead of expanding into a society of men, spirals in upon itself, dwindling into extinction, its members meanwhile being considered by others to be, like Grendel, man-monsters.

What is forbidden to the son, however, is obligatory for the hero—metaphorically speaking—if he is to achieve individuation or self-hood. The individuated ego, that is, must come to terms with the Anima, the projected feminine aspect of the male psyche. This coming to terms with the other half of one's split psyche in a "sacred marriage"
is symbolized in Christianity by the union of Christ with his bride the Church, at times personified as Mary. In myth the "sacred marriage" is symbolized by the union of the hero with the goddess or goddess-figure in the underworld.\(^{32}\)

In Homer this union occurs before Odysseus ventures into the underworld, his "marriage" to Circe, whose nature and powers are of an underworldly character, marking his subjugation of the dark powers of the unconscious, powers which undisciplined can turn a man from a human being into a "beast," just as Odysseus' sailors have been transformed by the temptress. In Virgil also this union takes place in the upper world at the time Juno contrives to place Aeneas and Dido alone in a cave where they have taken refuge from the weather during the course of a hunting trip. After deserting her, Aeneas later encounters Dido in the underworld. He attempts to speak to her; but she turns away from him in anger. Aeneas' mastery of his Anima figure, i.e., his self-mastery, is evidently inconclusive, and his troubles in settling his Trojans into Italy are numerous and exceedingly grave, *The Aeneid*, unlike *The Odyssey*, but like *Beowulf*, ending on a note of tragedy.

The only female figure in the underworld of *Beowulf* is Grendel's dam. Beowulf's slaying her with the huge sword of "eoten" or "giant" origin serves to reinforce
her identification, if such were needed, with Cain's descendants, all of whom are rebels against their Creator. Thus Beowulf's encounter with the Witch or Terrible Mother differs considerably from that of Odysseus and of Aeneas; the female antagonist he discovers in the depths of the mere is far more like the monstrous she-troll of the Scandinavian Grettis Saga than like the seductive Mediterranean witch Circe or the beautiful Queen Dido of Carthage.

In The Odyssey the hero has already met and conquered the goddess figure before his descent into the underworld. Possessing the magic talisman given to him by Hermes, who acts as his guide along the way, Odysseus is immune to the Witch's spell, which would otherwise have transformed him into a pig, a theriomorphic symbol of the undifferentiated self. "The deeper 'layers' of the psyche," Jung observes, "lose their individual uniqueness as they retreat farther and farther into darkness. 'Lower down,' that is to say as they approach the autonomous nervous functional systems, they become increasingly collective until they are universalized and extinguished in the body's materiality." This inchoate self is often projected in the form of some powerful animal such as a lion, a bear, or a boar, the last being noted for its numinous character in Greek, Roman, and Germanic mythology and religion. In The Aeneid, for example,
The river god Tiberinus prophesies to Aeneas during the course of a dream that he will see a white sow and her piglets on a riverbank and that this sign marks the spot where his city will be. Later, when Aeneas discovers the sow and her piglets, he lands and sacrifices them to Juno in an attempt to appease her anger at him (VIII.102-06).

In Beowulf the boar is also significant. The boar-figures, for example, on the helmets of the Geats "ferhwearde hōold" (held guard over the life) (l. 305) of Beowulf and of his companions, the guardianship quality indicating that the belief of Mediterranean peoples in the boar's magical or numinous quality was shared by Scandinavian peoples. Indeed, the widespread nature of this belief concerning the boar among Indo-Europeans is shown by the existence of the figure of a boar-headed mother goddess, a manifestation of Vishnu, found in northern India and believed to have been wrought in the seventh century.

It is not veneration, however, that the Great Mother requires so much as union with the male principle. Thus, Odysseus, aided by the wily Hermes, is proof against the Witch's spell and, in fact, by his own masculine generative power overcomes Circe's feminine power to transform the weak male into an animal shape. Odysseus' "wedding" with Circe comes, however, only after she has freed his followers from her spell and otherwise made submission to him. Here
the male principle, aided by its collaboration with Hermes, is shown mastering the female principle by means of uniting with it in a form of the "sacred marriage" with a surrogate goddess of the underworld, Circe's association with Persephone being shown by her knowledgeable directions to Odysseus for reaching the underworld and for carrying out the proper magical rites necessary to summon up the shades of the dead (X.516-30).

Aeneas also attempts to come to terms with the Terrible Mother as she is enacted by Juno in The Aeneid. His sacrifice of the white sow and its piglets to her indicates her close association with the fecundity of the Mother and her care for and feeding of her children since the pig in European folklore is a common embodiment of the corn-spirit and was closely associated with the mysteries of the Greek corn-goddess Demeter. But all Aeneas' many efforts to appease Juno go for naught. She is in reality the Great Mother in her negative aspect, as Venus is the Great Mother in her positive or heavenly persona. Un appeased, Juno continues her hostile intervention, continually stirring up the Italian tribes against the Trojans, the Fury Tisiphone being the persona she assumes for this purpose (X.996). Aeneas' failure to achieve symbolic union with Juno by accepting Dido, the surrogate bride whom Juno had intended for him, is the underlying
factor animating Juno's jealous wrath. When, therefore, Aeneas encounters Dido's shade in the underworld, she scorns his plea for forgiveness. His argument that he had to leave her in order to follow his divine destiny carries no weight with the female principle she represents. Dido, upon hearing Aeneas' excuse, merely glares, anger blazing up anew in her, and turns silently and grimly away, fleeing back into the shadows of the underworld, her fury as hot as ever.

Beowulf, like Aeneas, fails to come to terms with the Terrible Mother, the female principle awaiting him in the watery underworld of the mere. He does not flee from it as Aeneas fled Dido. Rather, he descends boldly to meet it, and the struggle between the two, Beowulf and Grendel's dam, is a fierce parody of the "sacred marriage" as the two fall entwined on the floor of the cavern. As one would expect, the Beowulf poet's concept of proper moral behavior prohibits his hero's mastering his adversary in the time-honored way, the way Odysseus mastered the witch Circe. Moreover, the sexual nature of the encounter is disguised. Nevertheless, the phallic symbolism of the sword Hrunting which Beowulf strives to use against the goddess of the underworld in her theriomorphic form has doubtless struck readers who, lacking a key to the mythic nature of the action, have suppressed their recognition of an archetypal encounter as too illogical and dreamlike.
to be acceptable to reason. All the same, the shattering of Hrunting clearly symbolizes Beowulf's reluctance to attempt the only kind of mastery recognized by the female principle which the masculine unconscious projects.

Before rejecting the notion that the struggle between Beowulf and Grendel's dam is a parody of the "sacred marriage" motif, one should recall the archetypal folk material which the Beowulf poet has taken over and shaped to his own end. The usual comparison in this respect is between Beowulf and The Bear's Son tale, in which the hero discovers three princesses in an underground cavern, rescues them, and makes one of them his bride. But there is another motif which the poet may have been consciously or unconsciously re-shaping, and that is the "loathly lady" motif. Stith Thompson notes the appearance of this motif in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale, and Joseph Campbell offers a most interesting variant of it in relating the story of the five sons of the Irish King Eochaid.

One at a time, having gone astray on a hunting trip, each prince quests for water. Discovering a well, he finds it guarded by a hag extremely aged and loathsome in appearance. To each request for water from the young princes the hag counterposes a demand for a kiss. The first four of the brothers refuse the hag's demand. And each in turn is sent away without having received the gift of the water
of life. The fifth and youngest brother, not as squeamish as his elders, accedes to the hag's demand, saying, "Forby giving thee a kiss, I will even hug thee!" The kiss and hug delivered, he discovers to his amazement that the dreadful creature has been transformed by his action into a wonderfully beautiful young woman who informs him that she is Royal Rule. Of this folktale Campbell observes:

Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. She lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters. And if he can match her import, the two, the knower and the known, will be released from every limitation. Woman is the guide to the sublime acme of sensuous adventure. By deficient eyes she is reduced to inferior states; by the evil eye of ignorance she is spellbound to banality and ugliness. But she is redeemed by the eyes of understanding. The hero who can take her as she is, without undue commotion but with the kindness and assurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world.

Thus, the fact that Beowulf succeeds in striking off the head of Grendel's dam by means of a sword supplied to him in his hour of need by Divine Providence does not so much solve the problem posed by Self as it forces the problem of acquiring self-knowledge down into the deepest layers of the unconscious, from where, taking on additional arche-
typal qualities of ferocity, the female principle re-emerges, as we shall see, in the form of the Dragon (or Draconitas), the antagonist against whom Beowulf fights his last fight.
NOTES


2. Ibid., p. 75.

3. Ibid., p. 76.


11. See, for example, Ritchie Girvan, *"Beowulf" and the Seventh Century: Language and Content*, 1st ed., reissued with supplement by Rupert Bruce-Mitford (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1971), pp. 67-68; Morton W. Bloomfield, *"Beowulf" and


13 Ibid., p. 91


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Huppé, p. 82.


21 Ibid., pp. 194-95.

22 Ibid., p. 20.

23 Ibid., pp. 23-24.


26 Girvan, p. 24.


30 Graves, pp. 33-32.


33 Ibid., p. 173.


36 Ibid., p. 543.

37 Jung, *Symbols*, plate IVa; see also his *Archetypes*, pp. 81-82.

38 *Archetypes*, pp. 81-82.

39 See Chambers for a résumé of scholarship relating *Beowulf* to "The Bear's Son" tale, pp. 451 ff. See also Garmonsway for the variant versions of this tale as collected by Panzer, pp. 331-32.

41 Campbell, p. 117.

42 Ibid., p. 116.
CHAPTER V

THIRD IMMERSION AND FINAL BATTLE

In creating the episode of Beowulf's third and final adventure in the sea the Beowulf poet had a problem to solve. Since on both the conscious and unconscious levels his water imagery was of exceeding importance to his epic, it was vital to his theme that Beowulf enter the water yet again. And in Beowulf's swim home from Friesland there appears the conscious effort to carry through the triple immersion motif of the baptism ritual of the early Christian church. Moreover, there was the need to raise Beowulf above the level of the unconscious into the realm of the self-conscious; for it is only on the conscious level that the hero may achieve individuation as opposed to individualism, that is, the egomania of the mana personality split off from the unconscious. This last state, egomania, comes about as a result of the triumph the individual often feels upon mastering the Terrible Mother—a victory which may also indicate a mastering of the Anima, the Terrible Mother being, as a man matures, frequently transformed into the Anima, the feminine element latent in the male psyche. When
projected as the Anima, this feminine element possesses a dæmonic quality and, according to Jung, invariably appears, at first, mingled with the mother imago. Both the Mother and the Anima projections are ambivalent, having good and bad aspects. In its good aspect the Mother projection or imago may appear as the Virgin Mary, the Heavenly Jerusalem, Paradise, or the Pearl beyond price. The dual nature of the Mother may be seen in the allegorical representation of Mary as both Jesus' mother and his cross. Faith Patten points out that the cross's gender in "The Dream of the Rood" appears to be feminine when, speaking in its own voice, it says: "Bifode ic þa me se beorn ymbclypte" (I trembled when the man embraced me) (l. 42), sexual imagery being conveyed in the use of the verb "embraced," the cross being Christ's bride, a concept put forward centuries earlier by St. Augustine, who called Christ on his way to the cross a "bridegroom" on the way to his "marriage-bed." In the Middle English "Dispute between Mary & the Cross," Mary says to the cross,

"Tre unkynde, thou schalt be kud,
mi sone step-moder I the calle."

"Tree unkind thou shall be shown,
my son's step-mother I thee call."

And the poet, developing the metaphor, adds later on that
The queen bore first--the cross afterward,
To fetch folk from hell.

Here, of course, the poet is punning on the double meaning of "to bear," i.e., to bear a child and to bear a burden.

The Terrible Mother-Anima projection, on the other hand, often appears in dream, myth, and fable as "the witch, the dragon (or any devouring and entwining animal, such as a large fish or a serpent), the grave, the sarcophagus, deep water, death. . . . This list is not, of course, complete; it presents only the most important features of the Mother archetype." Incomplete though it may be, there are in it close parallels to the Terrible Mother imagos (projections) in Beowulf.

The nicors or water monsters, for instance, grasp and drag Beowulf down into the deep. The brimwylf, Grendel's dam, fastens her claws in Beowulf's mail corslet, entwining herself about him as she seeks to destroy him. Her magical immunity to ordinary weapons makes her witch-like, and the struggle begins in water as Beowulf is swimming downward toward the bottom of the mere wherein lies her cavern (itself symbolic of the mother's womb). Twice Beowulf is victorious. He overcomes the nicors in the first struggle. In the second he slays Grendel's dam and decapitates Grendel's corpse.
It is noteworthy that the manifestation of the Terrible Mother-Anima imago keeps increasing in power and fearsomeness each time it is grappled with and—apparently—defeated. And just as the battle with Grendel's dam is more difficult than either the struggle with the nicors or the fight with Grendel himself, so the third and final encounter with the Terrible Mother in the form of the dragon is fatal to Beowulf. Jung explains why the effort to overcome the daemonic by force or by strength of will as it appears in the Terrible Mother-Anima projection so often results in disaster:

The dissolution of the anima means that we have gained insight into the driving forces of the unconscious, but not that we have made these forces ineffective. They can attack us at any time in new form. And they infallibly do so if the conscious attitude has a flaw in it. It's a question of might against might. If the ego presumes to wield power over the unconscious, it reacts with a subtle attack, deploying the dominant of the mana-personality, whose enormous prestige casts a spell over the ego. Against this the only defence is full confession of one's weakness in face of the powers of the unconscious. By opposing no force to the unconscious we do not provoke it to attack.

Elsewhere Jung notes that the kind of threat described above comes about when the conscious Ego integrates the Anima. The Anima loses her "mana" or "god-force" to the Ego. The Ego, vainglorious in victory, undergoes inflation, becoming the mana-personality. That is, it falls under the dominance
of an archetypal masculine figure rising out of the individual's collective unconscious. Well-known archetypes of the mana-personality are "the mighty man in the form of the hero, the chief, . . . saint, the ruler of men . . . , the friend of God."  

Beowulf in the latter portion of the poem becomes almost all of these. So mighty is he in his own eyes that he insists, even in his old age, on fighting the dragon unaided. And, of course, even before gaining renown as a result of slaying Grendel and his dam, Beowulf is a chief, the leader of the band of Geats accompanying him to Denmark. In time, he becomes the ruler of his nation and after he dies is regarded by his people with all the love and awe reserved for a secular if not a canonized saint. For, giving Hygelac filial love while the king lived, Beowulf acts with scrupulous regard for his nephew Heardred's claim to the Geatish throne following Hygelac's death. He shows respect and reverence for Wealtheow and Hygd. He behaves always and everywhere chastely. And when he dies he receives from his subjects the praise of having been

\[
\text{wyruldcyning(a)}
\]
\[
\text{manna mildust, ond mon(\text{\textbar})\text{\textbar}rust,}
\]
\[
\text{leodum l\text{\textbar}tost ond lofgeornost.}
\]

of world kings the mildest of men, the most gracious man, gentlest to people and most eager of praise. (ll. 3180-83)
In reality what has happened is that Beowulf has overcome the Terrible Mother only to have his persona (public mask) become adulterated with an archetypal figure of his own sex corresponding to the Father imago. Such a transformation is easier to comprehend when it assumes the characteristics of the Tyrant Father and rants on the stage as a Herod or a Tamburlaine or (in this century) appears as a demagogic leader of the masses such as Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin. Even so, certain critics have been suspicious of Beowulf's persona, discerning behind it the inflated ego described by Jung. Margaret Goldsmith points out, for example, that

the Dragon is quelled, but not before Beowulf has been wounded in the neck by its venomous teeth. Beowulf dies of the poison from this wound. The Dragon does not suffocate or devour him, which would signify that he was swallowed into hell. Instead he suffers a wound in the neck—a part of the body often associated with pride—and from this the slow poison spreads through him.¹⁰

Hrothgar, following Beowulf's defeat of Grendel's dam, we recall, warned the hero of the dangers of pride (ll. 1760-61). And, although they should not be confounded, pride and an inflated ego go hand in hand. Goldsmith believes that Beowulf may well have shortcomings, but her contention that his failing is cupidity or covetousness¹¹ flies in the face of his generosity in surrendering Hrothgar's gifts to Hygelac and Hygd (ll. 2152-76) and in rewarding his followers with
great liberality during his tenure on the Geatish throne (ll. 2865-72). Clearly he is no Heremod who "nallas bēagas geaf / Denum æfter dōme" (no rings gave to the Danes according to desert) (ll. 1719-20).

Granting for the sake of argument that Beowulf, like many another man, grows somewhat cynical and grasping in his old age, that he came to desire "worldly wealth" more than "everlasting life," as Goldsmith claims, what then? How, espousing this view, does one account for the strong feeling among any number of critics and lovers of the poem that Beowulf's death marks the passing of a selfless, great-hearted hero, a man at one with himself and his world?

The answer may be that there are two levels of meaning present at the conclusion of Beowulf. One of these is, apparently, conventional and literal, lying on the surface of the poem. The second level of meaning, on the other hand, seems to be unconventional and, most likely, unconscious, moving as it does against the poet's apparent attitude toward his hero. The principle at work is that of compensation. Jung, although praising Christianity's moral subjugation of man's most brutish instincts, notes at the same time that the Christian emphasis on "spirit inevitably leads to an unbearable depreciation of man's physical side and thus produces a sort of optimistic caricature of human
And in *Aion* he dilates on the consequences to the individual of a one-sided emphasis on the spirit:

Christ is our nearest analogy of the self and its meaning. Yet, although the attributes of Christ (consubstantiality with the Father, co-eternity, filiation, parthenogenesis, crucifixion, Lamb sacrificed between opposites, One divided into many, etc.) undoubtedly mark him out as an embodiment of the self looked at from the psychological angle, he corresponds to only one half of the archetype. The other half appears in the Antichrist. The latter is just as much a manifestation of the self, except that he consists of its dark aspect. Both are Christian symbols, and they have the same meaning as the image of the Saviour crucified between two thieves. This great symbol tells us that the progressive development and differentiation of consciousness leads to an ever more menacing awareness of the conflict and involves nothing less than a crucifixion of the ego, its agonizing suspension between irreconcilable opposites.

According to a diagnosis such as this, Beowulf is on the conscious level the ideal Germanic warrior and Christian king. He shows respect for Hrothgar and filial love for his uncle, Hygelac. He rejects Hygd's offer of the throne out of a sense of loyalty to his nephew, Heardred. But what are his longings and passions?

Reticent as the *Beowulf* poet is in regard to sexual matters, we can only infer the hero's private life and his feelings about the women portrayed in the poem. Viewing her through Beowulf's eyes, for example, we see Freawaru not as a desirable woman but only as a young princess betrothed to Ingeld (11. 2024-25) and doomed to suffer.
a fate similar to that of Hildeburh at Finnsburg, also a family conflict, once Ingeld's anger is rekindled against her father King Hrothgar (ll. 2064-66). Then "se ecghete āpumswēoran / æfter wælnīðe wæcnan scolde" (the sword hate by deadly enmity of sons-in-law and fathers-in-law was to awaken) (ll. 84-85). Wealtheow, Hrothgar's queen, appears to Beowulf primarily in the role of the mother defending the interests of her sons as heirs to the throne (ll. 2016-18). Of Queen Hygd we learn but little more: she is "swiðe geong" (very young) (l. 1926) and not ungenerous to Hygelac's retainers (ll. 1929-31). Then follows a strange passage concerning "Mōdpryðo" (Strong Pride or Great Arrogance). Klaeber interprets this nominative as a proper name, that of Offa's queen; Offa was a legendary, pre-historic Anglian king mentioned in Mercian genealogies. Kenneth Sisam, however, thinks "Strong Pride" an incredible name for a lady, pointing out that there is no capitalization or compounding in the manuscript, which reads "mod ðryðo wæg" (showed violence of character). He suggests that a proper name has been lost from the poem due to a scribe's error, and R. W. Chambers supports Sisam's view of this matter.

Whether "Mōdpryðo" is the name or the chief characteristic of some "perilous maiden" who had men executed for daring to look on her fair face, the motif is evidently that of
the princess of myth and fairytale whose bridegroom must risk death in order to consummate marriage with her. As an example of the kind of female who is dangerous to her suitors, she is doubtless meant to exemplify the obverse or Shadow side of Hygd's character. In this regard, it seems significant that her name, "Hygd" (mind, thought, reflection) is close to "hyge," which translates as "mind, thought, courage, pride," the last, of course, a cardinal sin characteristic of the mysterious Princess Modthrytho.

The Beowulf poet, as Ritchie Girvan observes, apparently creates Shadow doubles such as Modthrytho to highlight the good qualities of persona like Hygd, doubles which at the same time indirectly hint at their possible weaknesses. In pointing out that Unferth seems to personify Hrothwulf's jealous hatred for his uncle King Hrothgar, Girvan explains that "it is a recognized method of Germanic poetry. Instead of figuring internal conflict or evil passion in the individual, which would be difficult at that stage, it is given body and voice in the person of a zealous retainer." Following Girvan's thought to its logical conclusion, one must suppose that the "Heremod" or "Army-Mind" (by extension "War-Mind") of Hrothgar's homily (ll. 1687 ff.) symbolizes the avaricious, grasping Shadow of Hrothgar himself, the king who has usurped his nephew Heoroweard's place in the
succession to the Danish throne. Continuing with the application of the "Shadow Double" theory, it is conceivable that Grendel's dam symbolizes Queen Wealtheow's Shadow; both are mothers ready to fight on behalf of their offspring. Hygelac's Shadow is his brother Haethcyn, who has "ungedēfelīce" (unfittingly) (l. 2435) slain their oldest brother Herebeald, the heir to the Geatish throne (ll. 2432 ff.), killing him by means of an arrow ostensibly aimed at another mark.

Beowulf alone seems presented as a one-dimensional character without a Shadow or inferior personality. In real life, of course, the constant suppression of one's Shadow would be paid for by a psychic breakdown, for such is the power of the unconscious that to continually suppress it tends to strengthen not weaken it. It is logical, therefore, that there should be a noticeable growth in the powers of the forces that Beowulf must grapple with as the poem draws to its conclusion. First it was the nicors, then the two monsters, Grendel and his dam, and, last, the firedrake, a being more powerful than all the others put together.

Before the final struggle with the firedrake could begin, however, the Beowulf poet felt obliged to wind up his triple immersion theme. This feat is accomplished when the poet, shortly before the dragon fight, narrates the story
of Beowulf's swim home from Friesland as a "flashback." This literary device, known to both Homer and Virgil, enables the poet to sketch in with skilled economy his hero's adventures between the time of his victorious return from Hrothgar's court to Geatland and the destructive outbreak by the dragon following the incursion of a thrall into its lair (ll. 2279). From the flashback we learn that at the time of Hygelac's death in Friesland Beowulf kills his lord's slayer, squeezing him, Daeghrefn, until his bones shatter (l. 2508-09). Hygelac's death avenged, Beowulf gathers up no less than thirty suits of armor, enters the North Sea, and swims all the way home, bearing the suits of armor on his back the while. Such a swim while bearing one suit of armor would be miraculous, one while bearing thirty is undoubtedly an allusion to the numinous quality of three, the multiplication by ten inserted for emphasis.

The armor may also serve to remind us that this marathon swim completes the triple immersion motif, since this second swim in the North Sea along with the descent into Grendel's mere makes three times that Beowulf has undergone total immersion. And it is well for Beowulf that his baptism is now complete. Upon reaching Geatland he is subjected to the greatest temptation of his life.

Hygelac, the king and Beowulf's uncle, is now dead. One would be justified in assuming that Hygd, like Wealtheow,
who speaks against Hrothgar's adopting Beowulf and possibly bequeathing the throne away from their son (ll. 1168 ff.), would now exert her influence to insure that her son Heardred succeed his father on the Geatish throne. But such expectations are defeated. Hygelac's widow Hygd, who is perhaps his second wife,²³ is Beowulf's aunt by marriage, but nevertheless not too old to be considered as a marriage partner since she was yet "swīte geong" (very young) (l. 1926) when Beowulf returned from Hrothgar's court, and she offers him the throne—and, we may infer, recalling the analogues, herself along with it. Such a marriage would, of course, be an incestuous union, one proscribed in Leviticus. But a similar offer had been made before when Bjorn's stepmother, the queen, offered to share both the royal authority and the royal bed with her stepson (see above p. 52). And it is Bjorn's son, Bothvarr Bjarki, whose adventures so closely parallel Beowulf's that they seem to some scholars to have provided an analogue for those of Beowulf.²³

Firmly declining his queen's proposal, Beowulf rejects her offer of

hord ond rīce,
beagas ond bregostŌl.
treasure and realm, rings and princely throne. (ll. 2369-70)
Were Hygd aged and unlovely, Beowulf's refusal might be considered the result of his disinclination for her person. But we know that she must not have been much older than he and was possibly younger and that upon his return from Denmark Beowulf had thought enough of her to present her with

\[
\text{wætlicne wundurmæðum, ðone þe him Wealhtēo geaf, deod(nes) dohtor, þrio wig somod swancor ond sadolbeorht; hyre syttan wæs æfter bēahđege br(þ)ost geweordād.}
\]

the curious, wondrous treasure which Wealtheow, a prince's daughter, had given to him, together with three graceful and saddle-bright horses; after the presentation of the ring then was her breast honored. (ll. 2173-76)

The poet says no more of Beowulf's possible attachment to his uncle's young wife, perhaps because he is markedly refined and reticent where sexual matters are concerned. He refers, for example, to Fitela merely as Sigmund's nephew, passing in silence over the incestuous father-son relationship. And after detailing Beowulf's gifts to Hygd he leaves it to his audience to infer Hygd's motive in later on pressing Beowulf to take the throne. And apparently he feels no need to dwell on the temptation Beowulf must undergo. Having providentially experienced a triple immersion in sea and mere, Beowulf has been strengthened by his struggle with the monsters to the point that it now seems only natural
that neither Hygd nor her subjects can persuade the hero that he "hālford wære" (should be lord) (l. 2375) over his nephew Heardrēd.

That Beowulf refuses to supplant Heardrēd may seem no more than right. But elsewhere in the poem an uncle had supplanted a nephew, Hrothgar having set aside Heoroweard, son of his older brother Heorogār. Moreover, Hrothgar, as if suffering from a bad conscience, which not infrequently drives one to insult the one he has wronged, deliberately slights Heoroweard by giving to Beowulf the armor which had once belonged to Heoroweard's father. Such acts, it seems, bring their own retribution, for later on Hrothgar's other nephew, Hrothulf, will seize the Danish throne, shunting aside and slaying Hrothgar's son Hrethic. But Beowulf, evidently gifted with the will power to resist the lure of royal rule, refuses to supersede Heardrēd and instead acts as a guardian and friendly counsellor to his young nephew, showing him every sign of goodwill and respect (ll. 2378-79) until death in battle carries Heardrēd off, clearing the way for Beowulf to accept the throne (ll. 2384-90).

The swim back from Friesland and the matter of the succession to the Geatish throne recounted, the poet may at last move on to the recounting of Beowulf's advance toward the dragon's lair. Just why the poet chose a dragon as Beowulf's final mortal enemy requires examination.
Louis Bouyer tells us that, according to the church fathers, Satan made his dwelling in the waters and that Christ when he was baptized in the Jordan crushed the demon's head. Of this act St. Cyril of Jerusalem had this to say:

The dragon Behemoth, according to the book of Job (10:21-23), was in the waters and received the Jordan into his mouth. As it was necessary to break the heads of the dragon, Jesus descended into the waters and bound the Strong One (Matt. 12:29), so that he acquired the power to walk upon scorpions and serpents.25

In this quotation from St. Cyril the idea of water as the dwelling place for Satan in the form of Behemoth, a dragon, is linked with water baptism and the subsequent upsurge of Jesus' powers which enabled him to crush the head of mankind's ancient enemy. Moreover, the allusion to Satan as Behemoth and his identification as a dragon connects the dragon to the "beast from the sea" of Revelations, the creature with seven heads, one of which, John tells us, he saw "wounded to death" (13.3). The identification of Satan with Behemoth and with the dragon closes the circle, linking the Book of Job in the Old Testament with the synoptic gospel of Matthew and the last book of the New Testament, Revelations.

St. Cyril, one of the fourth century Greek fathers of the church, had as his special charge the instruction of catechumens (candidates for baptism), "both those who
were to be prepared for admission to the Christian community through baptism and those who after baptism were to be inducted into knowledge of the Christian religion, especially the mystery of the Eucharist." To this end St. Cyril wrote his books of *Catecheses* as an aid to other priests in preparing candidates for baptism. In his Third *Catechesis* he relates the tradition of Christ's entering the water to contend with the dragon Behemoth.

If the *Beowulf* poet were familiar with the *Catecheses*, directly or through translation, then that may be a source of inspiration for Beowulf's encounter with the dragon. Wilson L. Bevan, author of *Church History: Medieval and Modern*, calls Cyril's *Catecheses* one "of the most interesting monuments of ecclesiastical literature" of his age. As baptism was possibly the most significant of the church's rituals, it seems likely that the *Beowulf* poet would have acquainted himself with the best known works concerning this rite and would thus have been well acquainted with the motifs of triple immersion and heroic combat against Behemoth, the dragon from the sea.

At any rate it is certain that both *Beowulf* and the *Catecheses* emphasize struggle against demonic creatures who are the enemies of both God and man. Baptismal candidates were anointed with oil as if they were athletes about to enter the arena, and Beowulf himself makes preparations, standing
on the edge of the mere, for a struggle that may mean his
death. That Grendel and his dam are God's enemies is certain
from the poet's alluding to Grendel as "forscrlen" of
"Cáines cyanne" (proscribed of Cain's race) (ll. 106-07).
Beowulf himself calls Grendel a "leodsceadan" (people's
enemy) (1. 2093), and the poet twice calls the dragon
a "beodsceadan" (people's foe) (11. 2278, 2688). Further,
the poet characterizes Grendel and the dragon in similar
terms, the dragon as "laX" (hateful, hostile) (11. 2305,
2315), and Grendel as of a "laXan cynnes" (hateful race)
(1. 2354), as Adrien Bonjour points out. 29 Bonjour notes
these epithets when refuting the contention by T. M. Gang
that "the dragon is altogether a different sort of creature
from the Grendel-tribe. For he is nowhere called God's
enemy, or a fiend, or joyless; in fact, no words of moral
disapprobation are applied to him... It is hard to
believe that the poet, having so clear an idea of super-
natural evil and its opposition to God as we can infer from
the Grendel story, should suddenly present us with a symbol
for the same kind of evil that is nevertheless devoid of
so many of the specific characteristics of an evil creature."30
Despite Gang's argument, however, if one of the church fathers
identified the dragon with both Behemoth and the sea beast
of Revelations, then for the Beowulf poet to have further
stressed such identification would have been inartistic,
a violation of Augustine's dictum that "serious poetry should be allusive, enigmatic, periphrastic. . . . Literary pleasure comes from the discovery of veiled truth; the combination of enigmatic fiction and clear underlying meaning may be taken as defining the beauty of poetry."31 And since Christ himself was held to have contended with a dragon at the time of his baptism, then Gang's contention that J. R. R. Tolkien lacked sufficient evidence to support his hypothesis that the dragon is of "universal significance" as a symbol of evil32 now appears itself as based on insufficient knowledge of the Beowulf poet's possible background material. Tolkien's surmise was brilliantly intuitive of the truth.33

Herbert G. Wright points out that there is a tradition of "perpetual warfare between the serpent race and the descendants of Cain" stemming from the story of man's creation, his fall, and his expulsion from the garden.34 God, pronouncing judgment on the serpent for its rôle in man's fall, says, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head" (Gen. 3.14). Some scholars view God's prophecy as "the first promise of a Redeemer."35 After such a prophecy, it is only natural that the tradition of Jesus' entering the water and "breaking the dragon's heads" should have entered religious literature. In its way, this tradition corresponds to that of Christ's descent into hell during the three-day
period between the Passion and the Resurrection, a tradition retained in the Vulgate and in popular Old English and medieval literature—the basis, for example, of "The Descent into Hell" in The Exeter Book and of the mid-thirteenth century English mystery play The Harrowing of Hell. Both traditions, that is, are logical inferences of what must (or, at any rate, should) have happened, given God's promise of a savior.

Gang objects to interpreting the dragon as a symbol of universal evil on the grounds that the Beowulf poet does not "clearly and repeatedly" tell us that the dragon is evil, that the poet does not so much as drop a hint of the dragon's true nature. But Gang overlooks what Wright points out, that the setting and the dragon's physical characteristics provide the hint, make the link between the dragon and serpensentis (serpent-ness), the malice and envy which lurked in the garden and tempted Eve to disobedience, the sin which had brought about Satan's fall from heaven.

Like Grendel, who lives in a watery home in the "westen" (wasteland) (l. 1265), the dragon lives in a wasteland near if not in the water. His cave is located on a seaciff directly above the sea. Enraged over the theft of a gold cup from his hoard, the dragon prowls angrily about "on þære westene" (in the wasteland) (l. 2298). Further linking him to the water motif is the stream issuing from his lair. We know about this last indirectly. Wiglaf,
first bathing his lord with water, then, at Beowulf's request, goes into the barrow, looks upon the giant's work, and then again immediately upon his return, "winedryhten his ᵇǣtǣrē gelafede" (his liege lord laved with water) (l. 2791) a second time, a stream issuing from the barrow being the only place where he could have obtained the water. Then, when the Geatish warriors go to remove the treasure from the cave, the poet says that they "dracan ēc scufun, / wyrm ofer weallclif, lēton wēg niman" (moreover shoved the serpent over the cliff, let the wave take him) (l. 3132), so that the dragon receives burial in the water, the element most appropriate for him as a symbol of the sea beast of Revelations.

Besides being explicitly a "wyrm" (serpent) (l. 3132), the dragon moves like a serpent. When he joins battle with Beowulf, he "gebeah / snude tosomne" (coiled himself quickly together) (ll. 2567-68) and was "gebogen scriðan" (coiled to glide) (l. 2569) in his haste to encounter Beowulf. Previously the poet has told us that he was a "hringbogan" (coiled creature) (l. 2561), adding later on that the creature is a "wrym wōhbogen" (coiled serpent) (l. 2827). And when first introducing him, the poet calls the dragon a "gaest" (demon) (l. 2312) and a "lāt lyftfloga" (hostile air-flyer) (l. 2315), one who begins a "wyrmes wīg" (serpent's war) (l. 2316) against mankind, a creature utterly filled moreover with a "nearofāges nid" (torturing foe's
malice) (l. 2517) against his victims. He is also a "gudscæadæa" (hostile scather) who sears the Geats with fire by night and then flees in a coward's fashion to take shelter in his lair by day, trusting for his safety in the stone walls of the barrow (ll. 2322-23). Taking into consideration the dragon's physical characterization as a serpent, his being linked to the other monsters in the poem by means of setting (water and wasteland), and the use of the epithets such as "demon" and "hostile scather" and the emotions of hate and malice attributed to him, one must of necessity agree with Bonjour's conclusion that Tolkien's "symbolical interpretation is based on more solid ground than Mr. Gang allows." This being so, one may readily see the dragon as symbolic of "the dragon Behemoth" and of the "beast from the sea" of Revelations.

Not only is there the motif of the dragon as the hero's demonic antagonist in the latter half of Beowulf but also the motif of the hero's descent into the underworld, an element similar to that in the The Odyssey and The Aeneid as well as in the patristic theological speculations concerning Christ's "harrowing of hell." Allen Cabaniss points out that Beowulf prepares for his descent into Grendel's mere as though for death. The motif of the hero's encounter with and overcoming of death is further developed and given additional emphasis in the third and final conflict, the Beowulf poet
placing the encounter at the very entrance of the grave itself, i.e., the barrow constructed by the "last survivor." Certain phrases stress the underworldly aspect of the meeting with the dragon, e.g., "rōf őretta / . . . hiorosercean bær / under stāncleofu" (the renowned champion . . . bore his war sark under the stony cliffs) (11. 2354-40) and again

Biorn under borge  bordrand onswāf
wīt dām gryregiests,  Geata dryhten.

Under the mound the lord of the Geats turned his shield against the dreadful stranger. (11. 2559-60)

Prepositions in Old English must, of course, frequently be inferred from case and context when it is a matter of indicating movement to or from. The poet does not in this passage, however, choose any generalized forms to indicate Beowulf's movements but instead specifies "under" twice ("under the stony cliffs" and "under the mound") with only nineteen lines between these two instances. At the moment when Beowulf "turns his shield against the dreadful stranger," the poet might easily have said for the sake of variation "nean" (from nearby) or "ūtan" (from without), neither of which would have disturbed his rhythmic pattern nor significantly changed his meaning, since it appears later on that Beowulf and the dragon actually conduct their struggle outside rather than inside the barrow.
When Beowulf sinks down mortally wounded after the conclusion of the battle, he reclines on a spot where he can see

\[
\text{enta geweorc,}
\]

\[
\text{hū dā stanbogan stapulum fæste}
\]

\[
\text{ēce eordreced innan healde.}
\]

the giants' work and how the eternal earthhouse held stone arches fast on pillars within.

(11. 2717-19)

Here one might conclude that Beowulf is within the entrance of the barrow. Later, however, when he has sent Wiglaf to look upon the treasure and report back to him, Wiglaf wonders agitatedly whether he will find his lord still living where he had left him just as he had fallen at the end of the battle "in dom wongstede" (in the place on the plain or field) (1. 2786).

It is not easy to visualize a plain or field before a cave situated under a cliff facing immediately upon the sea (we know the Geats later tumble the dragon's corpse over the cliff's edge directly into the waves below). With the "harrowing of hell" motif in mind, the poet apparently did not wish to depict Beowulf as dying within the barrow, for, if he is a Christ-figure, his remaining in "hell" would not be appropriate, conferring as it would too much victory on the dragon, man's ancient enemy. On the other hand, it is clearly time for the poem to end. Beowulf is very old and has Christ-like or, at any rate, saintly
characteristics; thus, he clearly ought to die a martyr's death. One must imagine the two, Beowulf and the dragon, struggling at the entrance of the cave. When Beowulf falls, he falls in the "upper" world, that is, outside the "underworld" of the grave.

Of Christ-figure symbolism pertaining to Beowulf and noted by critics, one is the group of his twelve followers, one of whom, the thrall, proves to be his betrayer in that it is he who by his theft of the gold cup (a significant vessel in the celebration of the mass) wakes the dragon and incites it to devastate the countryside. Much has been made, also, of the symbolic or allegorical nature of the dragon. It has been likened by M. B. McNamee to Satan. Margaret Goldsmith sees it as linked with Leviathan and thus with Satan. And Tolkien, Bonjour, and Wright, as I have earlier noted, concur, Tolkien being the first, of course, to put forth the interpretation of the dragon as approaching Draconitas (dragon-ness), a creature considered by many (but by no means all) to be a symbol of universalized evil.

T. M. Gang, on the other hand, takes the position that if the dragon is a symbol, it is one for an impersonal, amoral kind of evil, evil only as disease or a natural catastrophe is evil. For him, the dragon does not bear personal responsibility for its nature and acts, not, at any rate, to the same degree that Grendel and his dam do.
He sees both Beowulf and the dragon as merely victims of an ancient curse of which neither is aware. That Gang should dwell on the unconscious nature of the adversaries in Beowulf's final struggle is significant. Persuaded by Gang, one might see both Beowulf and the dragon as victims rather than aggressors. Further, the symbolic or numinous number three that has run like a thread throughout both halves of the poem (the three immersions; the struggles against three kinds of supernatural opponents: the nicors, Grendel and his dam, and the dragon; the return from Friesland with thirty suits of armor; the three times Wiglaf sprinkles water upon his dying lord) is underscored in connection with the dragon.

The firedrake, we learn, has guarded the hord "þrō hund wintra" (for three hundred winters) (l. 2278). Moreover, at the climax of the battle, the dragon pauses dramatically and then rushes for a "briddan sīte" (third time) (l. 2688) upon Beowulf. And, as we might have guessed beforehand, it is during this attack that it both gives and receives a fatal wound, the wound or bite it inflicts upon Beowulf which spreads venom throughout the hero's body. It is as though the two, Beowulf and the dragon, unite in the third encounter, a union which proves fatal to both, Beowulf finishing off his opponent with a battle knife (l. 2704).
Without Wiglaf, of course, Beowulf might well have succumbed before killing the dragon. But divine providence in the form of Wiglaf and his attack upon the dragon's underbelly once again— as in Grendel's cavern when Beowulf miraculously regains his feet and sees the magic sword— intervenes, enabling Beowulf to overcome his final and greatest adversary. Goldsmith, who has pointed out this triumph as allegorizing Beowulf's victory over the sin of pride and cupidity, believes these last to be Beowulf's inheritance of Adam's legacy of sin and death. R. E. Kaske also sees the treasure hoard as symbolizing avarice and pride but holds that Beowulf himself is innocent of these two sins.

Little if at all discussed, however, has been the question of what the Dragon's bite symbolizes at the level of the collective unconscious. Much points to the supposition that, in Jungian terminology, the bite symbolizes the union of Beowulf's persona with its Shadow, the union, that is, of the public personality with the hidden or inferior one, the union being indicated by the flooding throughout the hero's body of the dragon's essence, its venom. At the same time the dragon also symbolizes the Terrible Mother. The seeming paradox of Beowulf's union at the very end with that against which he has struggled from the beginning can be explained on the grounds that what was unallowable in
the hero's youth becomes mandatory in his old age if he is to achieve self-hood:

The hero's victory over the "mother," or over her daemonic representative (dragon, etc.), is never anything but temporary. What must be regarded as regression in a young person—feminization of the man (partial identity with the mother) and masculinization of the woman (partial identity with the father)—acquires a different meaning in the second half of life. The assimilation of contrasexual tendencies then becomes a task that must be fulfilled in order to keep the libido in a state of progression. The task consists in integrating the unconscious, in bringing together "conscious" and "unconscious"... in the individuation process. At this stage the mother symbol no longer connects back to the beginnings, but points towards the unconscious as the creative matrix of the future. "Entry into the mother" then means establishing a relationship between the ego and the unconscious.

The Beowulf poet evidently realized at least subconsciously that his characterization of his hero was too one-dimensional. At the penultimate moment in the tale, therefore, he brought about a union of Beowulf with the very creature whom critics have seen as symbolizing man's baser—but perhaps necessary—instincts, necessary, that is, to self-preservation and to the preservation of one's family, tribe, and nation.

That the Beowulf poet uses animal symbolism other than that of the dragon can be demonstrated by an examination of the episode concerning the Geatish retaliatory attack on the Swedes, the "Gut-Scilfingas" of King Ongentheow.
Edward B. Irving, Jr., finds the names of the two Geatish warriors "Wulf" (Wolf) and "Eofer" (Boar) highly suggestive. Attacking Ongentheow's people in "onmêdlan" (arrogance) (l. 2926), the Geats lose their war leader King Haethcyn "wið Hrefnawudu" (by Ravenswood) (l. 2925). Wolf and Boar and the remaining Geats stand off the Swedes until the siege is lifted by the appearance of Hygelac with a relieving force of Geats (ll. 2941-42). Ongentheow retreats into his stronghold only to be pursued by Wolf and Boar. Called a "folces hyrde" (people's shepherd) (l. 2981) by the poet, fighting in defense of his aged wife and his home and subjects, Ongentheow dies, slain in a close contest and stripped of his mail corslet, sword, and helm. Later Wolf and Boar are praised and promised a reward for their deed by Hygelac (ll. 2989-90). Irving sees the actions of the Geats as bestial:

Brought to bay, they fight like animals. Is the poet not inviting us to think of the story in just those terms? Two men named Wolf and Boar drag down the mighty Ongentheow in the Wood of the Ravens, and the Messenger's speech ends with a dialogue between Raven and Eagle.55

Goldsmith also sees the Ravenswood battle as the "crowning manifestation of the ruthless cruelty and the fortitude which the feuds have bred."54 For her, this battle and its participants with their animal names constitute the thematic climax of the poem. She concludes that "like the raven at
Heorot, the ravens of 'Hrofnesholt' herald a day of death; they and the wolves come off best in the whole unhappy vendetta.\textsuperscript{52}

Since the substance of the action consists of the fall of King Ottarr Vendilkraka in the Ynglingatal, one might well think that the Beowulf poet was merely reporting history. According to Klaeber, however, the two warriors who slew King Vendilkraka were Vottr and Fasti, names "more authentic than the rather typical appellations Wulf and Eofer of the Anglo-Saxon epic."\textsuperscript{53} From Klaeber's remarks one can only draw the conclusion that the poet took a historical action and changed the names of the actors and the setting in order not only to work it into his plot but also to infuse it with symbolism of universal import.

Comparisons of man and animal were, of course, nothing new. Animal similes are commonplace in both The Iliad and The Aeneid. Throughout The Iliad warriors are frequently compared to lions and wild boars. Diomedes, inspired by Athene, is said to have run among the Trojans as furiously as a "wounded lion" among a "terrified flock."\textsuperscript{54} Further on he is called "formidable as a wild boar," and "lion-like" he prepares to "roar" as he and his cohorts regroup for battle.\textsuperscript{55}
In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas, describing the fall of Troy to Queen Dido, says of himself and other Trojan resisters: "As ravenous wolves / . . . with dry throats seek / Their prey; so through the foe / We rushed to no uncertain death" (ll. 490-94). And in the final battle between the Trojans and the Italians, Virgil compares Arrus to a wolf (XI.1036), Turnus to a wounded lion (XII.6-7), Aeneas and Turnus to two bulls (XII.908), and, finally, Aeneas in pursuit of Turnus to a hound and Turnus to a stag (XII.948-49) trapped on the edge of a river. Here one may well be reminded of the *Beowulf* poet's hart trapped by hounds on the edge of Grendel's mere (ll. 1369-73).

The comparison in the classical epics, however, are just that: similes. This fact marks the chief difference between the use of animal imagery on the part of Homer and Virgil on the one hand and of the *Beowulf* poet on the other. Homer and Virgil use animals as similes and metaphors to indicate a ruthless kind of courage or dumb terror on the part of their personae. The *Beowulf* poet uses animals symbolically, changing *Vendel* to *Ravenswood* and *Vott* and *Fasti* to *Wolf* and *Boar*. With this change, not one of degree only but of kind, the wood is the place of carrion birds and death; the two warriors are embodiments of those "beasts of war," the wolf and the boar. In their war frenzy Wolf
and Boar cease to be human, symbolizing not animals alone
but the beastliness of the Germanic blood-feud which
demanded an unending supply of victims.

Even the raven may be symbolic who "blitheheart"
(blithe of heart) announces "heofones wynne" (heaven's joy or
the rising sun) from Hrothgar's roofter on the morning
following Beowulf's victory over Grendel's dam (ll. 1801-02).
Ordinarily one would not hesitate to place the raven with
the eagle, wolf, and boar as scavengers of the battlefield,
a bird not infrequently the familiar of witches, gallowstree
corpses, and the pagan god Odin. But, as Heorot has just
been purified by Beowulf, such associations seem to make
little sense. In the hermetic writings of the early
church fathers, though, Christ had a number of symbols
in common with Satan, one of them being the "nycticorax"
(night heron or raven), a fact which perhaps helps to
shed light on the happy tone and brilliant light symbolism
connected with the raven's song.

As for Beowulf's name, Chambers has commented on the
"bee" element in the kenning "bee wolf" that makes it up.
And Cabaniss has drawn attention to the eulogy to the bee
contained in the baptism ritual of the early church and to
the linking therein of the chaste worker bee to the Holy
Virgin. One element of the kenning, then, may be seen as
an allusion both to chastity and to the Virgin Mary. And the name, taken as a whole, signifying as it does "bear," is an excellent choice for a hero since "O.E. beorn, or 'warrior, hero, prince' seems originally to have meant simply 'bear.'" Assuming that Beowulf's name was not a "given" in Germanic heroic tales, then the poet's choice of it may indicate not only his hero's aristocratic origin but also his qualities of valor and continence.

As we have seen before, the mingling of the dragon's essence with Beowulf's undoubtedly is significant on the conscious level. It could symbolize, for example, the spiritual wound inflicted by the serpent on Adam at the time of the Fall, a wound which left a heritage of guilt, sin, and death for "his human posterity, so that we all go stumbling because of that wound," according to Ambrose, one of the early church fathers. But on the level of the collective unconscious it is reminiscent of nothing so much as the "sacred marriage" of the hero with the goddess in the underworld. Hence, it would also be symbolic of the integration of ego and self with the Shadow that "properly belongs to it," the shadow-aspect lacking in Christ but necessarily present in the integrated personality of man, who lives not in the static, "ideal" world of heaven but in a "læne" (loaned or transitory) (l. 1754) world where
change is what distinguishes life from the state of death.

As William Blake put the matter,

> Without contrarities is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate, are necessary to human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys reason. Evil is the active springing from energy.

And in Blakean mythology it is the demonic Los, not Urizen, whom Blake credits with creating the material universe out of his own "Fibres," forming with them furnaces and "A Hammer of adamant" with which he unweariedly "beat on the Anvil, till glorious / An immense Orb of fire he Fram'd," and

> Oft he quench'd it beneath in the Deeps,
> Then survey'd the all bright mass, Again
> Seizing fires from the terrific Orbs,
> He heated the round Globe, then beat,
> While, roaring, his Furnaces endur'd
> The chain'd Orb in their infinite wombs.

According to Jung, in order to assimilate the primeval energy possessed by one's Shadow (Blake's demonic Los), one must be able to recognize the relative evil of his nature, the inferior traits lurking in his personal unconscious. But even success in integrating his own ego with the less admirable elements from his unconscious does not necessarily prepare a hero for the kind of shattering experience undergone by Beowulf when he struggles with the dragon, a symbol
of absolute evil rising from the depths of the poet's collective unconscious. Even a pyrrhic victory, in such a case, is a victory indeed, and this is the best that Beowulf can achieve.

So fundamental is animal imagery to Beowulf's impact, that even geographical features, if they bear an animal name, ought to be scrutinized for symbolic overtones, especially when one of them becomes the hero's final resting place. The name of the headland "Hrones-næss" (Whale's Bluff) (ll. 2805, 3136), for example, has in it the "whale" or "fish" element. Jessie L. Weston has written of the widespread nature of fish symbolism and of its association with the principle of the life force and of the godhead. In India Vishnu the Creator is represented in religious celebrations as a golden fish. In Buddhist monasteries one finds gongs and cymbals in the shape of a fish. In Chinese Buddhism the goddess Kwanyin is shown at times holding a fish or else standing on a fish. The Babylonians had a fish or fisher god, Oannes. The fish was associated with Orpheus and later with Christ. The Jews had a legend in which Messias was to catch the great fish Leviathan at the end of time and share it as a sacrificial meal among his followers. The Jewish custom of eating a holy meal of fish on the Sabbath "appears to have been adopted by the primitive church; and early Christians, on their side,
celebrated a Sacramental Fish-meal. The Catacombs supply us with numerous illustrations. The elements of this mystic meal were Fish, Bread, and Wine." Although the sacred fish-meal was to disappear from the ritual of orthodox Christianity, some memory of it seems to have lingered. Weston points out, for example, that in the *Voyage of Saint Brandan* the monks during their wandering "annually 'kept their Resurrection,'" i.e., celebrated their Easter Mass on a whale after disembarking upon its great back.

Arnold Whittock in *Symbols, Signs, and Their Meaning* also comments on the ubiquity of the fish symbol in primitive Christianity. The fish appears in outline on the walls of the catacombs in Rome, in signet rings, and on lamps. Some hold that for Christians the symbol first came into being as an acronym for *Jesus Christ, God's son, Savior*, the initial letters of each word spelling out in Greek the word for "fish." Ethel Ross Barker thinks it more probable, however, that "the presence of the divine name in the word" was discovered subsequently to its adoption as a symbol of baptism." Whittick points out also that early Christian writers liked to play on both significations of the fish symbol and quotes Tertullian as saying: "But we, little fishes, are born in water according to our Fish (IΧΩΣ),"
Jesus Christ." And in Tertullian's remark we find brought into conjunction the three motifs of water, baptism, and the fish, the whole constituting just the kind of pious pun which might appeal to the subtle mind of the Beowulf poet. In the present age, Louis Bouyer, writing of the Paschal mystery, refers to Christ as "the divine Ichthus."72

Over and above these varied religious significations, the fish in the sun-hero myth symbolizes both death and rebirth: "When the sun sinks into the sea, it becomes child and fish at once."73 Hence it is appropriate that Beowulf in the sunset of his life, having sacrificed it to deliver his people from the ravagings of the dragon, be laid to rest on a sea cliff called Whale's Bluff. Moreover, at this point in the poem the chief symbol, water, is once more brought into conjunction with the hero, Beowulf specifically requesting of Wiglaf that his barrow on Whale's Bluff be placed where it can be a signal and guide to sea-farers:

"Nu ic on mǣtnahord mīne bebohte
frōde feorhlege, fremmāt gena
lēoda þeartef; ne mǣgic hēr leng wesan.
Hātāt hēadomǣre hlāew gewyrcean
beorhtne æfter bāle æt brimes nosan;
se scel tō gemyndum mīnum lēodum
hēah hlīfian on Hronesnæsse,
bǣt hit sǣlītend sydātan hatan
Bīowulfes biorh, dā de brentingas
ofer flōda genīpu feorran drīfāt."
"Now that I have sold my old life for the treasure hoard, do ye the people's need. I can be here no longer. After the funeral fire command the battle-brave ones to build a barrow on the seacliff. It shall tower on Whalecliff as a reminder to my people so that afterwards sailors can call it Beowulf's barrow, those who drive afar the ships over the mists of the seas." (ll. 2799-2808)

These last words of Beowulf remind us that critics such as Dorothy Whitelock have seen the figure of the seafarer in O.E. lyric poetry as a metaphor for a "peregrinus" (traveler) journeying through life eschewing comfort and the easy life of shore people in favor of faring over seas and ocean in search of his salvation, as, for example, the Christian seeker constantly travels on in the folk hymn "The Wayfaring Stranger." 74

As one might expect in symbolic language the fish also means resurrection. With the rising of the sun the fish "that dwelt in darkness, surrounded by all the terrors of night and death, becomes the shining, fiery day-star" in the Babylonian myth of the fish-god Oannes-Ea, whose name was connected with that of John the Baptist. 75 In this regard Jung sees special significance in the words John speaks when he prophesies the coming of Jesus:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Mat. 3.11)
An "eald epelweard" (old guardian of the native land) (l. 2210) who has laid down his life on his people's behalf, Beowulf becomes in the end a type of the suffering servant described in Isaiah both as a "light to the Gentiles" (49.6) and as one undergoing terrible suffering (52.14). It was this suffering servant whom the church fathers saw as prefiguring Christ, who in the middle ages was compared to the "stella Marina" (the star of the sea), a mythical fish believed to be hot and burning and to consume everything it came in contact with. For the middle ages it signified "veri amoris vis inextinguibilis" (the inextinguishable power of true love), since for Christians trained in the typological exegeses of scripture favored by Augustine and Gregory the Great, all the transitory phenomenon of this "læne" (loaned) world were symbols in the divine drama of the incarnation of the godhead in the dying and resurrected Christ. Thus the glow of the stella marina was understood to symbolize the fiery nature of the Holy Ghost as well as the warmth of the divine love exhibited by both Christ and the Virgin Mary, who also was often addressed in orisons as "maris stella" (star of the sea). The fish, then, is a symbol that, in effect, sums up in itself all the other chief symbols of Christianity, emblematic of divine love, of rebirth in water, of the warmth
of *caritas* or Christian brotherly love, of the fiery nature of the Holy Ghost as in the tongues of flame that descended on the apostles at Pentecost, and, finally, of the divine Ichthus, Christ himself.

Besides fish imagery there exists yet another image from the collective unconscious in the poem's concluding lines. That Beowulf's *comitatus* or band of warrior thanes numbers twelve as it circles his barrow not only associates him with Christ and the apostles but also introduces an image symbolic of the integrated self, the mandala. Mandalas as sun wheels are found scratched or drawn by charcoal or other means on the walls of caves and in every conceivable place as far back into man's history as archeologists have been able to trace, and the magic circle within the square has come to be recognized by certain modern day scholars and psychiatrists as a symbol arising spontaneously out of the unconscious, one which signifies the inner reconciliation and wholeness of the masculine psyche (the circle within the triangle having a similar significance for the feminine psyche). Thus, it is fitting that for Beowulf the achievement of the union of the Ego with the Shadow come at life's end since such unity means equilibrium, equilibrium means stasis, and stasis means death.

Beowulf's warriors, following his instructions, build him a barrow and inclose it within a wall. To it
they bring treasure in the form of "beg ond siglu"
(rings and jewels) (l. 3163) and "gold" (l. 3167) from
the dragon's hoard, the gold reminding us that Beowulf is
a type of the sun-hero. As a final ritual gesture,

Ḍā ymbe hlāw riōdan  hildeddēore,
æpelinga bearn,  ealra twelfe.

Then around the mound rode the battle-brave
ones, the sons of nobles, all twelve. (ll. 3169-70)

McNamee, although without mentioning the mandala or
the quaternity (the circle divided into four parts within
the square), perceives the circle and the square in the
foregoing passage, remarking of it: "When Beowulf's
funeral mound has been built, his twelve disciples are
described as circling it singing his praises to the four
corners of the world."79 It may be that McNamee's
perception of Beowulf's warrior band's chanting praises
of their lord to the four corners of the world—these
are not actually mentioned in the poem—derives from his
recollection, conscious or not, of "The Dream of the Rood"
in which the dreamer-narrator describes a vision of the
glorified cross:

Dūhte mē þætic géswē  gyllicre trōow
on lyft lēdan,  lēohte bewunden,
beama beorhtost.  Eall þæt beacen wæs
begoten mid golde;  gīmmas stōdon
fægere at foldan scēatum  swylce þær fife wærón
uppe on þam eaxlegespanne.
Me thought that I saw a more wonderful tree,
brightest of beams, raised in the air, wound
with light. All sprinkled with gold was that
beacon; fair gems shone out as far as the
corners of the earth; there were five jewels
also up on that cross beam. (ll. 4-9)

Here we see not only the concept of a flat, four-cornered
earth but also a number of the same motifs that appear
in the description of Beowulf's funeral. There are gold,
gems, the term "beacon" used figuratively to mean
"monument" in Beowulf's case and "cross" in the case
of "The Dream of the Rood," and the implied concept of
the cross, like Beowulf's barrow, situated at the center
of the world.

Michael Swanton informs us that "the jewels of the
cross (invariably red stones like the garnet of St
Cuthbert's pectoral cross or contemporary Kentish jewels)
conventionally represent the various wounds of Christ (cf.
Blickling Homily I, 'He scealde his Done readan gim; þæt
wæs his halige blod' [He sold then his precious red stone,
i.e., gem; that was his holy blood] in EETS, lviii, pp. 9-11)." Unlike the "Rood" poet, the Beowulf poet fails to mention the
earth's four corners. But since Anglo-Saxons undoubtedly
held the world to be flat and to have four corners—as we
see above—perhaps we, like McNamee, may infer the
existence of the corners as Beowulf's warriors circle about
his barrow.
McNamee also points out, as I have earlier, that Christ and Beowulf have twelve followers each, including Judas in the first instance and the thief who leads Beowulf and his men to the dragon's lair in the second. The passage in *Beowulf* is as follows:

Gewat þa twelfa sum torne gebolgen
drygten Geata dracan sceawian;
hæfte þa gefrunen, hwænan swa fædræras,
bealondæ biorna; him tō bearma cwom
mædpumfaet mære þurh þæs mældan hond.
Sæ wæs on þam ðreotan þreotteota secg,
sæ þæs orleges őr onstealde,
hæfte hygegumor sceolde hæn þæon
wong wisan. He ofer willan geong
tō þæs ðæ he eortsele ænne wisse,
hlæw under hrūsan holmwyłme néh,
yðewinne.

The Geats' lord, swollen with anger, went then with twelve others to behold the dragon; he had then heard from whence the hostility, the baleful enmity against his warriors arose; into his bosom had come the great precious vessel through the finder's hand. He, who the beginning of that strife caused, was the thirteenth man of the troop, a sad-hearted humble man, he must thence point out the plain. Against his will he went to where he along knew the earthhall, the mound under the earth, near to the raging sea, the waves' strife. (11. 2401-12)

The "precious vessel," a cup, is reminiscent of the cup passed at the last supper as well as of the mead-cup passed to the members of the *comitatus* assembled in their lord's hall as at Heorot (1. 1015). The thrall
whose theft of the cup has stirred up the dragon is, of course, an analogue of Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. Present also in this passage is the motif of the sea, or the unconscious, and the turmoil of its waves, reflecting the strife soon to come to the kingdom of man in the world above. Following Beowulf's death the thrall disappears just as did Judas. The thrall's place in the number count is then taken by some unnamed warrior of Beowulf's court and, doubtless, the cowardly twelve who stayed hidden in the wood while Beowulf and Wiglaf fought the dragon are also replaced. At any rate, the number stays at twelve even as it did following Jesus' death when Matthaias was taken into the band of apostles to replace Judas (Acts 1.26).

Divisible by four, its center Beowulf's gold- and gem-bedecked body now consumed in the fire, its circumferences the barrow, the twelve circling horsemen, and the horizon set within the four imagined corners of the world, the squared circle found at the poem's conclusion symbolizes on the level of the collective unconscious the synthesis that has taken place in Beowulf at the climactic moment of his encounter with the fire-drake when he had been bitten on the neck and the dragon's essence, its poison, had entered and mingled with his blood. The suggestion that this union is an analogue of the "sacred marriage" of the hero's adventure in the underworld may well seem
preposterous. But we know that Saint Augustine conceived of an equally preposterous "sacred marriage":

Like a bridegroom Christ went forth from his chamber. He went out with a presage of his nuptials into the field of the world: he ran like a giant exulting on his way and came to the marriage bed of the cross, and there in mounting it he consummated his marriage. And when he perceived the sighs of the creature, he lovingly gave himself up to the torment in the place of his bride, and he joined himself to the woman forever.¹³

For centuries the union of Christ and the cross has been considered an analogue of Christ's union with his bride the church and of his union with the soul of the faithful Christian, and no one finds this a matter for wonder. The union of Beowulf and the dragon, on the other hand, may seem to defy commonsense notions. But for the Christian, Jung points out, "Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self."³⁴ That Jung is correct may be discerned in one of the homilies of Origen who wrote:

If I consider that the Lord and Savior is the image of the invisible God, I see that my soul is made after the image of the Creator, so as to be an image of an image, for my soul is not directly after the image of God, but is made after the likeness of the former image of Christ.¹⁵

Beowulf, as a Christ-figure, is thus man discovering the godhead within himself. That the Beowulf poet consciously
or unconsciously uses dragon symbolism in conjunction with Beowulf's self-integration or individuation underscores the correctness of Jung's conclusions concerning the meaning of the crucified Christ between the two thieves and the complementary nature of the Ego and the Shadow personalities.

"There can be no doubt," explains Jung, "that the original Christian conception of the *imago Dei* embodied in Christ meant an all-embracing totality that includes the animal side of man."  

Dramatically symbolizing the union of opposites, Christ's descent into hell to redeem virtuous pagans is the psychological equivalent of the integration of the unconscious into the conscious, an integration "which forms an essential part of the individuation process."  

Nevertheless, the Christ-figure, in general, is one-sided as a symbol of man's wholeness since its Shadow aspect, Satan, who attempts to win Christ to his worship, is outside the pale as an opponent or subverter of the Christ-like self. One of these archetypes of the self, Christ, strives for the kingdom of heaven; the other, Satan, strives for dominion in this world. Separately, each is but half of the archetypal self. Without any doubt both Christ and Satan are Christian symbols of the self, and, thus understood, "they have the same meaning as the image of the Saviour crucified between the two thieves."
They signify, that is, agonizing conflicts in the individual's concept of duty. Only in union or self-integration is this agonizing split resolved.

The dichotomy of the self and its aims appears earlier in *Beowulf* in Hrothgar's sermon warning Beowulf against the dangers of the inflated ego. In this homily Heremod functions as the hero divided from his followers and from society. Heremod's pride, anger, and avarice (ll. 1709 ff.) are obvious aspects of the Shadow personality and exemplify the most vicious of the cardinal sins. During his fifty-year reign over the Geats, Beowulf evidently succeeds in suppressing this side of himself. But, unaware of such heroic self-repression, detractors of *Beowulf*, such as Gilbert Highet, see the poem as about "monsters overcome in bloody battles, not by the power of the spirit but by strength of arm and magical weapons." Highet, too impatient (as he himself admits) to acquire adequate reading ability in Old English, relies on translations, and, reading hastily and in a patronizing mood what he takes to be the work of a poet whose knowledge of Latin and of the Bible was both "thin and vague," he disparages Beowulf as a muscle-bound Germanic warrior of little or no psychological or spiritual dimensions and his creator as a "primitive" poet too ignorant to possess any but the sketchiest knowledge of either
The *Aeneid* or of the theological implications of Christianity for the individual.

Following J. R. R. Tolkien's "Beowulf and the Monsters," an address delivered in 1936, the rather rash opinions of such critics of *Beowulf* as Hight and W. P. Ker have gone into eclipse. My object in resurrecting Hight's view of the characterization of Beowulf as that of a mindless muscle man is not to further discredit an already sufficiently discredited critique of the poem but to point out the possibility of one's overlooking even now various aspects of the *Beowulf* poet's subtle use of symbolism (I cannot call it allegory as Goldsmith does⁹³) to convey through his hero that which it is difficult to put into words, the achievement, that is, of self-integration and individuation.
NOTES


7Jung, Archetypes, p. 82.

8Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p. 243.

9Ibid., p. 228.


11Ibid., p. 237.

12Ibid., p. 238.

13Among admirers of Beowulf in his final moments are Fr. Klaeber, ed., "Beowulf" and "The Fight at Finnsburg,"


17Girvan, p. 33.

18Klaeber, pp. 195-96.


21Girvan, pp. 67-68.

22Klaeber, p. xxxviii.


27 Ibid.


32 Gang, p. 8.

33 Tolkien, pp. 90-91.


37Gang, p. 7.

38Wright, pp. 2-3.

39Bonjour, p. 312.


42For comment on the possible sacramental connotations of the cup see Lewis E. Nicholson, "The Symbolic Structure of Beowulf," Classica et Mediaevalia, 24 (1964), 194.

43McNamee, p. 352.

44Goldsmith, p. 236.

45Gang, p. 6.

46Ibid., p. 8.


50 A Reading of "Beowulf" (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 188.

51 Goldsmith, p. 252.

52 Ibid.

53 Klaeber, p. xlii.


55 Ibid., p. 117.

56 Virgil, *The Aeneid* of Virgil Translated into English, Christopher Pearse Cranch (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1906); line numbers pertain to this translation.


59 Chambers, pp. 365-69.

60 Cabaniss, p. 228.

61 Chambers, p. 366.

62 Ambrose, quoted by Goldsmith, p. 238.


64 Jung, *Aion*, p. 45.


67Jung, Aion, p. 10.


69Ibid., p. 132.


71Whittick, p. 184.

72Bouyer, p. 264.

73Jung, Symbols, p. 198.

74"The Interpretation of 'The Seafarer,'" The Early Cultures of North-West Europe, eds. Sir Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1950), pp. 261-72.

75Jung, Symbols, pp. 199-200.

76Jung, Aion, pp. 128-29.


79McNamee, p. 349.

80Swanton, p. 89; my translation.

81Swanton, note, p. 101.

82McNamee, pp. 348-49.

83Quoted by Campbell, The Masks of God, p. 638.

84Jung, Aion, p. 37.

85Jung, quoting Origin's In Lucam homilia, VIII, Aion, p. 37, n. 8.

86Jung, Aion, p. 41.

87Ibid., p. 39.

88Ibid., p. 44.


90Ibid., p. 564.

91Ibid., p. 565.

92Ibid.

93Goldsmith, William Whallon, and Charles Donahue, "Allegorical, Typological or Neither? Three Short Papers on the Allegorical Approach to Beowulf and a Discussion," Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (1973), 286, 287, 292-93; Goldsmith, debating Whallon and Donahue, argues that "the word allegory therefore appears to me the best available to cover the non-literal aspects of Beowulf, but it must be understood I use it in the broad sense that it anciently had."
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Even though direct influence may not be provable to the satisfaction of all critics, there are undeniably striking similarities of motifs and themes between Beowulf and the heroic epics of Homer and Virgil. The similarities between Beowulf and The Odyssey may be coincidental, arising out of the collective unconscious. On the other hand, they could very well be the result of direct acquaintance on the part of the Beowulf poet or else due to indirect influence transmitted through the poet's reading of Virgil's The Aeneid, one of the favorite literary models for Old English writers during the Age of Bede.

The baptism motif appears specifically in The Aeneid, Aeneas pausing to purify himself with water before passing from the region of punishment and suffering in Hades into the light-filled Elysium inhabited by blessed souls who have died at peace with themselves and their fellow man. The baptism motif in Beowulf appears not directly but in symbolic form, the clues being the numbers given by Unferth and Beowulf in regard to the latter's swimming match with 167.
Breca. Unferth says that Beowulf spent seven nights in the North Sea. Beowulf accepts this statement without comment (although he corrects Unferth's account in other respects) and adds that his fight with the nicors occurred on the fifth night and that he spent the whole night battling with them, concluding with the notable litotes:

"Næs hīe dære fylle gefēan hæfdon, mändordædlan, þæt hīe mē þegon symbol ymbstæton sægrunde nōah."

"By no means did they, the evil doers, take joy in that meal, that they partook their fill of me!" (ll. 562-64)

So inclined, one might hear in this passage an ironic inversion of Jesus' institution of the Lord's supper on the night of Maundy Thursday in the upper room: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me!'" (Luke 22.19). Beowulf's body clearly is not fated to be partaken of by demonic creatures of the ocean's depths.

Accepting Unferth's timetable for Beowulf's swimming adventure, one must conclude that he arrives on shore at dawn on the eighth day of his ordeal. These numbers, seven, five, and eight, point to Beowulf's swim as having taken place during Holy week, the period favored for the baptism of converts during the early days of the church.
The number five points to Maundy Thursday, the fifth night of Holy Week, counting from the Sunday before when Holy week begins. The number seven points to the Vigil of Easter Eve on Saturday, the day on which the baptism of candidates took place, and Beowulf's coming ashore at dawn on the following morning points to the conclusion of the Easter Mass at this hour on Easter Sunday morning.

Generally speaking, critics, except for Lewis E. Nicholson and Karl P. Wentersdorf, have shied away from extensive analysis of Beowulf's swimming feats, Chambers calling the swim home from Frisia "fantastic";\(^1\) Klaeber, "fabulously exaggerated . . . anything but authentic";\(^2\) Fred C. Robinson, "preposterous . . . defies visualization."\(^3\) Norman E. Eliason argues that the swimming match with Breca is one of Unferth's inventions, an invention Beowulf ironically goes along with.\(^4\) And Karl P. Wentersdorf attempts to deny the fabulous inherent in the swimming match passages by challenging the translations by numerous scholars of "sund" (swimming) (1. 507) and "sundnytte drēah" (bore himself by the act of swimming) (1. 2360) and "oferswam" (swam over) (1. 2367). These verbs, he contends, could very well refer to rowing in a small craft on the open ocean in the case of the swimming
match and along the coast during the return from Frisia. But Wentersdorf never explains why the Beowulf poet utilizes all the formulaic descriptions at his command when ships clearly are meant and none when describing Beowulf's swimming match and his swim home from Frisia. When the poet describes the ship in which Scyld is sent to sea at the time of his burial, he calls it a

hringedstefna
Isig ond utfus, æpelinges fær.
ring-prowed ship, icy and eager to set out, a prince's vessel. (ll. 32-32)

And the ship in which Beowulf sails from Geatland to Denmark he calls a "yltidan" (wave-traverser) (l. 198), "sægenga" (sea-goer) (l. 1832). "sægeap naca" (sea-curved bark) (l. 1896), "hringedstefna" (ring-prowed) (l. 1897), and, quite explicitly, a "scipe" (ship) (l. 1895).

Since for an Anglo-Saxon poet, sailing imagery would almost require such formulaic language and kennings for boats of the kind we find not only in Beowulf but also in Andreas, The Seafarer, and The Wanderer, it scarcely seems credible that the Beowulf has not so much as a single kenning or formulaic expression to spare if, indeed, Beowulf and Breca conduct a rowing match and if Beowulf rows home from Frisia. Further, Wentersdorf does not explain how Breca and Beowulf can row while holding their
naked swords "heard on hands" (hard in hand) (l. 540). Admittedly, it is also difficult to imagine them swimming this way, but somewhat easier than accomplishing this feat with oars in each hand.

Lewis E. Nicholson, on the other hand, sees, as I do, the triple baptismal motif in Wiglaf's sprinkling water three times on Beowulf as the latter lies dying. Further, he regards Beowulf's swimming match with Breca and his descent into the mere as figurative for baptism and, as I do, relates them to Holy Week and to the Easter Vigil. Unlike Wentersdorf and like Nicholson, I believe it far better in such cases to follow Saint Augustine's example and assume that when something does not make sense on the literal level then it must be meant figuratively. The numbers used in the swimming match passages, the wearing of the mail corslet and carrying of a naked sword, the overcoming of the demonic nicors, the light rising in the east on the last morning of the swim, all these point in the direction of symbolism and ought to be so understood. To seek realism in the accounts of Beowulf's swimming match and return from Frisia and accept with no more than an implied shrug the day's space it takes Beowulf to swim down into the mere is to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.
Moreover such straining for the literal overlooks the triple immersion theme implied by Beowulf's three immersions in water, his swimming match with Breca, first, his descent into the mere, second, and his swim back from Frisia, third. These three adventures symbolize on the conscious level spiritual rebirth or renewal. On a deeper level the water motif symbolizes both the Mother and the unconscious. Thus, Beowulf may be overcoming a youthful sluggishness symbolic of hidden incest-longings for Hygd at the time that he accepts Breca's dare to join him on the North Sea. Later, accepting, as the hero must, the call to adventure in Denmark, Beowulf detaches himself even more from Hygelac's court where Hygd may have been exercising an all-too-potent fascination on him.

Once in Denmark, Beowulf struggles with adversaries symbolic of man's murderous impulses, descending into water a second time in order to conclude his fight against Cain's kind. Following Hygelac's death in Frisia, Beowulf avenges his lord's death and swims back to Geatland with thirty suits of armor, thirty used perhaps as an emphaser of the sort often found in folklore but also bearing within itself the numinous and Trinitarian three.

Spiritually strong after having gone down into the water three times, Beowulf refuses to take the Geatish throne from his nephew Heardred although Queen Hygd wishes him to. Only after his nephew dies in battle does
Beowulf assume royal rule; and when he does so his reign is marked by self-restraint, wisdom, and justice. Viewed in this way, it is possible to see Beowulf's character as developing in an ascending curve that reaches its zenith at the moment of the fatal bite inflicted upon him by the dragon, a bite bringing about a symbolic union of the Persona (mask) and the Shadow (inferior personality).

Beowulf's fight with the dragon, ending as it does in a symbolic union of the two, marks an event, the union of opposites, which was not psychologically allowable earlier in Beowulf's career. As king and guardian of his people, Beowulf needed to suppress the Shadow aspect of his character. That the poet intended to depict him as altogether admirable once he overcomes his youthful sluggishness becomes clear when Hrothgar says admiringly of him:

"Þæt, lā, mæg secgan se þe sōt ond riht fremed on folce, feor eal gemon, eald eþelweard, þæt ðæs eorl wære geboren betera!"

"Lo! an old country's guardian remembers all far back, he who practices truth and right among the people, may say that this earl must have been born better than other men!"

(H. 1700-03)

Hrothgar's judgment, pronounced early in Beowulf's career, is reiterated by the similar judgment of Beowulf's subjects
and retainers who mourn for him after his death, the sons of nobles saying of him

\[ \text{þæt he wære wyruldcyning(a)} \]
\[ \text{manna mildust ond mon (d)ærust,} \]
\[ \text{lēodum listost ond lofgernost.} \]

that of world-kings, he was the mildest of men, and the truest man, kindest to his people and most eager of praise. (11. 3180-82)

This is not the sort of praise given by a people to a dead hero whose chief characteristic was the power of his hand's grip. On the contrary it is the kind of praise given a people's king who in the course of his life overcomes the temptation to play Claudius to his nephew's Hamlet, as Hrothgar had not in relation to his nephew Heorowead. At length in his final battle with the dragon, a theriomorphic symbol of the Shadow, King Beowulf achieves individuation. This achievement can only appear thus because there were no other literary tools available to the poet. Therefore it was appropriate that he utilize from man's collective unconscious an archetypal symbol, the dragon.
NOTES


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


Dictionaries


Encyclopaedia Articles
