

BEOWULF: A NORTHERN ARCHETYPE

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BEOWULF: A NORTHERN ARCHETYPE

by



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ABSTRACT

As an epic poem, Beowulf documents and attempts accurately to reflect the perimeters and possibilities of man's conscious development, on both the ontogenetic and the phylogenetic levels. Its epic scope therefore incorporates not only natural and social realities, which are expressed as phenomenological and philosophical structures, but also mental and emotional realities which find their expression in mythological, ritualistic, and dream form. Myths, rituals, and dreams represent the workings of the Unconscious mind, a psychic reality of far greater depth and potential than consciousness, and the patterns and figures manifest through these forms of psychic activity are, in actuality, facts of mind transposed into a figment of matter.

The Swiss psychological theorist, Carl Gustav Jung, (1865 - 1961), who made the study of these Unconscious forms his life-work, isolated and described many of the figures and patterns which recur in mythology, ritual, and dreams, and came to the conclusion that they are archetypal, that is, that they are of primary material, indigenous to man at the deepest level of his being, and common to mankind at every level of collective and

individual development. He depicts them as characters in a psychic drama which is enacted parallel to the physical process of life, or as scenarios which must be enacted in a process of psychic self-discovery that man is by nature impelled to undertake.

In addition to naming the archetypes, Jung advanced a dual theory of the Unconscious which I feel has particular relevance to Beowulf: his notion of the Collective Unconscious, with its assertive cognizance of the "race memory" of man and its postulate of the Self, an archetypal form of consciousness which presupposes the importance of interaction between conscious and unconscious mind in the development of the whole psyche, is applicable to any study of the epic as the repository of the conscious and unconscious knowledge of a particular society; and his idea that the Unconscious is force directing three main instincts - the aggressive, the sexual, and the religious - suggests a possible interpretation of Beowulf in a formal and a structural sense.

The adaptation of consciousness to its environment is of equal importance to the underlying common psychic reality of the Unconscious, for only by adaptation can the individual, or the race, survive. Beowulf is a study in survival, the survival of the individual, of the species, and of the human



spirit as the transcendent form of his will to continuance and renewal; and, because man's consciousness is integral to his survival, Beowulf must, therefore, be a study of human consciousness in conflict with those forces of unconsciousness that threaten its being, as well as in faithful obedience to those forces that promote its potential for becoming.

The epic form of Beowulf by definition demands the expansion and inclusiveness that establishes it as a vehicle for the presentation of man's greatest thoughts and actions. Just as the psyche, in its power to interpret the objective world, and to project its inner reality upon the world of nature, comprises all that man can know of himself and his world, the epic poem contains all of human reality, from the archetypal forms which manifest themselves as characters in the poem, to the landscape, which impresses itself upon the reader both as an introjection of objective reality and as a projection of subjective perception, to the structures of man's consciousness represented by Heorot, to the real and symbolic characters and objects encountered by the heroic protagonist. In relation to this essentially psychic material which forms the totality of Beowulf as a mental universe, Beowulf, as hero, represents man's awareness of himself as

a center, and his activities represent the struggle of consciousness to comprehend and to overcome (by acceptance) the seemingly alien forces within his own nature. His journey to the real center of his being, the archetypal Self, or God, requires the integration of the disparate and opposing forces of conscious and Unconscious mind, and his final union with the God within and without his being is the "real" subject of this poem, as, perhaps, it is of every work of art.

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## INTRODUCTION

"This bit which I am writing now, called Introduction, is really the 'er-h'r'm' of the book, and I have put it in, partly so as not to take you by surprise, and partly because I can't do without it now. There are some very clever writers who say that it is quite easy not to have an 'er-h'r'm', but I don't agree with them. I think it is much easier not to have all the rest..."

A. A. Milne, Now We Are Six.

Not wanting to take the reader by surprise with theory and terminology peculiar to a very particular, and rebellious, element of another discipline, I find that this thesis cannot do without an Introduction. However, I do not intend to embark upon a full-scale interpretation of Jungian terminology, because I hope that these terms will explain themselves through their application to the poem; if they do not, the reader may refer to the Glossary on pages 309-310 for basic working definitions. What I do wish to do here is to introduce the man whose definitive perspective has informed this study of Beowulf, and to offer such information and speculation as may be found necessary prior to adopting this perspective with reference to the poem.

Born in 1875 to German parents living in Switzerland, Carl Gustav Jung inherited a psyche that derived from the linguistic and historical tradition out of which Beowulf emerged. Throughout the course of his distinguished career

as a world-renowned psychoanalyst and theorist, Jung's development of his consciousness involved him in the study of many of the same subjects that are implicit in any study of Beowulf, not only as "a 'handbook' on the continuing struggle towards ego-consciousness,"<sup>1</sup> but also as a valuable source of insight into the development of social, artistic, and religious thought.

Besides his natural predisposition to modes of thought which might confidently be ascribed to the poet of Beowulf, Jung's environmental heritage suggests a possible affinity with that anonymous, if not unknown, author. In addition to the apprehension of physical reality shared by all who are exposed to the harsh conditions of the Northern climate, the poet and the psychologist may have shared a measure of cultural conditioning. Jung's father was a Protestant clergyman, and he was raised in a domestic atmosphere of austere religiosity, not altogether dissimilar, one might imagine, from the atmosphere that might have surrounded the Beowulf poet if he were, as some speculate, a monk. Jung's interest in religion was at least equal to his passionate curiosity about every aspect of life, and he was particularly fascinated by the writings of Saint Paul, to whom he refers frequently throughout his voluminous writings. The Beowulf poet, too, was influenced by Saint Paul, and this influence is reflected both thematically and imagistically, in particular through the references to the harne



stan, "the grey rock" (887, 1415, 2553, 2744) which is an often-noted Pauline image. Rejecting Protestantism because of the limitations of its "desymbolised world"<sup>2</sup> Jung embraced the study of alchemy, Gnosticism, and the occult, modes of thought with which the Beowulf poet was undoubtedly familiar, in that they were more than likely living traditions of his time, existing parallel to Christianity, and, indeed, overlapping dogmatic religion in their interpretive function.

Jung's first interest in psychology arose through his own observations of a phenomenon which both puzzled and tormented him, and which led him to develop a scientific view of man as a creature divided against himself. The evidence of this psychological duality began with personal experience; first in his mother, and then in himself. The writings of Saint Paul illuminated certain aspects of this duality, from a particular perspective, but Jung was compelled to go further, and his studies, both practical and theoretical, led him to formulate his famous theory of the Collective Unconscious.

Jung's theory, developed in part out of his long-time association with Sigmund Freud, but departing radically from Freud's psychosis-based research in its inclusion of the so-called 'normal' psyche, postulates



the existence of a highly complex psychic entity which is antecedent to conscious awareness and which manifests itself in action, through behaviour, and in fantasy, through dreams. This entity, which he sees as a biological, or physiological, reality, rather than as a mystical force, he calls the Unconscious.<sup>3</sup> The overlapping of biology and psychology occurs naturally, for the brain is a sense organ that combines the physical with the psychical as an integral function. It has been suggested by Jung, and affirmed by other theorists,<sup>4</sup> that all inherited systems or tendencies of mind may be due to past racial experience, and it does not seem illogical that man may inherit his psyche much as he might the shape of his nose or the colour of his skin, in just those individual and collective aspects. It is this idea that forms the basis of his theory of the Collective Unconscious.<sup>5</sup>

That the poet of Beowulf was concerned with unconscious processes is indicated by two elements of the poem which seem to stand apart from everything else as belonging to an immaterial world. The first is that, although he is flamboyantly descriptive of the places and objects (buildings, ships, swords, etc.) that are found in the objective world, there are few physical descriptions of people. Even though Beowulf is himself described as having ænlic ansyn, "peerless form" (251), we are left to imagine for ourselves

whether this description refers to his physical or his psychic form, or (most probably) both. In any case, we do not know exactly what he looks like, not the colour of his hair (although, in old age, he is described as frod, this is rather more an indication of wisdom than appearance) nor his height, nor any of the other attributes by which he might be identified in the external world. The women, too, are described as personalities, rather than as physical beings, and this is unusual given the position of women in the social world of Beowulf, for they are (as will be contended in Chapter III) valued chiefly in terms of their usefulness, that is as "objects," and one might suppose that an object would be described in terms of its appearance. This pattern seems to suggest that the people of Beowulf are rather more psychic forms (archetypes<sup>6</sup>) than actual physical beings.

The second indication of the unconscious realm may be found in the unusual sense of time in the poem. Aided by the epic technique of foreshadowing, the poet creates a sense that past, present, and future somehow exist simultaneously. As Klaeber points out, "different parts of the story are sometimes told in different places, or substantially the same incident is related several times from different points of view," while events leading up to the final combat take a "circuitous route."<sup>7</sup> Although



this posed a problem for Klaeber in terms of the overall merit of the poem (he calls it "trying"<sup>8</sup>) I see it as an indication of the Unconscious, in which a sense of time is totally irrelevant. It is only consciousness that takes cognizance of the categories of space and time,<sup>9</sup> and of course it is for this reason that Klaeber's own conscious mind was frustrated by the poet's dismissal of logical progression through time and space. Indeed, as Klaeber rightly acknowledges, the poet takes "the keenest interest in the inner significance of the happenings, the underlying motives, the manifestations of character."<sup>10</sup> This "elaborate psychological analysis,"<sup>11</sup> is of primary interest to the poet, who, stimulated by his own Unconscious, has been moved to recreate a folktale in the mythic shape which identifies it as deriving from a source deeper than he perhaps consciously knew, the Collective Unconscious.

In the Collective Unconscious there reside a number of psychic entities which reflect different aspects of the Self, a hypothetical entity which comprises, in perfect balance, all elements of the physical and the psychic.<sup>12</sup> The Self does have a mystical being, in the sense that it is no longer whole, but divided, and yet it retains the archetypal form of absolute wholeness as



a postulate of its existence. By some initial trauma (the birth trauma, or the onset of puberty, as Jung suggests, or perhaps simply as part of a continuing process of differentiation, by means of which life on earth has evolved from the single-celled organism to the multi-complex being of man), this a priori unity fractured, and its fracturing gave rise to the three levels of man's psychic being: two levels of the Unconscious, the Collective (as discussed) and the Personal, which essentially contains all the repressed elements of an individual's own life experience;<sup>13</sup> and consciousness, which may be simply defined as "the faculty of self-awareness possessed by man."<sup>14</sup>

It is man's consciousness that becomes aware, as did Jung, Saint Paul, and the Beowulf poet, each in their different ways, of the divided psyche, and it is consciousness which is impelled to embark upon a psychic process of re-integration, in an attempt to reconstruct the archetype of psychic wholeness, the Self. Jung calls this process "individuation."<sup>15</sup>

The struggle to individuate, or integrate, the various and disparate elements of the psyche arises in part from man's awareness of his ontological status.

The human being, as the American existentialist Rollo May defines him, is "the being who has a center,"<sup>16</sup> This awareness of his centre, or "Self-consciousness," is a faculty of the conscious mind present in animals, but consciously developed in man, and it has a bifold effect upon the psychic organism. On the one hand, man's awareness of his own "centeredness" gives rise to the need and the possibility of going out from this centeredness to participate in other beings; on the other hand, that same awareness impels him to preserve and protect his own center. Unlike the center of being in animals and plants, a human being's centeredness depends upon his courage to affirm it. In order to do this, he must "know" it, either consciously or subconsciously, with sufficient strength that his contact with other realities does not annihilate him. This condition of "self-awareness," as distinct from "self-consciousness," gives the individual what R. D. Laing calls "primary<sup>17</sup> ontological security," a centrally firm sense of his own, and other peoples', reality and identity.

It has been suggested by Jung that the impulse to individuate actually arises from the Unconscious itself, which he describes almost poetically as "an acting and suffering subject with an inner drama that primitive man rediscovers by way of analogy, in the processes of nature



both great and small." <sup>18</sup>

The "actors" in this drama are the archetypes, and these are the entities which figure so prominently in Beowulf. I would like to introduce them by way of an interpreter whose work has been very helpful to the formulation of this thesis.

Maud Bodkin may have been the first literary critic to become entranced with the Jungian frame of reference and to realize its value to a study of the products of human imagination. Her powers of comprehension, organization, and creative application of the Jungian hypothesis which so stimulated her own critical imagination are impressive, and I am indebted to her for her elucidation of certain aspects of Jungian theory. She begins her seminal work, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (1934), with her interpretation of a general critical hypothesis advanced by Jung in his article "On the relation of analytical psychology to poetic art":

The special emotional significance possessed by certain poems - a significance going beyond any definite meaning conveyed - [Jung] attributes to the stirring in the reader's mind, within or beneath his conscious response, of unconscious forces which he terms 'primordial images', or archetypes. These archetypes he describes as 'psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type', experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, a priori determinants of individual experience.



The archetypes, which determine the patterns of psychic action undertaken by an individual in his process of integration, are the chief characters of Beowulf, and they include Beowulf himself as an archetypal Hero. Although Jung does not capitalize the names of the archetypes, I have done so in order to emphasize their natures as distinct "personalities." For a similar reason I have capitalized any reference to the Unconscious as a specific entity.

The archetypes of the Unconscious most frequently make their appearance through dreams,<sup>19</sup> often disguised as one or another of the persons known to the dreamer in his waking state, upon whom he has projected this facet of his Unconscious content. Whether the archetypal forms are close to the circumference of consciousness, as is the Shadow, or deeply buried in unconsciousness, as is the Great Mother, they play their part in the psychic drama enacted in this nocturnal theatre of the mind.

With its surreal landscape, mythic figures, and fantastic events, Beowulf does, indeed, have a dreamlike quality which is in no way diminished by its wealth of realistic detail. This dream-like atmosphere is further intensified by the powerful sense of significance imparted by the poem. It is as if we are ourselves represented here. As, indeed, we are.

The dream, as psychoanalysis has traditionally recognized, represents a form of reality connected to, yet liberated from, the notions of reality experienced by the waking, or conscious mind. The amount of time spent sleeping, and the proportion of that time passed in the dream state, indicates that if this mode of perception is nothing else, it is as "real" and "temporal" as much of our day-to-day existence. Yet, it is clearly more than this, for the most basic feature of the dream is its transcendence of the limitations of time and space; thus it experientially resolves one of the major conundrums of consciousness. At the same "time," it engages the dreamer in a form of immediate experience which may seem more "real" and compelling than that of his waking state. This effect is enhanced by the physiological fact that the dreamer is uninfluenced (to a major extent) by information from his five senses. Thus, the "objective" world, and its physical reality, do not influence or control the experience, although the metaphysical dynamic of objective reality (and of sensory response) may be represented in the dream content. While waking experience is extrinsic, therefore, the dream appears to be intrinsic, arising solely out of the psychological and physiological components of each individual.

Consciousness may intrude upon the dream, as at moments



of great stress it reliably does, waking the dreamer from an intolerable nightmare, or sometimes reassuring him amid the action that it is all "only a dream." Nevertheless, one cannot exert a conscious control over the dream action, at least not until later in the waking state, when the recalling and the retelling impose a kind of order and interpretation evolving out of the selection and description of elements which seem to retain their vividness and significance. It is at this point that the archetypal forms which inhabit the dream world cross over the borders of awareness; exposed to the light of day, or the light of consciousness, they are reduced to a manageable size, marvelled over, analysed, "nailed down" (or up, onto the roof of Heorot) and remembered with slight shudders, reverberations of the deeper terror of their nocturnal visitations.

The contents of the Unconscious represent the totality of psychic experience inherited (genetically, Jung suggests) from our ancestors as a series of pre-conscious "ideas" or "forms." Jung calls these forms "archetypes" (arche - "first", typos - "kind"). They seem to have aggregated out of the differentiated primary material of the fractured psyche, much as a star is born out of nebular matter. Just as the star's core, the force which attracts to itself all intrinsically related material, remains primal, an



archetype is a central idea shared by all members of the human race, and may also be differentiated by factors which are the result of personal and racial experience. It is the shared image which is the archetype of the Collective Unconscious, and it is this image which appears in the enduring work of art, in folktale, fiction, and saga, for the apparantly simple reason that it will continue to exercise its particular fascination independent of time and social change. This appears to be pre-eminently true of the forms which manifest themselves in Beowulf.

Since all poetry may, in a Romantic sense, be said to be a "dream of the poet's mind," an epic poem in which monsters and dragons fight with a superhuman hero may easily be compared to a marathon dream in which the protagonist is every man who has ever, as a little boy, imagined himself a hero. But the appeal of such a poem might be limited to little boys, if this were all its significance. Since this is clearly not the case, and, on the contrary, the power of Beowulf seems to increase apace with the developing consciousness, it is suggested that this poem contains some fundamental and important truths, about man, his being, and his world. As in the poem itself, these truths are uncovered through the action of the hero, Beowulf, in his particular function as the archetypal Hero.

The function of the Hero is to enact the process of individuation,<sup>20</sup> and the evolutionary stages of the Hero represent the development of the individual's ego-consciousness, which must include his awareness of his strengths and weaknesses. This is the basic matter of this thesis, which will attempt to follow Beowulf through the patterns and activities by means of which the individual comes to terms with himself as a human being, utilizing and transcending his lower, instinctual nature in the final realization of both conscious and unconscious aims.

I envision the whole of Beowulf as the enactment of this process. Beowulf himself is the archetypal Hero, confronting the archetypal projections of his own Unconscious, which, in its active and elemental state is perceived by Jung as a driving force, or will, directing three main instincts.<sup>21</sup> These three instincts seem to parallel man's three perceived states of being: life, expressed in the sexual instinct as that which controls the creative and pro-creative powers; spirit, manifest through the aggressive instinct as the power of action for good or ill, introducing the moral question; and death, the awareness of which gives rise to the religious instinct as a means of interpreting physical or natural reality in terms sustaining to both life and spirit.



Since the will of the Unconscious is totally selfish, in that it seeks above all its own resolution, it may, on every level, threaten the main constructs of consciousness: ontological being and society. It is therefore in the interest of both individuation and society to control, by ritual, taboo and repression, the blind urge of the Unconscious to self-expression, and, instead, to channel its drives into socially acceptable behaviour. This necessitates a constant battle between conscious man and his unconscious will. However, since the Unconscious is the source of the creative, as well as the destructive spirit of mankind, consciousness, in acting to repress what it perceives as destructive impulses, may repress many creative ones as well. The dangers to life and spirit are implicit in such activity, and the Unconscious fights back with all its primordial powers of creation and annihilation.

"Life and the world are a battleground, have always been and always will be, and, if it were not so," says Jung, "existence would soon come to an end." <sup>22</sup>

The three instinctual drives of which Jung writes, the aggressive, the sexual, and the religious, are inextricably linked one with another, by virtue of their common source of psychic energy, or libido. <sup>23</sup> This study does not wish to separate them, and, in fact, cannot do



so. However, for discussion to be coherent, it will be necessary to create an artificial division, and it is one which has been irresistibly suggested by the structure of the poem itself, which has been divided into three mythic battles.

The expression of the instincts of aggression and sexuality, and the functioning of a religious instinct seem to parallel the poem's three battles: the fight with Grendel enacts the conflict with the aggressive instinct; the battle with Grendel's mother acts out symbolically the struggle with the sexual instinct; the final, and apocalyptic, encounter with the fire-dragon has religious overtones which relate directly to Jung's theory of individuation, in the sense that the goal of individuation, the attainment of the transcendental Self, is, in the broad sense, of a religious nature,<sup>24</sup> so that Christ Himself is considered by Jung to be the apotheosis of this central psychic entity.

The quest for that archetype of psychic wholeness which Jung has termed the Self is not undertaken by every individual, for the strife is tō strang/lā<sup>h</sup> ond longsum, "too strong, hateful, and longlasting" (133-34). On the way, the seeker meets many powerful archetypal forms arising out of the depths of his own Unconscious, and,

engaging in patterns of symbolic behaviour, enacts a drama the meaning of which may well elude his powers of comprehension, but which must, nevertheless, take place in order that certain necessary stages of development may be reached and passed.

It would seem that the process of development implied in the activity of the Unconscious must be related to a similar process of development in the physical world, for such an assumption is a logical extension of Jung's vision of the Unconscious as a biological entity.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, man's evolutionary process must be reflected in the workings of the Unconscious, and, indeed, this is an implication of Jung's three instincts theory.

In his emergence from animal being to that being which is identified as uniquely human, man (as many paleo-anthropologists now believe) has passed through three evolutionary states. His first, most controversial form, was that of homo habilis, the toolmaker or "handy man;"<sup>26</sup> the second hominid development was homo erectus,<sup>27</sup> "erect-walking man;" finally, there was man as we know him today, homo sapiens, "knowing man,"<sup>28</sup> the man who knows that he is a man.

It is conceivable that each stage of development carried with it particular psychic problems, and that

man has created his own solutions to those problems. Thus, homo habilis may have suddenly required a social structure which established work roles; homo erectus may have had to justify, by evolutionary success, his "sudden" tendency to walk upright; and homo sapiens perhaps required a mode of thought which would alleviate the anxiety generated by his new awareness.

It may be, as Jung's theory suggests, that the psyche still carries within it the vestigial remains of man's pre-sapient being, as well as the archetype of his emergence into consciousness. These evolutionary processes seem integrally related to the three instinctive drives described by Jung in his theory of the libido as manifest through three primary instincts. As the individual develops from infancy to old age, it may be that he or she passes again through each stage of evolutionary development, either symbolically or instinctually, through the engagement of these three primary instincts, and in so doing, "resolves" once again the evolutionary process. Thus, on a conscious level of experience, the sexual drive is concerned with establishing "right roles" for males and females; the aggressive drive asserts man's right to take decisive action; and the religious function is to create thought patterns which answer his fears.



In Beowulf, as I hope to show, these functions are fulfilled in the three mythic battles. I am particularly fascinated by the structure of the poem for this reason. Most provocative of all is the poet's accurate intermingling of the more purely "animal" instincts of sexuality and aggression. This intermingling takes place structurally in the integral relationship of the Grendel kin, who represent the embodiment of these two instinctual drives; just as anthropologists cannot agree on which form of man came first, habilis or erectus, though they lean towards the theory that it was habilis,<sup>29</sup> so the poet has Grendel, the agent of aggression, precede his dam in action, although she precedes him in genesis. The religious function, as explored in the fight with the fire-dragon, clearly comes last, and distinguishes man as a being unique from all the rest of animal nature.

The patterns of behaviour, both psychic and symbolic, by means of which these resolutions are effected, is the material of this poem.

Such patterns are archetypal, in that they are already set down by the Unconscious. In primitive societies, these patterns of psychic behaviour are projected onto appropriate symbols in the objective world, these symbols become the agents acting in a myth that expresses the psychic drama,

and these myths are physically re-enacted by primitive man in imitative rites that serve to complete the cycle from the Unconscious mind to the conscious affirmation of the Unconscious contents - or actualisation.<sup>30</sup>

The function of myth, which is essentially "the primordial language natural to (the unconscious) psychic processes"<sup>31</sup> may be to present to the conscious mind symbolic patterns and projections which, though antecedent to consciousness, must nevertheless be assimilated by it in order for individuation to take place. In contemplating Beowulf as myth and as art a partial integration of the conscious mind with its unconscious counterpart is already set in motion, for the poem speaks directly to both levels of existence through symbols, and it is through symbols that the inner drama of the Unconscious is revealed to consciousness. In this sense, it is suggested by Jung that "symbols are the living facts of life."<sup>32</sup> They represent emotions, urges, and primary "ideas" of human nature which cannot by any other means be assimilated by the conscious mind.

Primitive societies understood this principle instinctively, and many modern churches employ it successfully, for their rituals and taboos serve to give symbolic expression to many of the urges of the



Unconscious, without the necessity of conscious understanding or assent. As long as the unconscious drama may unfold in symbolic action, the integrity of the psychic organism is protected and promoted.

Interestingly enough, Jung once stated that "Alfred the Great lived the symbolic life about 2/3 of the time,"<sup>33</sup> by which he meant to indicate the degree to which the daily life of earlier societies permitted the natural subconscious apprehension of psychic reality. The society of Beowulf, as well as the society which gave rise to the idea of Beowulf as an archetypal Hero, was engaged in naturally symbolic behaviour, the meaning and importance of which was probably neither questioned nor analysed. The very manner in which these myths were related, chanted, as they were, by scops, or bards, in a group situation, ensured a collectivity of experience which validated the communal ideals, as well as allowing an almost direct expression of unconscious ideas. When the poem finally made the transition from the oral to the written tradition, the basic symbolic material was doubtless already established. One may presume, at least, perhaps, that Beowulf as a hero figure had some basis in tradition, and that the Grendel Monster fights were known to the audience of Beowulf when it was an oral poem. The dragon is, of course, a universal archetype



and its manifestation in Beowulf is sufficiently allusive to permit identification with the Scandinavian Fafnir, the Midgard serpent of Norse mythology, or even, perhaps, the prototype of St. George's arch foe which harks back to the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps, too, these tales were originally told separately, the unification by theme provided by the writer, who may or may not have been the first to integrate the Christian motif into the poem, perhaps as a brilliant reply to Alcuin's famous rhetorical question "What has Ingeld to do with Christ?"<sup>34</sup> For, if we substitute the name "Beowulf" for the Norse hero singled out by Alcuin, we may agree that the poet has taken us beyond the limitations imposed by conventional religious thought, towards a perception of Christ which explores the nature of His being as the apotheosis of mankind's own potential, the total actualisation of the human being as a child of God.

In keeping with the intention of epic poetry, Beowulf attempts to encompass the totality of man's evolving humanity, his society, his systems and his psyche, and to give expression both to facts of matter (the so-called "objective" facts as determined by history and science) and to facts of mind, the subjective truths which make themselves known to each individual independent of objective reality, but which are, nevertheless, affirmed

by intersubjective experience. Like all poetry (and, indeed, all products of mind in its creative or intuitive function) Beowulf represents the interaction of consciousness with a projection upon the "real" world of Unconscious forms inherent in the structure of the human psyche. The power of the conscious mind to repress the contents of the Unconscious, forcing them "underground," and the perceived necessity of its so doing, creates the tension out of which the interpsychic dialectic arises.

In literary criticism, as with all "scientific" or systematic structures, the language and the patterns perceived represent entirely the sense that an intersubjective consciousness has managed to make out of what must ultimately be acknowledged as unconscious processes. The work of art is transcendent in just this way: that it opens the "doors of perception" onto worlds and states of being which may exist outside the borders of conscious awareness, by suggesting processes in which consciousness may participate without the necessity of being fully cognizant of either its methods or its ultimate purpose. It is partially for this reason that the true work of creation, whether that work is a poem, such as Beowulf, or a life, such as the life of Christ, exercises a compelling power over the minds and hearts of all who contemplate it.



As Jung has suggested in his theory of psychological "types,"<sup>35</sup> for some this fascination is primarily intellectual; for others it is emotional; for still others, it is sensual, stimulating an acknowledgement of the senses; for a relative few, people like Jung himself and our poet, it is intuitive, a mode of awareness which subsumes the other three modes, imparting a conviction of truth and beauty which is its own justification. For, although the scientist and the artist express their insights in different ways, their inspiration springs from a common source.

The polarization of science and art is arguably a "fact" of twentieth century perception, with the finest minds in each mode of understanding streaking away from one another as inevitably as the primary particles of the universe race towards opposite and isolated space. And yet, with the same inevitability, these paths must turn back towards one another in order to realise the common source and end of all experience. Thus, poets seek the truth of creation in phenomenological patterns, and scientists gain inspiration from the integrity of man's artistic creations.

It is not my intention to justify the work of Jung, which is the subject of a controversy best left to psychology; nor is it my desire to erect a "tower of psychobabble" on



the foundations of his exhaustive pioneer work in the field of psychoanalysis; but simply to apply some of his main ideas, which derived from traditional psychological thought and transcend it as a poem transcends its interpreters, to a work which has fascinated me since my first meeting with it many years ago. Nor do I pretend that an understanding of Jung is essential to an understanding of Beowulf. Jung himself would probably have seen it the opposite way around, as his theories and ideas developed out of mythology, poetry, stories, paintings, and people - in other words, out of works of art, such as the poem before us.

CHAPTER I

THE GENESIS OF THE HERO

"Beowulf is min nama."

The eponymous hero of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem, Beowulf, uses his own name only twice in the course of the poem: before his initial meeting with Hrothgar, king of the Scyldings (343) and before his final meeting with death (2807). In both cases, the effect highlights an essentially subconscious intent, imparting a sense of Beowulf's keen awareness of his individuality, his uniqueness as an æþeling ~~æ~~ argod (2343), and signifying his determination to affirm and retain that uniqueness as long as he lives. In this endeavor, as in his words, Beowulf displays a strong self-awareness, and reveals his possession of an ontological integrity which enables



him to act in and for his world. He also displays his pride, or hubris, a fundamental quality of the heroic figure.<sup>36</sup> It is this pride, the ego's weapon and curse in a cosmos that seems to negate man's self-affirmation and deny his sense of meaning and value, which enables Beowulf to stand uppriht (2092) to claim the rewards of his success and accept the responsibilities of his failure, to identify his being with the Being of God, and to define himself, in action and reflection, as a hero.

Heroes, tragic or triumphant, are the personification of man's highest possibilities in a world seen as a battleground. And, as every battleground demands its own kind of heroism, the figure of the hero undergoes change and development in response to his contact with life and the world. As an archetype of the personal ego in its struggle for maturity and individuation<sup>37</sup> the hero undergoes cycles of behaviour which are themselves archetypal, in that they enact processes necessary to the realisation of these basic psychic goals; yet, these goals alter in both definition and direction as the heroic protagonist approaches a final resolution. For this reason, the Hero begins the life experience as an "infantile personality," and grows (as, ideally, does the individual) in knowledge and wisdom, until he attains a mature psychic

stage, called by Jung the Old Wise Man. These forms are archetypes of the Collective Unconscious in the sense that Western man's collective idea of a hero is intrinsically the same, although certain phylogenetic attributes may differ. The great heroes of classical mythology are as different in some ways as they are alike in others, for reasons which have their roots in the types of societies which produced them. Thus, the pious virtues of Aeneas differ from the passionate and cold obsessions of Odysseus as the values of Imperial Rome differed from those of Ancient Greece. Beowulf, the major heroic figure of the Christo-heroic Weltanschauung, combines elements of the Teutonic hero with qualities of heroism exemplified by Christ and His followers. Deriving from this tradition, he moves, over the course of his three battles, from the pagan, Germanic ideal to become the living symbol of Christian fortitude. This transition is a complex one, and involves a change in values; yet certain patterns remain constant.

The pattern of the hero motif, which occurs in literature and myth, contains features common to all traditions: the humble, or miraculous birth; superhuman strength; a rise to a position of power or prominence; battles with the forces of evil; pride (hubris); and, finally, a fall, through either betrayal or sacrifice,



resulting in his death.<sup>39</sup>

Ample evidence of Beowulf's status as a hero is provided in the poem. His humble origins, as the son of an outlaw in a foreign land (459-64) and his unprepossessing youth (2183b-88a) are mentioned particularly; his early display of strength and prowess in the contest with Breca and his reputation as moncynnes mægenes strengest/ on þam dæge pysses lifes, "the strongest man in might at that time in this world" (196-97), attest to his superhuman strength; he has risen to a position of prominence as a thane of Higelac, but later achieves the highest position as king of the Geats; his pride is revealed not only in his self-affirmation, but also in his boasting, his willingness to challenge any comers, his devastating defence of his reputation against the charges of Unferth, as well as in his refusal to back down from his final battle with the fire dragon even though, if we are to believe the poet's affirmation of Hrothgar as a god cyning (863), it was neither required nor desired as proof of heroic stature; his final self-sacrifice for minum leodum (2797, 2804) leads to his death in conflict with an archetypal form of evil.

The primary form of action undertaken by the hero, apart from the foregoing life pattern which is his by destiny, is a cycle of experience known as the rebirth



pattern. The rebirth pattern,<sup>40</sup> or, as Maud Bodkin has designated it, affirming the experiential nature of all archetypes, the "Rebirth Archetype,"<sup>41</sup> may be repeated several times, either actually or symbolically, throughout the heroic lifetime. The major functional and situational motif of psyche, this pattern involves the heroic protagonist in a process of catabasis, a descent into the "underworld" of the Unconscious, such as that of Hercules (most vividly suggested in the poem by Beowulf's descent into the dismal mere) and includes such motifs as a sense of tension, or suspension between opposites (suggested by the juxtaposition of fire and water which recurs throughout the poem, most effectively in the description of the mere); a meeting with dangerous animals (such as the nicoras, which symbolise the animal instincts of the Unconscious); and an eventual breakthrough, a victory which signifies a conquest of the dark powers within and without the mind. These symbolic activities are then followed by an ascent, indicating a transcendence to a higher level of awareness, and, ultimately, a transformation from one stage of being to another.<sup>42</sup>

These are the elements which, because they are not subject to the ideas of a changing consciousness, may be said to arise from the Collective Unconscious as an archetypal form, a prototype of the hero which, in this

study, will be designated the Hero Archetype, or simply, the Hero. As thus understood, the Hero represents a particular form of psychic being and action which derives from the Unconscious.

But the figure of the hero exists as well on the conscious level, as a construct of society and the conscious mind. And although Beowulf, as he appears in his function in the poem, is the personification of the Hero, and enacts this role alone, there is another sense, suggested by a view of the epic as "a form of art continually responding to the needs of man's developing consciousness,"<sup>43</sup> in which the poem Beowulf, as a totality, represents the whole man. Everything in the poem from the forms and people Beowulf meets to the landscape and elemental conditions in which he moves, is a part of the psychic universe that corresponds to the physical universe in which he lives, both of which combine to form the totality of Beowulf's being. As Goethe has said, "All that is outside is also inside,"<sup>44</sup> thus recognizing the conscious and unconscious nature of man's world.

The perceived nature of man's conscious universe, intrinsic to homo sapiens through a process of development and self-definition, is subjective, and inter-subjective or collective, but it is also objective, in the sense that man has a body, and exists in a world of matter. The



ontological formulation of this idea is found in Saint Paul, who suggests that man has a relationship not only to objects, to other men, and to God, but also to himself.<sup>45</sup> He is both subject and object of his own existence, (an affirmation of Johannine dualism) and can, therefore, act upon himself, either to abuse or to master himself. For Paul, the importance of consciousness in human destiny seems to derive from the possibilities of this choice: man can be at one with himself, and therefore with God, or he can be estranged from himself, and therefore in a state of sin, which he describes as a state of psychological duality:

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but  
sin that dwelleth in me."

(Rom. 7:17)

As thus understood, sin is not intrinsic to man, but resides within him as a possibility of action, and this implies a choice either for, or against, the "authentic self,"<sup>46</sup> Consciousness must make this choice (which, though logically simple, is, in practice, extremely difficult) and must act to effect it by means of heroic energy.

By definition, consciousness is understood to encompass all those faculties of reason, logic, and discrimination by means of which an individual is aware of himself, either



in a primary or a reflective sense; it may be likened to a sense-organ which is capable of perceiving internal mental events and distinguishing them from external perceptions. Consciousness differs most radically from unconsciousness in that it is intolerant of contradictions and is impelled to attribute to images a relatively constant meaning <sup>47</sup> (as opposed to the expansion of image into symbol effected by the Unconscious); meaning which may be perceived by the conscious mind.

The center of the field of consciousness, the Ego, is "the subject of all personal acts of consciousness" <sup>48</sup> and, tending to see itself as the controlling faculty because of its rational function, the Ego logically wills its own supremacy. Unlike many other archetypes, which may subvert the will of the Ego, the Hero Archetype is not in conflict with the will of consciousness to repress, control, or direct the expression of the Unconscious. On the contrary, the Hero brings the power of the Unconscious to bear in the service of conscious ideals and values. The phenomenology of the Hero reveals that he is, however, willing to risk the negation of consciousness by the Unconscious in pursuit of their conjoint goal of individuation, for he continually enters psychic (and physical) situations that endanger the whole organism (as Beowulf does when, in diving into the water of the mere, he delves

into a region of the psyche in which the conscious mind may be either extinguished or transformed.)

In its depiction of the formidable mere wherein reside the monsters who threaten the constructs of consciousness (symbolised by Heorot), Beowulf contains a dramatic image of the psychic structure and process as postulated by Jung. The relationship between the disparate components of the psyche is dynamically represented in the action itself, which operates on all three instinctual levels. Because the episode includes a conflict with a female monster, the sexual element (to be discussed in Chapter III) is implicit, but so, too, are elements of aggression and religion; all three come together in a moment of psychic energy generated by the Hero as the "personification of the libido."<sup>49</sup>

The concept of the libido is one of the foundations of Jung's theory of the Unconscious, for it incorporates all three of the basic instinctual drives, and does so in a way that permits the ascendance of one, without a necessary eclipse of the others. Thus the word libido itself has elements of the aggressive drive, the will to action, in its Latin application, expressed in the phrase libido est scrire, "I will, it pleases me." The sexual contents of the word (which has come to have a general



sexual meaning in everyday language) derives from its implications of desire and urgency, implicit in the Latin, and also in its Sanskrit relative, lubhyati, "to experience violent longing." The religious intent is uppermost in the Gothic lubains, "hope," and liufs, "love," as well as in the Old High German, libo, "love," and lob, "praise."<sup>50</sup> In the Anglo-Saxon language, this concept is suggested by the final word of Beowulf, lofgeornost, "most eager for praise," which as Klaeber indicates, is cognate with the German lob, "praise."

As a final description of Beowulf, lofgeornost must surely include all three instinctual elements of his heroic nature, which combine to form a totality of energy and will that may be reduced, as the concept of the libido may be reduced, to a prevailing will to live. Beginning with the instinct for self-preservation and combining with the sometimes contradictory instinct for preservation of the species (a dichotomy which is resolved in nature by the recognition that the continuous life impulse actually attains the creation of the whole species by the preservation of the individual<sup>51</sup>), in its initial formulation the psychic energy of the libido cries "I will," and is manifest as a driving urge to creation. However, in reference to the future, a time concept of which only man, so far as we know, is capable, the prevailing force



of individual will must be transmuted into desire, and "I will" becomes "I wish." As consciousness has imbued man with a sense of the future, a corresponding awareness of his own powerlessness in relation to that future, and a certain knowledge of death, it seems that it has also, through its prototype in the Unconscious, forced the emergence of a third instinctual drive which reflects this primary pre-occupation. It would seem that the functioning of the religious instinct, as unique to man, consists primarily of an innate tendency to sublimate, or transform, the energy of the libido onto another, symbolic level, a level which is accessible to consciousness, and acceptable to it. In this sense, the Hero, who personifies the energy of the libido, effects the transformation of the whole psychic organism through his contact with the powers of both consciousness and the Unconscious. This is what Beowulf does when he dives into the dreadful mere.

The threatening lake, with its niðwundor of fyr on flode (1365-66) symbolises the whole psyche, for water is one of the most common and universal symbols of the Unconscious, while the element of fire both at the surface and in the depths of the underwater cave suggests the power of the conscious mind. A "terrible wonder" indeed is this fire of consciousness. Its surface burning is an image of the questioning intellect, that Promethean architect of

its own destruction, which, in its consuming quest for knowledge carries with it the terror that inevitably attends man's concomitant awareness of his absolute vulnerability.

The tension and suspension between opposites represented by the image of fyr on flode very effectively suggests the apparently irreconcilable conflict between consciousness and the Unconscious, leading to an awareness of psychological duality that stimulates man's process of self-discovery. While Klaeber suggests that the source of this phenomenal image may have been "nothing but the will-o'-the-wisp," he does acknowledge that the image itself has powerful associations in "Oriental, as well as Christian accounts of hell."<sup>52</sup> He appears to overlook the possibility of its association with St. Elmo's fire, a phenomenon that occurs during storms at sea, which suggests itself as an image of psychological duality to me for three reasons: the phenomenon of St. Elmo's fire was said in ancient times to be the manifestation of Castor and Pollux, the Dioscurian twins, themselves symbols of psychological duality, with whom the relationship of Beowulf and Breca has been compared; Breca's<sup>53</sup> name has been interpreted to mean "stormy sea;"<sup>54</sup> and the mere was said to be gedrefed, "troubled, or stormy" (1417).

Jung's observations of psychological duality are central to his theory of the divided psyche, and are also



related to the idea of paradox expressed as a philosophical question, perhaps inspired by the concepts contrasted by Saint John in his notion of dualism<sup>55</sup> as central to the problem of man's existence. The "double identity" of the Dioscuri, used by Jung to illustrate the relationship between the mortal man and the "hidden immortal"<sup>56</sup> within, may be extended to include the awareness that mortal man is a conscious being, aware of his mortality, whereas the "hidden immortal" is an Unconscious entity that seeks its own expression. The archetype of this duality may appear in Beowulf as the relationship between Beowulf and Breca, which presents in dramatic form the question of choice as elementary to man's existential position.

One mortal, the other immortal, Castor and Pollux were twin brothers, whose fidelity to one another led to their dual apotheosis as the protectors of seamen.<sup>57</sup> Like Beowulf, Breca was also a legendary heroic figure, and both men earned their fame by prodigious feats of swimming in the sea (a symbol of the unconscious realm). According to Beowulf's story, a particular aspect of their exploit was his decision to stay with Breca, just as Pollux would not accept immortality if Castor had to die. Because the question of choice is a particular problem of consciousness, it seems fitting that the first important situation of choice into which Beowulf was thrown should include the



depth provided by the idea of the Twins,<sup>58</sup> which exemplify the Johannine notion of duality. And it seems that, from the moral polarities of good and evil (explored in the hero's conflict with the monsters) through the question of truth and falsehood (which emerges from Beowulf's argument with Unferth on the true nature of his contest with Breca) to the possibilities of freedom and enslavement (discussed obliquely at the end of the poem), and including the physical and metaphysical antinomies of light and darkness (in the Merewife's cave) and, of course, life and death (a prevailing theme), the Beowulf poet is preoccupied with the same concepts contrasted by Saint John in his observations on dualism.<sup>59</sup> As Hero, and thus, the embodiment of the active principle,<sup>60</sup> Beowulf must be concerned with these ideas, for they may all be possibilities of decision, and gain their true meaning from the question of human existence. It seems that, by thus suggesting the double possibilities of man's existing,<sup>61</sup> the Beowulf poet indicates the single most important function of consciousness: the responsibility of distinguishing between the "right" and the "wrong" forms of action, and of choosing between them.

The sense of "right" is a manifestation of the "archetype of meaning",<sup>62</sup> a powerful psychic form which adds its power to the total presence of the Geat Hero. An intrinsic sense of right and wrong is of immeasurable value to anyone

placed in a position of existential choice, for it is through this choice that the Ego creates (or re-creates) itself in the image of its highest ideals; yet, as we may infer from the nature of the Hero, and as the small fire burning in the Merewife's cave indicates, these conscious ideals are themselves resident in the Collective Unconscious. They seem to aggregate to the psychic form described by Jung as the "archetype of meaning," and identified by him as a mature form of the Hero Archetype, the Old Wise Man, itself a figure of dual possibility, which appears in Beowulf under various guises. Generally, the archetypal figure of the Old Wise Man appears in myth as a king, hero, medicine man or Saviour.<sup>63</sup> The snotor guma, or frod cyning, respected figures in the world of Beowulf, represent a manifestation of this archetype, in the sense that age is generally considered to confer wisdom and moral enlightenment.

The Old Wise Man has been called by Jung the "archetype of meaning," because its manifestation seems to point the way towards an understanding of ultimate reality, and it reveals itself as a source of hitherto hidden knowledge. Occurring at a late stage in the heroic cycle, it may nevertheless appear at any point during the psychic life process, and displays both positive and negative attributes. In situations of doubt, the Old Wise Man may generate a sense



of certainty and significance, and his power is felt to be supernatural, shamanistic; he is a mana personality, who imbues events or symbols with particular, transcendent importance. But this power is dangerous, and may easily "possess" the ego personality, so that it becomes "inflated."<sup>64</sup> In an essentially weak character, this archetype may serve merely to further entrench the collective wisdom (or rationalisations) of conventional man, endowing it with an authority it does not merit.<sup>65</sup>

Such seems to have been the case with the aged Hrothgar, who, although he gives the young hero much good, sound advice, and dispenses his life-gotten wisdom with a great sense of certainty, nevertheless makes some conclusions which derive more from the evidence of his own, personal experience than from any truth inherent in the maxims he advances. One of these patently false pronouncements is his assumption that the heroic nature will inevitably succumb to the assaults of old age - a notion which Beowulf himself disproves. Hrothgar's is a negative, rather than a positive voice. He tells Beowulf how not to act (it is left to Wealhtheow to give positive guidance). His didactic interpretation of the story of Heremod recalls the Old Testament tale of Nebuchadnezzar;<sup>66</sup> Jung suggests that the Old Testament God was a projection of what he termed the "daemonic"<sup>67</sup> side of the Old Wise Man archetype, and, although



the Beowulf poet does not overtly criticize Hrothgar (indeed, pays due and frequent lip service to him as a god cyning!) I feel that Hrothgar is a negative, even insidious, figure, who may in fact represent the negative aspects of an absolute authority figure, a kind of superego,<sup>68</sup> which may not be criticised (as who can criticise God?) but which may, through dramatic device, be judged, nevertheless, as Beowulf effectively does, both by inference and action. When, for example, he is about to revenge Hrothgar for ~~A~~schere's death, Beowulf suggests to him that it is better for every man to seek his own vengeance:

Ne sorga, snotor guma! Sēlre bið æghwām,  
pæt hē his frēond wrece, þonne hē fela murne.  
Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebīdan  
worolde lifes; wyrce sē þe mōte  
dōmes ær dēape; pæt bið drihtguman  
unlifgendum æfter sēlest. (1384-89)

Do not sorrow, wise man! It is better for each of us that he avenge his friend, than that he mourn greatly. Each of us must accept an end of this world's life; let him who may win glory before his death: that will be best for the lifeless warrior, afterwards.

In his own old age, Beowulf certainly did not follow Hrothgar's example of hiding in the women's apartments when a force of destruction threatened his kingdom. Indeed, the figure of Hrothgar seems to have acted as a kind of antithesis to Beowulf, reminding him not only of his own

mortality and vulnerability to the ravages of time and fortune but also of the unacceptable alternative to heroic action which presents itself in every situation of existential choice.

A further negative effect of the Old Wise Man archetype may result in the conviction on the part of the individual possessed by it (for every archetype has the power to "possess" the personality) that he is a kind of invincible, superior being, a superman - thus leading him to take unnecessary risks.<sup>69</sup> There is some evidence that Beowulf himself was subject to this negative possession, for many of the risks to which he exposed himself, including the swimming match with Breca, the fight with Grendel, the dive into the unconscious realm of the mere, and the final conflict with the fire-dragon, were undertaken without regard for the consequences and even, at least at the outset, without great precaution. But this sense of caution, at least, increases, so that, although he fought Grendel unarmed, he did take a sword into the dreadful lake, and wore both sword and shield in his final battle. In old age, moreover, it is clear that Beowulf does not feel himself to be invincible; on the contrary, he is painfully aware of his vulnerability:



wæpen tō wyrme,	Nolde ic sweord beran,
wið þam āglæcean	gif ic wiste hū
gylpe wiðgripan,	elles meahte
ac ic þær heaƿufýres	swā ic giō wið Grendle dyde;
[o] reðes ond attres;	hātes wene,
bord ond byrnan.	forþon ic mē on hafu
	(2518b-24a)

I would not bear sword or weapon against the serpent, if I knew how else I might come to grips with the monster in such manner as to fulfill my boast, as I did aforetime against Grendel. But there I look for hot destructive fire, for blast and venom; therefore I have upon me shield and corslet. (Clark Hall 70 )

That the Old Wise Man archetype should lead Beowulf into situations which could end in his death affirms its psychic integrity, because the hero motif includes this death as an essential element, and its importance, or significance, is equal to that of his life.

The necessary death of the hero reflects more than the realistic, or physical, fact of death; it signifies the effective death of the Ego in the realisation of the Self. For the final goal of heroic action on the psychic plane is to effect the actualisation of this hypothetical entity, described by Jung as a state of completion and unity of being which comprises, in perfect balance, all elements of the psychical and physical. Existing both <sup>71</sup> a priori and a posteriori to consciousness, it is both



the source and goal of conscious awareness, the beginning and the end of being. The Self has been described in religious terms as the "kingdom of God" which is within every man, and in alchemical terminology as the "Adam Kadmon, the Christ in every man."<sup>72</sup> As a psychic entity, in the divided psyche of man, the Self is the archetypal form of psychic wholeness, the Father, as it were, of the Ego.<sup>73</sup> Described by Jung as "a psychic totality and at the same time a centre, neither of which co-incides with the ego, but includes it, just as a larger circle encloses a smaller one,"<sup>74</sup> the Self is symbolised in Beowulf by the "treasure hard to attain"<sup>75</sup> for which Beowulf, as Hero, ultimately sacrifices his life.

Jung has compared the relationship of the Ego to the Self with that of the Son to the Father:<sup>76</sup> the sacrifice of the Son is the final, necessary archetypal pattern which must be enacted before the attainment of that total awareness which releases the individual from the limitations of the physical body. It is, of course, impossible to escape the Christian implications of such a view, nor avoid the overt identification with Christ which Beowulf, as archetypal Hero, affords.

At this point, it seems relevant to recast Alcuin's famous question, and ask "What has Beowulf to do with Christ?", because it is obvious from the poem as a whole

that the poet saw an integral relationship.

The Christian mode of perception is almost immediately introduced into the poem, and thereafter colours its picture of man and the world. Even in the early episodes, there is the suggestion of Christian thought in incidents such as the singing of a hymn of creation in Heorot and in the coastguard's reference to God as Fæder alwalda (316). Beowulf speaks of God in biblical terms as Metod, "Creator" (967), Frean, "Ruler" (2794), and even God (1658), and clearly understands Him in this way, but the fact that Christ Himself is not mentioned in the poem leads to the conclusion that Beowulf's understanding derives from his own innate sense of Self in relation to God. His awareness of a First Cause, and his attributing to that Cause a nature which includes benevolence and moral will, establish him, if not necessarily as a Christian, then certainly as a man who expresses a natural religious sensibility, one who interprets the world in religious terms. This mode of understanding is instinctual, and results from the functioning of the religious instinct, which may, in a certain sense, be said to originate the ultimate desire for unity and transcendence which characterizes man's search for God. Operating on the energy generated by the religious instinct, Beowulf as Hero enacts that "drama of repentance, sacrifice, and regeneration" which is the only



means by which man can repair his separation from the Father.

By the time he has reached the final battle of his life, Beowulf, though still ostensibly conforming to the idea of a hero in the pre-Christian Teutonic world, is living a symbolic life which closely resembles the last days of Christ. From the moment he accepts the cup from the slave, Beowulf is committed to fight the dragon, just as Christ, in accepting a "cup" in Gethsemane, was committed to die on the Cross. Beowulf's thanes desert him at the extreme moment, just as the disciples of Christ abandoned Him. Wiglaf, like Peter, the only man who comes to his defence (after wrestling with his fears and his sense of duty) is left to interpret for his followers the significance of Beowulf's life and death. Like the twelve disciples of Christ, twelve men ride round Beowulf's barrow, singing his praises, an eulogy in which the penultimate line describes Beowulf as the mildust manna, a description so startlingly in contrast to what we have been led to believe was an aspect of the pagan hero that it is almost superfluous to recall that this expression may also be descriptive of Christ.

In portraying Beowulf as Christ-like in both essential nature and patterns of symbolic action, the poet seems to be aware first of all that certain patterns express funda-



mental psychic realities, and also that the archetypal form of the Hero, of which Christ was the apotheosis, is within the psychic potential of every man, pagan or Christian. The desire for oneness with God is enacted by the Hero as the agent of the Unconscious, specifically religious, drive, which affirms the possibility of continuance and renewal in defiance of the manifest "fact" of mortality. In this sense, the religious instinct may be seen as the psychic counterpart of the sexual instinct. As the sexual function is to ensure the continuation of the physical components of the human body, the religious function is to ensure the psychic continuity of the human spirit; the integral relationship of both these instincts is reflected in the essential likeness of the goals, for both seek unity with another entity as a form of immortality. Yet, just as the achievement of this unity implies a kind of "death" to the individual being, so the overall goal of individuation requires a death of the Ego, which is limited to notions of time and space that do not exist in the Unconscious. Ultimately, also, it requires the death of the physical body, which is similarly limited.

Although the death of the individual Ego is what the Unconscious most desires, it is also what consciousness most fears. As Beowulf nears this final, inevitable confrontation, his desire to live is plain; he has

experienced what he calls the lifwyn(n), "the joy of life" (2097), and has no desire to relinquish it. In the same way, the Ego has no desire to relinquish the differentiation and individuality which sets it apart from all of creation, just as Beowulf's heroic qualities set him above and apart from other men. His impulse to resist, to defy the possibility to the very end, however werigmod, "weary of soul" (1543) he might be, may be the result of pride (hubris), but it is a pride which is effective in preserving life, not destroying it. It is, therefore, a creative force, to the extent that it permits the possibility of an alternative. As Beowulf puts it:

unfægne eorl,                      Wyrð oft nereð  
   þonne his ellen dēah! (572-73)

Fate often saves the doomed warrior, if  
his courage is great!

Still, this observation, which is more bemused than didactic, opens up a whole area of unknowing that challenges the security of rational deduction, and yet offers it that element of hope which is its inspiration. For it cannot be denied that consciousness has its limitations, and it cannot be denied that hope often ends in despair. The tenuous thread by which hope is maintained depends entirely upon the strength of the Ego, which is maintained by the



slender skein of its own self-affirmation.

This self-affirmation, when placed in opposition to the Self-actualisation<sup>78</sup> which is the absolute goal of individuation, poses a metaphysical conundrum that seems to be basic to the whole question of man's temporal existence: "How does one lean on God and give over everything to Him, and still stand on his own feet as a passionate human being?"<sup>79</sup>

The answer, if there is an answer, may have been provided by Beowulf himself, who reserves the right to act, but dedicates his action to God, in the exercise of an affirmative self-confidence which provides the only alternative to failure of nerve. One must either act or succumb. It becomes a matter of pride.

His pride, a consistent element of Beowulf's character, contributes to his conscious development as a heroic figure, for pride is necessary to maintain ego-supremacy,<sup>80</sup> which is itself necessary to prevail over the forces for chaos that threaten the ordered world of man. And Beowulf is, first of all, a man, and knows he must be a man, the best man that he can be, simply because he is the best there is. Nor was his pride vain or unfounded. His feeling of invincibility was supported by his extraordinary strength and physical prowess, but, far from feeling that he was, in himself,





The identification of God as the "real" source of his strength and, in fact, power, is a conjoint effort of consciousness and the Unconscious. The presence of the power of God, or the power of the unknown force within the soul, which is symbolised by the Hero's sudden vision of the mystical sword, god ond geatolic, "good and majestic" (1562), signals his conscious affirmation of the archetypal source of his heroic energy. In the psychic underworld of the mere, the archetype of Soul<sup>81</sup> appears as this marvellous sword. The blade represents its active power, and the hilt, a Rood-like remnant which is all that remains for Beowulf to take with him in his return to the conscious realm, tells a cryptic tale of primordial evil, and of the Flood<sup>82</sup> that drowned it in unconsciousness, but did not destroy it.

The reality of evil is dramatically revealed in its awful, destructive power, as "demon blood," to melt the mighty sword blade in hildegicelum, "icicles of war" (1606). The images of blood and of war seem to link this evil with man, and therefore with Beowulf himself. For, although the Hero has rejected evil, and battles against it, thereby detaching himself from it, as Beowulf expressly does in terming himself unsynnigne, "sinless" (2089), in an existential sense evil is not external to the whole man; it derives from him as a possible form of action.



This awareness is reflected in many mythologies, which link the Hero with the archetypal form of evil, the Dragon, not merely by virtue of their opposition, but integrally. In Scandinavian myth, for instance, the Hero may be described as having "snake's eyes,"<sup>83</sup> because he is partially a snake himself, while in other traditions the souls of heroes often take the form of snakes after death.<sup>84</sup> This pattern seems to indicate that there is an intrinsic connection between the Hero and his counterpart. On the conscious level, however, this connection has been broken, so that the two are seen as separate entities.

Because the forms of good and evil represented by the Hero and the Dragon, or Monster, are defined, or "illuminated," by the conscious mind, it may be that this polarity is meaningful primarily in relation to conscious aims and objectives. But while it may be true that a concept of morality is inoperative on the unconscious level, the Unconscious itself, as depicted in the fearful mere, is not, in itself, hostile to conscious awareness. Although it contains much that threatens, many "sea monsters," it contains everything else as well: eorpan, "earth" (1532); air, as there is no water in the Merewife's cave (1512b-16a); water; and fyrleoht, "firelight" (1516), the symbol of consciousness itself.



In his battle with the archetypal form of evil, Beowulf as Hero and as agent of the Ego, is aided by this burning light of consciousness, by means of which he can distinguish the shapes of darkness and of evil against which he must fight; it is also this firelight that enables him to perceive the grace of God, materialised as the magic sword which empowers him to overcome the monstrous daimon. Yet, just as fire, gæsta gifrost (1123), empowers, and yet, ultimately consumes man, so consciousness, greedy for proof, empowers man to postulate ultimate and absolute Being, and yet bears the burden of choice which proposes to him the equal and opposite possibility of annihilation.

The prospect of annihilation does not daunt the Hero. As Beowulf dives under the surface of conscious awareness, into the depths of the chthonic Unconscious, in search of that pattern of rebirth which will free him from the destructive power of his own repression, he does not count the risk to himself: nalles for ealdre mearn (1443). His faith in the psychic integrity and power of his conscious mind is affirmed, for even in those regions of the psyche in which consciousness may be extinguished, he comes upon its chthonic counterpart, the prototype of consciousness which exists in the capacious Unconscious, symbolised by the blacne leoman beorhte scinan, "the brilliant light

shining brightly" (1519), in the sea-mother's cave. Through contact with, and experience of, the vast and limitless force of the Unconscious, the Ego realises its own limitations and affirms a greater Being, reflected in the depths of its own being, which it knows to be the prototype of itself, and which it must call good (god). The hero, in consciously choosing good, creates himself in the image of that good, the ultimate form of which he calls God.

The power of this God is triumphant in the image of melting ice which begins the poem's one epic simile:-

þæt hit eal gemealt                    þæt wæs wundra sum,  
þonne forstes bend                    ðise gelicost,  
onwindeð wālrāpas,                    Fæder onlæteð,  
sæla ond mæla;                    sē gewæld hafað  
þæt is sōð Metod.                    (1607-11)

It was a great marvel that it all melted,  
very like to ice, when the Father -he who has  
mastery of times and seasons, -loosens the  
bond of frost, unwinds the flood-ropes. He  
is the true Lord.                    (Clark Hall)

Allied to consciousness, and activated by heroic energy, the archetype of Soul reveals the will of this archetypal God. As the free, but necessarily committed, agent of this will to good, Beowulf fulfills his fundamental and transcendent purpose as Hero.

CHAPTER II

BEOWULF AND GRENDEL: The Aggressive Contest



In Anfang war die That.

"In the Beginning was the deed."

Goethe.

Beowulf was an outstanding hero to a warrior society in which the word for hero (hæle) was a synonym for "man." In his world, the possibility for heroic action was available to every man, and its definition of heroism reflected the exigencies of its social condition. "Courage, loyalty, memorable and honourable behaviour" <sup>85</sup> were the required attributes of these hæle<sup>86</sup>, whose existential choice was limited, as Sartre has suggested it ultimately is, to how they are going to die. A final rallying call of these hero-men was uttered by Byrhtwold, an old retainer, as he urged his doomed comrades on in The Battle of Maldon:

'Hige sceal þē heardra, heorte þē cētre,  
mod sceal þē mǣre, þē ūre mægen lýtlaſ. (213-13)

"Thought must be firmer, heart must be braver 87  
Courage must be greater, as our strength grows less."

These words poignantly reflect the "courage of despair"<sup>88</sup> that characterizes the ideal of heroism to which Beowulf subscribed, and which, in his final battle, he displayed in its most noble form.

The heroic ideal depicted in Beowulf evolves out of, and acts upon, a Northern consciousness, a racial psyche in which the rigours of environment play a necessarily prominent role, underlining, and sometimes defining, a particular interpretation of objective reality. The power of the elements to constrict and limit man is nowhere as evident as in the northern countries, where man's essential vulnerability is a constant factor of his existence.<sup>89</sup> In such a potentially hostile environment, phenomenological evidence alone forces man to recognize the fact that if, indeed, he does have free will, it is severely limited.

This apprehension seems to overshadow the poem, for Wyrd, like the over-riding Fate to which even the gods of Olympus were subject, stands immutably outside the action of Beowulf, while at the same time controlling its outcome. God may enter on the side of good, evil may do its worst, but, to Beowulf, Gæf a wyrd swa hio scel! "Fate goes ever as it must!" (455). Yet the very contingency of fate as thus expressed seems to indicate his awareness of a presence that subsumes the self-defining powers comprehended by the mind of man as good and evil, one which may perhaps be

construed as Will. Just as that primeval ice, out of which, in Norse myth, all life emerged,<sup>90</sup> is also the source and symbol of death, the limitless force of this Will, with which Wyrð may be identified, confronts the individual will, subsuming man's possibilities for good or evil action. It is against the annihilating force of this idea, manifest in the lives of men by seeming futilities, injustices, ironies, and the common end of both hero and villain, lēofes ond lāȝes, "the loved and the loathed" (2910) in death, against which Beowulf, as an existential hero, struggles.

Although the images of ice and cold in Beowulf, from the īsig ond ūtfūs, "icy and eager to go" (33) funeral ship of Scyld to the dramatic melting of the magic sword blade in hildegicelum, "icicles of war" (1606), all contain a definite sense of motion and power, it is power conceived in negative form. Isig, which is closely parallel to the OE īsern, "iron," seems to be associated in the poem with death and war in the same way as is iron, which, as the metal symbolic of, and essential to, the age of Beowulf, epitomises the social values of his time. Like the power of the elemental forces suggested in a word such as īsernscūr, "iron shower", the power of ice, and of winter, which yȝe beleac/ īsgebinde, "locks the sea in icy bonds" (1132b-33a) is active, not passive; it contains all the aggressive energy of that formidable source of life, as well as all its regressive



power as an anti-force. Its negative charge, linked with evil, impotence and death, is linked also with aggression, and in this sense ice stands as a metaphor for all those things against which Beowulf fights.

For to fight was everything. Although victory enhanced the reputation, defeat did not diminish it, as the story of Beowulf affirms. Both possibilities exist for every man, but not within his control; and whether he ascribes his victory to God, or his defeat to Wyrd or the Wyrm, his duty remained, simply, to fight, wīgan, "to wage war."

There are numerous, vivid Old English words for that central social reality, war. Of the many compound words employed by the poet to convey the most important aspects of this most important behavioural fact, the word ræs is a recurring element. Its own meaning, which comes down to us today in the form of "rush," or "race," is added to such prefixes as gūð, heaðo-, hilde-, hond-, and wæl-, to produce a variety of impressions of life in the midst of violence and death. Synonymous with the idea, and the reality, of gūðræs is the exercise of aggression, a

powerful instinctual drive in mankind. The noun, "aggression," which in its sound and substance suggestively echoes the Old English ras, actually comes from the Latin, ad-gradior: "I move towards," and in normal usage "aggression" is defined as an "act of beginning (a) quarrel or war," while the adjective, "aggressive," is more broadly defined as "forceful, self-assertive."<sup>91</sup> This latter definition seems more fully to capture the nature of the aggressive drive as the instinctual energy directed towards ensuring the expansion, as well as the survival, of the individual organism; however, the universal tendency to equate aggression with hatred and destruction is a revealing footnote to the historical pattern that has resulted from the unchecked expression of this primary instinct.

The biological foundation of the hypothesis of the aggressive instinct is the observation of a basic distinction between plant and animal forms of life: the power to move. Man, as an animal, can move; he can act. But to generate this action, he requires more fuel than plants, which need minimal life support. Indeed, the fact is, he needs other living organisms, plant or animal. He needs to kill and consume them in order to live. The energy which is concentrated upon doing this is generated by the aggressive instinct. Without it, the feasting that occupies so central a position in the social milieu of Beowulf would



be non-existent, as would that society itself, for Heorot could not have been built if Hrothgar had not been given heresped, "success in war" (cf. 64-8).

However, man, qua man, differs from all other animate life in one startling particular: not only can he act, but he can reflect upon his actions, not merely to assess them in terms of their effectiveness, but to judge them in terms of their value. This power is a property of consciousness, a function of which is to control the blind expression of instinct,<sup>92</sup> and thus to impose order upon the chaos that results from the indiscriminate expression of the active principle. Chaos, the primordial Deep out of which God created the ordered universe (Gen. 1:2) is perceived as antithetical to divine order.

The dynamic set in motion in the conscious realm by the exercise of the aggressive instinct may be either positive or negative, creative or destructive. Thus, man may use it to expand his area of control, and to create order out of chaos, as Hrothgar intended in the building of Heorot, or he may use it to limit the expansion of others, and to effect discord, which leads to the resurgence of chaos, as Unferth attempts in his quarrel with Beowulf, and as Grendel intends in his raids upon Heorot. The Hero, Beowulf, in contrast, is committed to preserving order, restoring, or creating it. Nevertheless, by virtue





judicious references to the emotions of joy and sorrow reflect this faculty of consciousness, since both joy and sorrow are not merely feelings, but are reflective emotional responses to events over which the individual has no direct control. Sorh is geniwod (1322) and Gamen eft astah (1160) in response to external stimuli, most particularly, in this case, to the situations (either of danger or security) in which the Scyldings found themselves.

The verb sorgian, "to sorrow" is itself cognate with the German besorgen, which has been adopted by the philosopher Heidegger<sup>93</sup> to identify a particular state of being in which there is a necessary involvement between man and his world. Besorgen actually means "care" or "concern," and in actuality man's relationship with his world is one of concern, for it cannot be otherwise. That this concern is most often experienced as anxiety is implicit in the etymology of the word, especially in its Old English application of "sorrow," and also in the Beowulf poet's contrasting usage of both sorh and gamen throughout the poem. While there are many instances of sorh in Beowulf, there are few of gamen, and all but one of those that do occur are negative, denoting a lack of joy (2263,2459), an end to it (1775,3021) or a perversion of it, as in the dire threat of Ongentheow to slaughter the Geats and hang them on the gallows-tree as [fuglum] to gamene, "joy (game) for the birds" (2941). Dream, as well, is used



equally to denote joy [as when it describes the revelry in Heorot (88, 497)] and the lack of it [as when Grendel is described as drēamum bedēled, "deprived of joys" (721, 1275)]. Apart from contributing to the tragic overtone of the poem as a whole, this pattern indicates a perceptual awareness of man's condition as a "being-in-the-world,"<sup>94</sup> a world in which there exists something that threatens his being. What that "something" might be, and how it might best be overcome, has long been the subject of intense contemplation on the part of the poets, priests, and philosophers, each in their different ways. The Beowulf poet brings to his task a strong unconscious element, manifest in his use of language and symbols that seem to have a life of their own; and they, in turn, speak with an integrity that triumphs over the attempts of consciousness to repress or manipulate them.

The first thing the poet acknowledges is the limitations of consciousness itself. Men ne cunnon, "men do not know," he says, hwā pām hlaeste onfēng, "who received that cargo" (52b) or hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþaſ, "where the mysterious demons go in their wanderings" (163) - they do not know heaven or hell. The Danes, terrified into reverting to heathen practices, do not know the nature of Metod (180) and nobody can comprehend Wyrd (1233).



The problems associated with the irrefutable limitations of conscious knowledge are compounded by a corresponding sense of powerlessness and an awareness of danger. Because consciousness thinks in terms of time, and can project itself imaginatively into future time, this "not knowing," a fundamental theme of Beowulf from the destination of Scyld's funeral ship to the destiny of the Geat nation at the end of the poem, causes an anxiety which is in direct proportion to the certain knowledge that consciousness does have of both evil and death. The tendency of consciousness to fear anything it cannot control or comprehend (implicit in its psychic makeup which seeks to encompass the totality of its world) is amplified when that consciousness exists in a world of time and of other entities, simply because the Ego is aware of the possibility of injury (evil) deriving from them. For while man does not know, he is capable of projecting possibilities for good and evil, and his response to the possibility for evil is fear.

The phenomenon of fear, with its assumption of something in the world which is harmful to man, demands a rationale from a theology that stresses the Old Testament notion that the world was made by God for man's enjoyment (Gen. 1:27-28). This question is raised by the poet in his motivational and structural

linking of Grendel with the scop's Song of Creation. Explicitly stated in the Song is the idea that God created everything for the use of man, even appointing the sun and moon for the specific purpose of providing lēoman tō lēohte landbūendom (95). It is immediately following this assertion, in response, and perhaps in refutation, that Grendel emerges from the darkness which is the inevitable concomitant of light, to enact the evil which is the inevitable concomitant of good.

As the embodiment of fear, and again as the object of fear, Grendel's form explores a fundamental condition of man as an ontological being: his awareness of the possibility of some incomprehensible danger to his psychic and organic integrity. Fearing is, essentially, the discovery of something as terrible, in a world which is "understood a priori to be such that out of it something terrible may appear." <sup>95</sup>

The sheer phenomenological fact is that man is situated in a world where his being is threatened. Whether the threat is as immediate and external as the presence of Grendel, or as intimate and remote as the inevitability of his own death, man is faced with the unavoidable "facticity" <sup>96</sup> of injury, destruction, annihilation. The living agent of these abstractions, Grendel is seen by the warriors of Heorot as the



embodiment and objectification of their worst fears.

The description of Grendel's approach to Heorot perfectly conveys the essential characteristics of "that which is feared," as delineated by Heidegger.<sup>97</sup> The three amplifications of the approach Com on wanre niht, "he came in the dusky night" (702b); Ða com of more, "then he came from the moors" (710a); Com þa to reced, "then he came to the hall" (720a) - quite apart from the suspense generated by this technique, disclose in their very effectiveness the nature of fear, which exists in the dual aspect of its potentiality (it is time-related, not yet present, but approaching) and its uncertainty (it may not strike at me, it may pass by, or choose some other).<sup>98</sup> These two elements reflect a state of powerlessness which is integral to the existential condition of man.

It is aggression that saves man from the crippling effects of this sense of powerlessness by impelling him to act; it is aggression that imparts to him his sense of autonomy, however limited this proves to be; it is aggression that opens to him the doors of possibility, and ultimately forces him to create himself by action, rather than simply unfold or recoil in response to external stimuli. And the aggressive instinct in man is perhaps best expressed through the work of his hands,



which, as the distinguishing mark of the highest forms of animal life, seem to represent a major biological triumph over the natural environment in their potential power to manipulate and change the objective world.

Beowulf's hands are an important aspect of his heroic presence; he is renowned for the strength of his mundgripe (380) and his trust in his "handgrips" indicates his determination, as well as his ability, to "take matters into his own hands" - in other words, to pursue an active, rather than a passive course in dealing with life situations, whether physical or psychic. This is in keeping with his heroic nature and destiny, because whether the field of action is psychic or physical the hero's primary function is to act,<sup>99</sup> and, indeed, he only exists in the active sphere. Potential alone is not enough, as the aging Beowulf well knew. Only in action may ideas cross the bridge provided by words and become objective reality. As the Danish coastguard simply, but profoundly, states:

scearp scyldwiga  
worda ond worca,

~~A~~ghwæres sceal  
gescād witan,  
se þē wēl þenceþ. (287b-89)

A wise warrior, one who judges well, must know the difference between two things - words and deeds.

As the embodiment of the active principle,<sup>100</sup> Beowulf operates on both the social and the personal level to effect good. But, although the hero initiates action for the cause of good, as opposed to evil, it is societal ideology which, to a very great extent, determines the nature of that good. Beowulf is a hero to his society, therefore, not only because he has the active desire and power to accomplish good, but also because he does not doubt his society's designation of value, a designation that evolves out of the urgent necessities of its own continuance and renewal.

Since man in the harsh Northern climate could not survive alone - much is made of the "outlaw" theme in Icelandic literature for this reason - the hero's commitment to his society was a strongly reinforced element of his makeup. The structures set up by society for its own protection and continuation were upheld, in form as well as in function, by common assent. This is why Hrothgar's worthiness is never questioned, even though he fails to fulfill his own function as king, and, in fact, shows a cowardice Beowulf would later tacitly condemn by his own actions in old age.

Yet, although Hrothgar is never criticised, neither is he a true hero, for it is not heroic merely to serve as a figure-head. Such a role is passive, upholding







The essence of this self-definition is revealed, by Beowulf himself in his report of the battle to Higelac, to be fundamentally moral in nature:

Hē mec þær on innan	unsynnigne,
dior <del>dæd</del> fruma	gedōn wolde
manigra sumne;	hyt ne mihte swā,
syððan ic on yrre	uppriht āstod. (2089-92)

There the fierce evil doer wanted to do to me, an innocent, what he had done to many others; this he could not do, after I stood upright in my wrath.

Besides his self-identification as unsynnig, Beowulf's only description of his own action is that he "stood upright." We cannot ascribe this selection to modesty, for he is quite capable of boasting, nor to inarticulation, for his powers of speech are well known. He says it is "too long to tell...." (cf. 2093) therefore he selects the most important aspect of the battle to recount, the aspect which, symbolically and linguistically, conveys the significance of the total act.

The expression "to stand up," allied with the notion of "right" as in uppriht, implies the idea of right action as a possibility of choice. Sociobiologists would probably see in this expression linguistic evidence of the origins of man as a pre-sapient being - homo erectus, the forerunner of homo sapiens. The decision to "stand upright" may have

been man's first choice, his first break with his primate ancestors. In standing upright - an evolutionary "choice" which had undeniable ramifications for man as a physical entity - man was making a decision which was radically to effect his psychic makeup, for in "choosing" one mode of living and being, he was essentially rejecting another. The degradation of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden reflects mythologically the rationalization of this initial choice, for the Serpent, or Wyrn, in representing first of all man's reptilian ancestors, represents also the absolutely Other, that Other rejected by man in his primal choice. This he calls evil, and to this symbol accrue all those things which his developing consciousness reveals to him as antagonistic to his purpose of survival. Good and evil may therefore be seen as the opposing possibilities of man's continuous, necessary choices, and the acceptance, or rejection, of these possibilities as the means by which man defines, and perhaps thereby creates, himself.

As the Genesis myth delineates, while mankind lived in Eden, that is, in that state of wholeness which he associates with God, he was semi-divine; after the original sin of opposition to God's will, he became uniquely human,



divided in psyche as Adam and Eve were separated from God; with the sin of Cain, there developed a sub-human nature, guilty not only of disobedience, or breaking away from God, but also of actual evil, or sin, which Saint Paul has described as the ultimate separation from the essential self. These three states of being remain vestigially in the psyche in the archetypal forms of Self, Hero and Dragon. Cain is himself an archetypal figure, close to the roots of consciousness, for he represents, in Judeo-Christian mythology, man's first deliberate act of evil, an act which marks the responsibility of the conscious mind to determine and choose between god, "good" and man, "evil," or, indeed, between God and Man.

This choice has particular relevance to the aggressive instinct, because it is this instinct that is engaged in the worldly activities of man in society. Problems of history, of morality, and of volition, whether one is thinking of individual will or of intersocial objectives, derive from situations created by the exercise of the aggressive instinct; since man must act, it seems to follow that some acts are "right" and some are "wrong."

The murder of Abel, and the banishment of Cain, followed by the birth of Seth, may seem to mythologise the development of the human race from man's two distinct hominid ancestors, identified by Leakey<sup>101</sup> as the vegetarian



and the carnivore. Cain, in his offering to God the fruits of his fields (Gen. 4:4), may symbolise the vegetarian. The rejection of his offering by God, who preferred the slaughtered lamb sacrificed by Abel, effectively justifies the ultimate triumph of the carnivorous species.<sup>102</sup> Abel, the carnivore, dies, but his primal instinct to kill has been validated and accepted by God. This instinct to kill, the fundamental expression of the aggressive drive, was not, however, to be turned against one's fellow man, nor used for any purpose other than survival and the glorification of God. In denying his instinct, or repressing it, Cain lost control over it, and, projected, this energetic force became a "demon crouching at the door" (Gen. 4:7, New English Bible), rising at the extreme moment to impel him to murder his brother. Possessed by this now uncontrollable drive, Cain is banished from the society of men, into the Land of Nod. In modern usage, perhaps deriving from R. L. Stevenson's suggestive poem, the "Land of Nod" is a metaphor for sleep, that space of time in which the instincts run rampant and psychic forms enact their symbolic dramas close to the surface of conscious awareness.<sup>103</sup>

Grendel emerges out of the borderlands of consciousness as a haunting image which evokes an undercurrent of empathy even as it terrifies, for Grendel is the embodiment,<sup>104</sup> or the projection, of the Shadow, the dark side of man,

which has been banished from the society of men.

The approach of Grendel, under cover of night, and while the warriors are sleeping, signifies the "return of the repressed,"<sup>105</sup> an involuntary irruption into consciousness of unacceptable derivatives of the primary aggressive impulse. He is the angenga, "the aggressor" (165, 449).<sup>106</sup>

An archetype of the primitive, uncontrolled and instinctual man, the Shadow represents all those animal instincts repressed by consciousness in the process of civilization.<sup>107</sup> In this universal, or collective sense, Grendel lives in every man as potential action which has been rejected by consciousness as antagonistic to its constructive aims, in the same way that Grendel is antagonistic to the great hall of the Scyldings. In this larger-than-life sense, Grendel is an archetype of the Collective Unconscious.

However, as the Shadow cast by the conscious mind of Beowulf, Grendel contains the hidden, repressed, unfavourable, or malevolent aspects of Beowulf's own personality, and personifies the inferior man whom Beowulf has repressed in the construction of his public face, or Persona.<sup>108</sup> On this level, Grendel belongs to Beowulf's Personal Unconscious.

Although his actual mythological antecedents are



undetermined, Grendel's Biblical genealogy is quite specific. He is in Caines cynne (107). Proscribed by God for a crime committed by his ancestor, Cain, just as man has been proscribed because of the sin of Adam and Eve, Grendel is essentially a pitiable creature, a composite of inferior attributes, whose only power lies in the exercise of his aggressive drive. It is the uncontrolled, unconscionable expression of this instinct against which Beowulf, as both Hero and Persona, fights. The image of Grendel thus forms a powerful, collective projection of the Hero's antithesis, a projection made necessary by society's collective affirmation of the idea of the Hero, compounded by the overt dedication of Beowulf's Ego to the actualisation of that idea.

In the heroic age of which Beowulf is the ultimate and archetypal figure, the Hero was by far the prevailing conscious ideal, and Beowulf has consciously defined himself with reference to this heroic ethos, constructing his Persona by its precepts. He has also been influenced by the as yet unconscious aspect of this image, and exhibits all the more infantile manifestations of the Hero  
109  
Archetype - his insistence that it should be ic...ana, "I alone" (431) who vanquishes the monster, his seemingly megalomaniacal insistence upon taking risks (displayed not only in his determination to seek out Grendel, but also in his swimming match with Breca) and his conviction that this



was a task appointed for him, that he had divine guidance, may all be seen in this light. The power of this archetype to attract others and to inspire them with confidence in one who exhibits these heroic qualities is well represented in the coastguard's instant recognition of Beowulf's exceptional aspects, and in the willingness of his own men to follow him into danger. By such physical and psychic actions, which are essentially actions sanctioned by the Ego, Beowulf has acquired a reputation for bravery and prowess, the attributes of a hero; these attributes he presents to the world, and himself, as the whole of his character. But this is not the whole Beowulf. His boasting words, his reclaiming of his reputation from Unferth's charge, his professed disdain for weapons, and his stated willingness to risk a ghastly death in pursuit of fame are indicative of the Persona, for the Persona is superficial, more concerned with the appearance of things than with things "in themselves."

Best described in T. S. Eliot's phrase as "a face to meet the faces that you meet," the Persona's purpose is two-fold: it first of all serves to make a specific impression on other people, the idea understood in the popular use of the term "image"; secondly, it acts as a more or less effective mask, which conceals the individual's inner self from others. The relationship of the Persona

and the Shadow has been classically represented in Stevenson's story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, in which an important element in the maintenance of the Persona is shown to be the element of repression; just as the negative qualities of the "good" Dr. Jekyll are forced under the surface of consciousness and emerge in the form of an evil destroyer, Mr. Hyde, so the destructive qualities of the hero, Beowulf, are repressed, to emerge in the manscaða (712), Grendel.

Apart from his formal speeches, by means of which Beowulf establishes a Persona over which he has total control, Beowulf's reaction to Grendles gryre, "the terror of Grendel" (478a), reveals the operation of repression as a factor in the creation of both Persona and Shadow, for the development of the ideal of the archetypal Hero into a viable Persona requires that Beowulf repress an element of his human nature which is basic to human existence, i.e. the element of fear.

It is a little disconcerting to discover the extent to which the young Beowulf has repressed this normal human response, if only because, if he really feels no fear, it is difficult to think of him as a hero. He becomes, instead, merely a very strong man who doesn't have the sense to realize the danger he is facing. Clearly, of course, this is not the case. He draws a



very accurate, if blackly humorous and somewhat melodramatic picture of his possible fate should he fail to overcome Grendel:

hafalan hȳdan,	Nā þū mīnne þearft
d[r] ēore fāhne,	ac hē mē habban wile
byreȝ blōdig wæl,	gif mec dēaȝ nimeȝ;
eteȝ āngenga	byrgean þenceȝ;
mearcaȝ mōrhōpu;	unmurnlice,
līces feorme	nō ȝū ymb mīnes ne þearft
	leng sorgian (445b-51)

You will have no need to cover my head (in burial), instead, he will have me covered with blood, if death seizes me. He will carry off my corpse, dripping with blood, intent upon eating it; the solitary one will feast pitilessly, will stain the moor-fastnesses; no longer need you care about the feeding of my body.

His boasting, and his black humour, constitute Beowulf's attempts to distance himself from his fear, and thus to gain control over it. By not acknowledging his own fear, and repressing it as abhorrent to a man of heroic stature, Beowulf relegates this emotion to his <sup>111</sup>Shadow, Grendel, who is obviously terrified when the fight begins in earnest, and wants only to escape:

forht on ferhȝe;	hē on mōde wearȝ,
Hyge wæs him hinfūs;	nō þȳ ȝr fram meahte.
sēcan dēofla gedræg;	wolde on heolster flēon
	(753b-56a)



He became terrified in heart and soul, and yet he could not escape. His mind was eager to get away, he wanted to flee to a hiding place, to seek the company of devils...

Jung has described the Shadow as, variously, a "wild man," an "ape," or, most significantly, in view of the bear-son theories of Beowulf, a "bear." <sup>112</sup> Common to all three is the element of the primitive, unrestrained, aggressive instinct. As Hero, Beowulf uses his aggressive instinct to effect good; his Shadow, Grendel, effects evil.

By virtue of the same logic by which a child defines pain as the frustration of his primary desires, <sup>113</sup> the metaphysical concept of evil may be primitively rendered as anything that threatens the life and safety of an individual or his society. For this reason, Grendel is the embodiment of evil, and is so identified in the poem by such epithets as manscaða, "the evil destroyer" (712, 737) and manfordædla, "the evil-doer" (563). It is worth noting, however, that, although the other monstrous forms in Beowulf, the Merewife and the Dragon, are also described as manscāðas, (1339, 2514) only Grendel is identified as a manfordædla, with its linguistic connotations of action, and of the deeds that result from it. Grendel is the dædhata, "one who shows his hatred by deeds" (275), an epithet that identifies him most particularly with the

negative aspects of the aggressive instinct.

As the personification of the aggressive instinct, Grendel is also the collective Shadow, unleashing upon the society of Heorot all the violence and blood lust inherent in that society itself, which had established necessary taboos against the unrestrained exercise of the aggressive function. Chief among these was the murder of kinsmen. Grendel, descended from the fratricidal Cain, was less than human because of that sin against humanity. Nevertheless, it was a common crime in the world of Beowulf, one for which the society paid in wars and destruction. The fact that it was frequently tolerated - as in the case of Unferth - only served to increase the collective social guilt, a guilt which rendered the society itself defenceless against its natural - and supernatural - repercussions. And yet, it may be that this sin and its attendant guilt were necessary evils in the successful development of the heroic world.

Northern man lived by killing. The dictates of survival in a climate which would not sustain a totally agricultural society indicate that of Leakey's two hominid forms, the one most likely to survive in the northern countries was the carnivore, who necessarily killed and ate the flesh of animals, and conceivably, of other



humans. The first tools of these primitive men would have been weapons, and their natural disposition warlike. Feuds and murders would be an inevitable by-product of such a society, and its history would naturally reflect this fact. Its social systems, too, would have to take into account the practical problems, as much as the moral question, of blood guilt. The wergild, money paid to settle a blood feud, attempts to end the pattern of violence which is caused by a primary act of aggression. In paying Hondscioh's wergild, Hrothgar is, in a certain symbolic sense, atoning for the sin of Cain, for it may be that the obsession with blood guilt that permeates Beowulf derives from this primary fratricidal scene, which includes a justification of carnivorous man, and of the aggressive instinct that ensured his survival.

While the overt pattern of blood guilt and vengeance lies upon the surface of awareness, and is, in fact, a conscious moral question of the society of Beowulf, as outlined by the poem's pre-occupation with the theme of fratricide, it seems that this much more primitive sense of blood guilt is implicit in the cannibalistic attributes of the monster, Grendel. Man the carnivore had long overcome, and deeply repressed, the desire for human flesh, but somewhere, in the depths of the psyche, the vestigial lust remains, surfacing in myth and ritual



in forms such as the ancient cannibalistic Bacchic rites.<sup>114</sup>  
The picture of Grendel greedily devouring the body and  
blood of Hondscioh evokes this ancient blood lust; its  
horror and fascination seems to hold even Beowulf in  
thrall:

~~þrýð~~ ~~swýð~~ behēold  
mæg Higelāces, hū se mānscaða  
under fērgripum gefaran wolde.  
Nē þat se āglāca yldan þōhte,  
ac hē gefēng hraðe forman sīðe  
slæpendne rinc, slāt unwearnum,  
bāt bānlocan, blōd ēdrum dranc,  
synsnædum swealh; sōna hæfde  
unlyfigendes eal gefeormod,  
fēt ond folma. (736b-45)

Higelac's mighty kinsman kept watching how the  
evil destroyer would set to work with his sudden  
grips. The monster had no intention of delaying,  
but quickly seized a sleeping warrior in his first  
foray, tore him apart greedily, bit into his body,  
drank his blood from his veins, swallowed him in  
huge gulps; soon he had gobbled down all of the  
dead man, even his feet and hands.

A further association of this saturnine scene is  
the ritual of Holy Communion, which enacts an archetypal  
pattern of repentance and redemption, and during which  
the participant is perhaps cleansed by its implication  
of Christ's possible acceptance of this unconscious  
cannibalistic urge, and His offering of Himself as its  
fulfillment, both spiritually and physically:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

(1 Cor. 11:24-25)

Jung has stated that "if we are to develop further we have to draw to us and drink down to the very dregs what, because of our complexes, we have held at a distance."<sup>115</sup> In just such a way, symbolically through ritual or on a more conscious level through experience, the individual must accept within himself the darkest aspects of his humanity. By not preventing Grendel from this full expression of his animal nature, Beowulf partakes of that nature, and accepts its full implications for himself. He effectively shares in the devouring of Hondscioh, as he must, in order to assimilate and thereby conquer the enemy within. When he then closes for the fight, he is in no doubt as to the identity of his adversary. Grendel is his Shadow, the inverse correlative of himself, both in power and in the expression of that power.

The integral relationship of Beowulf and Grendel has been established by S. L. Dragland<sup>116</sup> in his exploration of terms common to both, and the poet quite specifically



indicates that they are equally, if inversely, empowered by assigning numerical values to the strength of each: Beowulf is said to have the strength of thirty men in his hand grip, while Grendel, in his first raid upon Heorot, makes off with thirty thanes.

Although their physical strength is equal, however, their moral strength is not. Beowulf and Grendel are radically opposed in the application of their powers. Nevertheless, in his battle with the monster of instinct that threatens Heorot, Beowulf trusts to his moral advantage, affirming the power of good over evil:

on swā hwæðere hond      '...ond sipðan wītig God  
mæra dēme,      hālig Dryhten  
swā him gemet þince'      (685b-87)

May the wise God, the holy Lord, grant the glory to whichever side seems fitting to Him!

This moral advantage is suggested by the two-to-one ratio of good to evil implied in the structure of the poem (Beowulf wins two battles, is overcome once) and also in the second reference to þritig as a measure of Beowulf's strength (lines 2361-62, when he is said to swim from the land of the Frisians with thirty suits of armour.) In choosing to trust in the power of good, and acting on that faith, Beowulf is validating his



conscious moral sense in the exercise of his freedom of choice, which may be the fundamental responsibility of man. Grendel, on the other hand, has no freedom of choice; he is in the grip of compulsion, controlled by his instincts.

The poet seems to indicate this compulsion in his use of the passive voice to describe the obsession of this tormented creature as he contemplates the sleeping warriors:

Þā his mōd āhlōg;  
mynte þæt hē gedælde, ær þon dæg cwōme,  
atol āglæca ānra gehwylces  
lif wi~~ð~~ līce, þā him ālumpen wæs  
wistfylle wēn. (730b-34a)

Then his spirit laughed aloud; the horrid wretch thought that he would separate the life of every one of them from his body before day came; for the hope of great feasting had come upon him.

In this sense, it is possible to see Grendel as a victim, not only of his own nature, but of a God who permits that nature to exist. In a further sense, it is also possible to see him as a mere tool, an instrument of God's will, as when the poet tells us Godes yrre bær, "he carried/wore God's anger" (711b) (not merely against himself, as may initially be assumed, but against erring mankind) in much the same way as Judas was such an





pervades the poet's picture of Grendel, who, at the height of his conflict with Beowulf, is no longer frightening, but pitiable. As is the Shadow, Grendel is essentially a pitiful creature, a composite of inferior attributes,<sup>117</sup> whose only power lies in the uninhibited expression of his violent instinct.

Whether we could expect the audience of Beowulf (as opposed to the poet) to sympathize with this view on any sort of conscious level is doubtful. Far more likely, they would greet Grendel's destruction with shudders of relief, as, the poet tells us, those who suffered because of the monster felt only joy at his destruction. This, however, does not weaken or negate our sympathetic impulse, for the reduction of fear leads, in the course of time (in this case over ten centuries) to pity for the one-time object of fear. The Salem witch trials are an example of this process; as knowledge increases, the "thing which is feared"<sup>118</sup> changes its form. This same thing happens in the poem: the fire-dragon is a far more "supernatural" creature than is Grendel, not because the supernatural holds a greater power over the primitive than the modern mind, but because the subhuman, or nearly human, figures of Grendel (and his mother) may conceivably become assimilated into the realm of conscious understanding and thus "accepted", leaving the more abstract, less



comprehensible concept of evil to hover in the metaphysical realm, until it finds expression in a form which cannot come under the control of, nor be contained in, the conscious province: the Wyrm, or Dragon, a creature that can never be reduced to a pitiable size.

Pity and fear, as Aristototele tells us, are the emotions generated by an apprehension of tragedy, and the integral relationship of these emotions to experience suggests that tragedy itself is the natural form for the expression of human reality. If one can perceive Grendel as a tragic figure, as is possible within the context of this poem, it is natural to see him as, in some part, human, as, indeed, he is, for over and above his theological and sociological symbolism, Grendel represents an aspect of the psyche which is close to the experience and consciousness of every human being.

Grendel is not simply an emissary from hell, an agent of evil; as the "bearer of God's anger," he is a creature of hell, helle hæfton, "hell's captive" (788) when hell is conceived as that state farthest from the love and light of God. In his own pain, he is driven to inflict pain upon others; hated by God, he is driven to hatred of God and his creatures (which include, of necessity, himself). This may be emotionally sound, not merely for Grendel, but for mankind in general, most of

whom have ample occasion during the course of any one lifetime to feel far from the embrace of God, the victims of a cruel retribution, a cycle of crime and punishment perhaps, like that of Cain, greater than they can bear.

The theme of John Gardner's book, Grendel,<sup>119</sup> seems to derive, almost inevitably, from the sense of vulnerability and pain which clings to Grendel even in the throes of his fiendish violence, for the poet seems to foster a sympathetic understanding of Grendel when he points out certain features of the story of Cain that seem unduly harsh, asserting that Cain (or, perhaps, Grendel) ne gefeah... þære fæhte, "had no joy of that feud" (109) and recalling the curse that attached itself not only to him but to his descendants.

Because, in the Genesis myth, Cain does not die, but carries his sin and blood guilt with him outside the borders of civilized life, we may infer that his descendent, Grendel, lives, moves, and acts under the control, and by the permission, of God. Thus, the myth acknowledges the necessary (since God's will, in being absolute, is necessary) continuation in the human race of potentially destructive aggressive drives: hatreds, jealousies, and, especially, murderous inclinations, deriving from, and perpetuating, pain.



A sense of pain haunts the reader of Beowulf from the poet's insight into the cause of Grendel's agony (86-90) to the final vision of Beowulf, dr̄iorigne .../ealdres æt ende, "bleeding, and at the end of life" (2789a-90a). The story of Grendel especially is a study in pain. Described as dr̄eamum bed̄æled, "deprived of joys" (720) and dr̄eamleas, "joyless" (1720) his pain at the obvious joy of the revellers in Heorot, and his need to hurt them in turn, recall another of Cain's descendants, <sup>120</sup> Lamech, who killed, to avenge his own pain, a "young man to my hurt" (Gen. 4:23). The poet also vividly describes Grendel's mortal wound, a particularly gruesome one, from which he does not immediately die, but escapes only to suffer a slow and painful death, and his scream of agony and despair, which strikes fear into the hearts of the Danes:

		Swēg up āstāg	
nīwe geneahhe:		Norð-Denum stōd	
atelic egesa,	ānra gehwylcum	wōp gehȳrdon,	
þāra þe of wealle		Godes andsacan,	
gryrelēoð galan		sār wānigean	
sigelēasne sang,	Hēold hine fæste		
helle hæfton.		mægene strengest	
sē þe manna wæs	bysses līfes.		(782-90)
on þām dæge			

Up rose an uncanny noise: dire terror seized the North-Danes, each and every one of them who heard, from the wall, the shrieking, the enemy of God singing his terrible song, his dirge of defeat, hell's captive bewailing his pain. He who was the very strongest of men at that time in this world held him fast.



Beowulf himself is not permitted to kill Grendel outright because þa Metod nolde, "the Creator did not will it" (967b). It was enough that, in tearing off his arm, Beowulf negated Grendel's power to act against Heorot:

atol æglæca;	Līcsār gebad	
syndolh sweotol,	him on eaxle wearð	
burston bānlocan.	seonowe onsprungon,	
gūðhreð gyfeþe;	Bēowulfe wearð	
feorhsēoc flēon	scolde Grendel þonan	
sēcean wynleas wic;	under fenhleoðu,	
þæt his aldres was	wiste þē geornor,	
dōgera d grim.	ende gegongen,	
æfter þām wælræse	Denum eallum wearð	
	willum gelumpen	(815b-24)

The horrible monster suffered bodily harm; on his shoulder appeared a terrible gash, the sinews sprang asunder, the bone-locks burst. Glory in war was given to Beowulf; Grendel, mortally wounded, had to flee from there to the foot of the fen-cliffs, and seek his joyless den; he knew that the end of his life had surely come, the number of his days. The desire of all the Danes was fulfilled after that murderous onslaught.

The fact that Grendel does manage to get away, although at a terrible price, parallels the story of Cain, whom God spared, but cursed. This curse, however, was mitigated by the injunction that no man should kill him; vengeance belongs to God, not man. To institutionalize vengeance, as did the society of Beowulf, is to perpetuate evil as a certainty, rather than a possibility, of action. In this sense, it is suggested that there was something

intrinsically evil in Heorot itself, and that this evil affected every man there, so that, from the very outset, Heorot was doomed. The poet's description of the hall makes this connection immediately:

	Sele hlīfade	
hēah ond horngēap;	hea <sup>ð</sup> owylma bād,	
lā <sup>ð</sup> an līges;	ne was hit lenge þā gēn,	
þæt se ecghete	āpumsweoran	
after wælni <sup>ð</sup> e	wæcnan scolde.	(81-85)

The hall towered, high and horn-gabled; it awaited the surges of battle, the hateful flames; the time was not yet come that violence should spring up between son-in-law and father-in-law, after murderous envy.

The inevitability of such a fate for Heorot seems as tied to the sin of Cain (wælni<sup>ð</sup>, "murderous envy") as is the fate of Grendel. No one is exempt from the guilt that destroys Heorot, neither the highest chief, nor the lowest þegn. The notion of sin and guilt seems to be, at its most basic level, an attempt to integrate the reality of evil into the structure of the psyche. This idea is a thematic one in Beowulf, and one which comes to its high point in the final battle with the Worm. At this early juncture, guilt is introduced overtly in the case of Unferth; by implication, in the case of Hrothgar; and intrinsically, with reference to the entire Scylding race.



That man is sinful, that he suffers pain and, ultimately, death, because of his original sin is a basic problem of Christianity,<sup>121</sup> and one which the Beowulf poet addresses, both directly and indirectly. The Scylding race lives under the shadow of guilt, implicit and explicit, in the person of Unferth, whom Beowulf recognises as the weak link in the chain; a Cain-figure himself, guilty of the murder of his brothers, Unferth, whose name perhaps means "unpeace," may also represent that discord which permits the incursion of destructive forces. This chaotic principle has both physical and psychical implications, and any defence against it must begin in the mental sphere.

The mental quality of Beowulf's courage is established by Wulfgar's description of the Geat hero. He calls Beowulf heardhicgende, "brave-minded" (394), a designation later applied by the poet to the other Geat heroes who, recovering their senses, attempt to come to Beowulf's aid in the battle with Grendel (799). Wulfgar's words remind us that the battle with Grendel is one which requires strength of mind as well as body; it is a battle of conscious mind and value against a force that threatens to destroy the order imposed by consciousness upon the world of behaviour, that is, upon society.



In a certain sense, Unferth represents this negative force present within Heorot itself, and not only present, but tolerated, even given a favoured position. His taunting of Beowulf is more than a little reminiscent of Loki's constant taunting of the Gods of Asgard; both of them seek to create division, for its own sake. They are pure chaotic types, as subtle in their ways as Iago was in his. Beowulf recognizes this instinctively. His charge to Unferth (590b - 601a) involves Hrothgar's courtier personally in the responsibility for Grendel's raids. Although, as lines 588b-89 indicate, Unferth will suffer his personal retribution in the afterworld, Heorot, as a physical and social structure, can only pay in the material world; as, indeed, it does, long after its ritual "cleansing" by Beowulf, with the uprising of Hrothulf, who was to murder his kinsman, Hrethric. This, in addition to the continuing raids of Grendel, ensures the enactment of God's promise of retribution, which, on the psychological level, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy set in motion by sin (the breaking of a taboo) and its natural psychological companion, guilt.

Hrothgar, the ruler of the Scyldings, is guilty not only of tolerating evil within his own court by simply being blind to its machinations, but also (an unstated, but dramatic, fact) by his failure to live up to the

responsibilities of kingship, implied in his unwillingness to face Grendel. Although, as we have earlier observed, neither the poet nor the society of Heorot seems to blame Hrothgar, there is a subtle ridicule implicit in the picture of Hrothgar leaving the hall to seek the comfort and security of his wife's bed (662-65a) and emerging late the next morning, after the battle had been decided, from the brydbure, "the woman's apartment" (921) and mægha hose, "in the company of maidens" (924). This ridicule may be justly deserved on more than one level, for not only does Hrothgar fail to provide an example of kingly behaviour for his subjects, but he also shirks a duty which is attendant upon any high office: the duty to accept the ultimate responsibility for, and the consequences of, the actions of his people, however dire those consequences might be.

As Sir James Frazer points out, the ritual of the human sacrifice, common to many ancient civilizations, involved the awareness that, if the gods were angry, for whatever reason, with a particular tribe, they would be appeased only by the sacrifice of the supreme member of that tribe, or a member of his family. Frazer also notes that in ancient Scandinavian tradition the old Swedish kings could reign only for a period of nine years, after which they were put to death, unless they



could find a substitute to die for them. The ritual was held at Uppsala, and involved human sacrifice.<sup>123</sup>

So much is made of Hrothgar's great age and his lengthy term of office that, in view of this tradition, it seems possible there was some hidden suggestion of subliminal guilt in this fact alone.

The ritual requirement of human sacrifice is not just a pagan tradition, however. A similar concept appears in the Bible, in God's comment to Abraham (Gen. 22: 1-13). God, of course, did not really want the sacrifice, merely the proof that Abraham was willing to make it, but still, the demand was made. Technically, therefore, from both a pagan and a Christian perspective, Hrothgar should have offered himself, or one of his sons, as a ritual sacrifice. Yet, although the Scyldings, reverting to paganism, did, indeed, promise sacrifices (175-178a) Hrothgar and his sons remained safely out of harm's way, thus violating a primary social and religious obligation. Which is not, ultimately, surprising, for Hrothgar, like Anfortas (and unlike Beowulf) had only inherited, not earned, his high office.

The Scylding tribe thus bears a burden of guilt that seems to go beyond mere collective responsibility. The name Scylding itself, though possibly derived from their founding ancestor, Scyld Scefing, carries resonances



of the OE scyldig, "guilt." Because of the multivalent properties of Old English words, it may be possible to contend that this orthographic similarity was intentional, but even if we choose to interpret the name as, merely, "Sons of Scyld," when we recall that Scyld also means "shield," with its implications of necessary protection and its intimations of institutionalized violence, it is impossible to overlook the pattern of guilt and retribution recurrent in the drama of mankind as both a historical and a psychic entity. This association is suggested in the orthographic similarity of the Old English words mān, which means "crime," "guilt," and "evil," and man, or mon, which refers to the whole human race. In this sense, the Scyldings are also Sons of Guilt - as are all descendants of Adam.

Into this milieu, in which everything that is fine and good is being insidiously destroyed by the undetected corruption seething within its own core as much as by the enemy without - an enemy made necessary by its own blindness, which necessitates the projection of its faults upon the exterior world - Beowulf appears as a champion, perhaps a heroic Redeemer. He is, as he himself maintains, unsynnig (2089b), and this, coupled with the fact that he was not himself a Scylding, raises him above the historical pattern of guilt in which the Scyldings

are enmeshed. He enters the world of Heorot as a pure energy source, directed towards the achievement of a single commitment, the "cleansing" of Heorot, its redemption from the powers of evil, both within and without.

The world that is represented in Beowulf by Heorot is "the fenced-in world of man,"<sup>124</sup> a social and ideological construct that represents the body of consciousness, or all those structures and relationships by which the conscious mind orders and understands its world. The importance of maintaining the contours of Heorot is equal to the importance of maintaining the supremacy of consciousness itself, for outside its walls may lie the "boundless world of monstrous nothingness,"<sup>125</sup> the Chaos that threatens its annihilation. With the incursion of Grendel, who, as the Shadow, is the mearcstapa between consciousness and the Unconscious, the chaotic principle crosses the border into the ordered world of the Ego. This archetypal figure challenges the possessions of the Ego, and attempts to possess them himself, as Grendel attempts to hold Heorot, but, nō hē þone gifstōl grētan mōste, / māþūm for Metode, "he could not approach the gift-throne, because of the Lord" (168-69a); - his power is definitely seen to be limited.

Indeed, the Shadow, though formidable, is the least powerful of all the psychic forms, simply because



it is closest to man's conscious understanding, and can be understood in terms of man himself.<sup>126</sup> Although it takes a heroic Ego to face up to the Shadow, and although most men upon encountering it would run away just as the Scyldings themselves did, the confrontation of the Shadow is only the first major contest on the path to individuation, a psychic process which continues throughout the physical life of the individual, and leads to a resolution in which, theoretically, the psychic and the physical are united in a moment of transcendence, perhaps of transmutation.

As a structure and a construct, Heorot stands for the physical, the material, and the objective, as well as the ideological manifestation of man as a psycho-physical being. As such, Heorot is the body of man; not merely his social body, or his spiritual body (as in Alvin Lee's interpretation of Heorot as World, or Church<sup>127</sup>) although that is, of course, a natural extension of meaning, but fundamentally, as his physical body, the "dwelling place" of his spirit, or soul.

Descriptively, and etymologically, this idea is borne out in Beowulf, for not only is Heorot described in bodily terms, as when the poet speaks of Grendel's arrival at the muða, "the mouth" (724) of the hall, but the Old English synonyms for "body" are often compound forms or derivatives of words such as hama, and hus, as



in lichoma (3177) or banhus (2508) evoking a clear vision of the body as the "house" or "home" of the spirit. The name Heorot may be interpreted as "hart," a view reinforced by the poet's description of it as horngeap, "horn-gabled" (82). A symbol of the soul,<sup>128</sup> as well as a sexual symbol,<sup>129</sup> with both aggressive and passive qualities, the hart is also the animal associated with Odin, and lives in Valhalla as Eikthyrner.<sup>130</sup> Its religious significance, established by the archaeological find of the golden horns of Gallehus,<sup>131</sup> is introduced by the poet in his description of Grendel's pool:

Ðēah þe hæstapa	hundum geswenced,
heorot hornum trum	holtwudu sēce,
feorran geflȳmed,	ǣr hē feorh seleð,
aldor on ōfre,	ǣr hē in wille,
hafelan [beorgan];	nis þæt heoru stōw! (1368-72)

Although, harried by the hounds, the heath-stalker, the hart, strong in its horns (may) seek the forest, chased from afar he will sooner give up his life, his being, on the brink, than plunge in to save his head. That is no pleasant spot!

Besides a suggestive separation of "life" and "being" from both consciousness and physical safety jointly implied in the phrase "to save his head," the hart stands here as a symbol of pure spirit, which would sooner choose bodily annihilation than immerse itself in evil.

As a symbol of man's physical body, Heorot is identified with "soul" just as man has come to define himself as the being who has a soul. For Heorot is not gross materiality; it is the finest expression of man's nature that he can create in conjunction with, and opposition to, the given factors of his own being as a creature of God. In this sense, man creates himself, out of himself, out of the awareness that his total reality is something more than he consciously knows, and out of the hope, inspired by this awareness,<sup>2</sup> that this absolute totality includes the possibility of perfection, that perfection of being which is conceived as immortality, symbolised by the gold adornments in Heorot. As an ideal construct, Heorot is not simply man's mundane body, but is, or aspires to be, his heroic body as well, embodying all that was noble and good in the heroic age, all the ideals and notions of man's self-image which evolved out of, or created, the heroic ethic. Integral to this idea was the notion of man as a tragic figure, valiantly struggling against powerful and hostile forces, doomed to inevitable destruction and death, but occasionally allowed a victory which permits him to postulate his eventual triumph.

Perhaps it is the hope of triumph, and thus of immortality that renders the fact of death so alien



to the human spirit, in the face of its inevitability for the human body. The poet makes this ultimate connection between Heorot and the physical body most poignantly in his description of the hall after the raids of Grendel, and particularly after the final raid, which is followed by a homily on death. The destruction and death inflicted by Grendel in Heorot parallels the death and decay of the body itself:

Was þæt beorhte bold	tōbrocen swīte
eal inneward	īrenbendum fæst,
heorras tōhlidene;	hrōf āna genæs
ealles ansund,	þē se āglæca
fyrendadum fāg	on flēam gewand,
aldres orwēna.	Nō þæt yfe byð
tō beflēonne	- fremme sē þe wille-,
ac gesēcan sceal	sawlberendra
nyde genyðde,	nipða bearna,
grundbūendra	gearwe stōwe,
pār his līchoma	legerbedde fæst
swefep after symle.	(997-1008a)

That radiant house, all bound within with iron bands, was very broken, the hinges sprung apart, only the roof remained completely sound, when the horrible wretch, stained with wicked deeds, turned in flight, despairing of his life. That is not easy to escape from, -let him try it who will - but each man is compelled of necessity to seek the place prepared for the bearers of souls, the children of men, the earth-dwellers, where his body, fast in its bed of death, will sleep after the banquet.

Beowulf is always aware of the possibility of death and defeat; before his battle with Grendel, he makes a



speech which acknowledges this possibility, even as it commits him irrevocably:

Ic þæt hogode, þā ic on holm gestāh,  
sēbāt gesæt mid mīnra secga gedriht,  
þæt ic ānunga ēowra lēoda  
willan geworhte, opþe on wæl crunge  
fēondgrapum fæst. Ic gefremman sceal  
eorlic ellen opþe endedæg  
on þisse meoduhealle mīnne gebīdan! (632-38)

I determined, when I put to sea, set out in my ship with my company of men, that I would completely accomplish the wish of your people, or fall in death, fast in the clutches of the foe. I will show the courage of a hero, or in this meadhall pass my last day!

Balanced against the possibility of victory, which is outside his power to predict, is Beowulf's awareness of what is within his power: he will win or he will die in the attempt. Either way, his heroic stature is assured, for, in his world, it does not matter that you win, it matters that you fight.

This ideal represents the last stand of heroic effort in a civilization that perceived itself to be on the verge of extinction, not only culturally, but physically. Aside from the fact that the average life span in Anglo-Saxon times was extremely short, and apart from evidence that the Anglo-Saxon's language, religion, and ethic was being assaulted by the powerful influence

of Christianity, the generally-held belief that the world was going to end in the year 1000 A.D. with the second coming of Christ<sup>132</sup> doubtless had a profound emotional impact on these people, bringing home to them not only the imminence of their own individual deaths, but also the possibility of total annihilation, in which even the physiological solace of genetic, or racial, continuity is withdrawn.<sup>133</sup>

This dark theme continues throughout Beowulf, weaving its way from the initial threat of Grendel, who tries to "diminish and destroy" (cf. 1337) the Scylding race, to the final battle with the fire dragon, in which Beowulf's death renders the Geats vulnerable to invasion leading to chaos and annihilation. Although he is successful in preventing the course of extinction in the first instance, ultimately fate will win out. There is no philosophic acceptance of this inevitability, and no consolation. On the contrary, resistance to the end, and lamentation for the loss of greatness characterize the ideals of heroism which permit action on behalf of racial and individual dignity in the face of extinction and death. Named as the deorc deapscua, "the dark shadow of death" (160) Grendel's essential identity may be, not death, but the fear of death. His role as, literally, the "hand" of death is directly linked to his irredeemable condition of



sin, the legacy of his ancestor, Cain; but, as the symbolic manifestation of a part of the psyche, Grendel's power to inflict death takes on another dimension, for it suggests that man contains within himself the will towards death. Whether this "death-wish" <sup>134</sup> is the result of man's original sin, or the psychic counterpart of the physical fact (in much the same way, theoretically, as the Anima-figure is the psychic representation of the female genes in a man's body) and whether the aggressive drive is its master or, as Klein <sup>135</sup> has contended, its servant, are questions which attempt to probe the nature of death itself. Just as a concept of psychic wholeness includes an androgynous resolution of the male and female elements of psyche, so it is perhaps possible that the will towards death may be reconciled with the will to life in the final transmutation of matter and spirit into the spiritual body. <sup>136</sup> As Grendel will surely die, so, in the words of John Donne, "Death, thou shalt die!"

Beowulf's victory, over Grendel, however, is not a transcendental one; it is personal, social, and temporal. The seeds of discord and hate remain within the court of Heorot, in the persons of Unferth and Hrothulf, and Heorot is fated to be attacked again, and ultimately to be consumed in laðan liges, "hateful flames" (83), a fate (reminiscent of the cremation of the corpse, and of the final flaming

battle of Armageddon) to be brought about by the unleashed aggressions - the transgressions - of its human inhabitants.

Nevertheless, Beowulf does win a moral victory, for himself and for his society. The principle of control and order has been upheld, a principle which finds its greatest expression in Beowulf's own psyche. His encounter with the Shadow, his own negative image, has shown him that he can control and conquer this inferior aspect of his being, and can effectively "disarm" destructive instincts by committing his own aggressive drives to action for the higher good.

Direct confrontation, or the application of the light of consciousness to the shapes of darkness, reduces these shapes to manageable proportions, and deprives them of their power to act autonomously, an effect symbolized by the wrenching off of Grendel's arm, for the arm may represent the will to action. Beowulf's trophy, the arm and claw of Grendel, acquired by the exercise of brute strength, reflects both the active and the destructive elements of Beowulf's own aggressive nature - elements over which he has established a conscious control. He is now ready to move on in his heroic quest for immortality, "on the lips of men" and "in the arms of God."



CHAPTER III

BEOWULF AND THE MEREWIFE: The Sexual Conflict

"Although man and woman unite, they nevertheless represent irreconcilable opposites which, when activated, degenerate into deadly hostility."<sup>137</sup>

C. G. Jung

With the attack of the monstrous form in idese onlicnes, "the shape of a woman" (1351) that has risen from the depths of the dismal mere to wreak a primordial vengeance upon the world of man, the underlying theme of the second of Beowulf's epic battles is established as sexuality, in all its complexity. Sexuality, or the sexual instinct, has been very broadly defined by Jung as "all those instinctual forces which extend beyond the domain of the instinct for self-preservation."<sup>138</sup> These forces, present in every human being, are the psychic and physical manifestation of a primordial energy which is seen in many cultures to be of an inherently sexual nature. The yin-and-yang principle of Chinese philosophy expresses the essence of this concept, while Freud's early notion of the libido as



the sexual energy available to the life instinct<sup>139</sup> formulates the psychological application of this same idea. In Jung's schema, the intrinsically creative aspect of sexuality is separate from the necessarily destructive aspects of self-preservation incorporated in the idea of the aggressive instinct; nevertheless, the conflict which lies at the heart of all creativity is retained.

Like those other primordial pairs of opposites, heat and cold, light and dark, wet and dry, consciousness and unconsciousness, and, ultimately, good and evil, these szygies,<sup>140</sup> as Jung calls the male and female principles, represent the extremes of differentiation by which human comprehension experiences life. All opposing principles maintain their integrity by conflict, and yet, in nature, as Jung has observed in his theory of enantiodromia,<sup>141</sup> the opposites naturally seek each other; it is the conscious mind out of its need to discriminate, which has separated them, contra naturam.<sup>142</sup>

Some Jewish and Gnostic interpretations of the two creation myths in Genesis suggest that man and woman were once the same being;<sup>143</sup> and it may be that this androgynous being still lives in the psyche as an archetype of wholeness. With the "separating-out" of consciousness from unconsciousness, as Eve was separated out of Adam, came the unavoidable

conscious intuition of a primordial split of the original entity into the male and female principles. Nevertheless, these distinct sexual beings remain irrevocably joined by the same energy that attended their break, the energy of the life instinct itself.

It may be, as M.I. Seiden suggests, that all Jungian cycles and antinomies "represent symbolically the conflict and union of the archetypal male and the archetypal female."<sup>144</sup> If this is so, the relation of man and woman takes on a cosmic importance, and "becomes an element where man and Daimon sport, pursue one another, and do one another good or evil."<sup>145</sup>

This study of Beowulf's second mythic bout will test this view of sexual relationships on an earthly, and a cosmic, battlefield, for Beowulf's battle with the merewife acts out the psychic drama of confrontation with the archetypal female principle, as experienced from the perspective of the masculine mind. (It is an unavoidable, and undeniably relevant, assumption that the author of Beowulf, whoever he may have been, monk, courtier, or scop, was, first of all, a man, and, as a man, he had no choice but to "see" woman from a particular, and limited, perspective, that is, in terms of her relationship to him, or, to employ an overworked conceit, as an object). Apart from the sexual overtones set by the gender of Beowulf's



second antagonist, the study of Beowulf as the product of a masculine mind grows naturally out of an understanding of the epic itself as a form which chronicles the development and progress of what must be acknowledged as male-dominated society.

In such society, as Maud Bodkin incisively observes, the archetypal hero image is itself a construct of the masculine mind.<sup>146</sup> So, also, are the ideals of womanhood to which the actual women in that society are expected to conform. In the heroic age of which Beowulf is the surviving relic, the warrior group was firmly established in the seat of power, both political and interpersonal, and Bodkin's assessment of the dynamics of male-female relationships under such a structure notes "the 'woman ignoring' or woman belittling atmosphere of the warrior group, and of the patriarchal system it has imposed upon a conquered land."<sup>147</sup> This "conquered land" need not have been on foreign soil, and, indeed, for the purposes of this study, was not. On the contrary, it may be seen to have existed in the realm of male-female relationships, which underwent a radical change that may perhaps be traced to the "revolutionary institution of fatherhood."<sup>148</sup>

Robert Graves theorizes that the institution of fatherhood, which gave rise to the patriarchal system, was a relative late-comer on the social scene, but it



arrived with tremendous dramatic impact, for once it was established, the social status of women radically altered. Before man became aware of his paternity, the mysteries of birth had conferred upon the female a mystical sovereignty. In those prehistoric times, Woman was worshipped as the embodiment of the life force, and it is an accepted anthropological fact that the female deity preceded the male in most Indo-European cultures; the Greek goddess Demeter, as well as the Sumarian Ishtar and the Celtic Epona, have origins which predate their male counterparts.<sup>149</sup> With the knowledge of paternity, however, the female's mystic power was revealed to be dependent upon insemination by the male, and the seeds of revolution were sown, along with those of suspicion and distrust.

The importance of the sister's-son relationship in Beowulf indicates the nature of this suspicion, implying a basic sexual distrust of women which may be traced to a fundamental question, or doubt, of paternity. Under such conditions, the closest certainty a man might have of his relationship to a descendant would seem to be with his sister's son. The inclination to trust consanguinity was not always justified, as the apparently frequent incidence of fratricide indicates, but the maternal-uncle/sister's son relationship, such as that between Sigemund and Fitela, and Higelac and Beowulf, was

generally sacrosanct, having evolved out of a sublimated sexual desire. (It was said, for example, that Fitela was not only Sigemund's nephew, but also his son by his sister, Signy<sup>150</sup> - but even if this were not the case, the desire for the continuation of the family blood line might conceivably be seen to be more reliably satisfied by the son of a man's sister than by his own sons.)

Thomas Garbátý concludes that this sort of preoccupation originates in "a noble, wealthy, polygynous society involving a low confidence of paternity."<sup>151</sup> Whether such suspicion was justified or not in the monogamous society of Beowulf is not at issue; that this implication should stand as a tradition of the sexual and social relationship at the time of the poem's action (as indicated by Tacitus in De Germania<sup>152</sup>) is, however, relevant. Hrothgar's seeming preference for both Hrothulf and Beowulf over his own (or Wealhtheow's) sons, implicit in Wealhtheow's need to remind him of their rights (1167-87), might be explained by this tradition, for it is likely that this attitude was partially created by the subconscious assumption of betrayal implicit in such a convention. This assumption touches all the women in the poem, even the most idealised. Hygd, the youthful wife of Higelac, appears to be the ultimate idealisation of the female in the "real" world



of Beowulf. Young, wise, accomplished (1926-27), Hygd is a kind of paragon, to whom Beowulf owes, and pays, allegiance, long after his liege lord is dead. It is to Hygd that Beowulf gives the Brising necklace given to him by Wealhtheow, a very valuable treasure with a mythological history going back to Freya, the Norse goddess of love. The transfer of such a symbolic article from Wealhtheow to Hygd seems to signify the passing from one generation to another both the perceived guilt, and the power, which affect women's status and survival in the warrior world.

The story of Freya and the Brisingamen reveals that the source of woman's power and downfall in the male world is her sexuality. As the myth goes, Freya, goddess of love and death, was wed to Odur, whom she passionately loved. One day, however, she chanced upon some dwarfs, who had just created, as a sexual trap for her, the most beautiful necklace she had ever seen. Its magical properties seduced her, and she offered to buy it, but the dwarfs would not sell for mere gold. In order to possess the Brising necklace, she had to agree to "wed"<sup>153</sup> each of them for one night. Obsessed by her passion to own the necklace, Freya instantly agreed. Upon returning home, however, she was overcome with shame, and wore the necklace only in secret.



Her guilty secret was revealed to Odur by Loki, a satanic figure of Norse mythology, who entered her room while she was sleeping and stole the necklace from around her neck, presenting it to Odur as proof of her infidelity. When she awoke and discovered it was missing, her first anguished thought was of her husband. She went straightway to somewhat belatedly confess and beg his forgiveness, but he had left her. Going to Odin, the All-father of the Gods, Freya confessed to this patriarch, and begged for help. Odin gave her permission to leave Asgard in search of Odur, and forgave her, but decreed that she should wear the necklace always, as a memory of her sin. For many years, Freya traversed Midgard, the human world, teaching men and women the "gentle ways of love,"<sup>154</sup> until she was finally reunited with her divine husband.

Another version of the myth has Odin as the outraged lover, and he orders Freya to stir up hatred and destruction among mankind so that warriors fallen on the battlefield will rise to fight again and again.<sup>155</sup>

This tale of love, infidelity and violence evoked by the mention of the Brising necklace served to keep alive the primary sexual guilt of women as established by a society concerned with eradicating women's sexual autonomy. This was perceived as necessary because, while the social value placed upon the uncle-nephew relationship may

represent the masculine attempt to control succession to power, or limit it to blood descendants, it clearly could not be a totally satisfactory solution to the problem that attended man's knowledge of his role in procreation. The ideal solution would have as its goal an absolute confidence of paternity; this confidence could only be assured if women's sexuality could be in some way controlled;<sup>156</sup> the linking of love and sexuality is the final step in this process, effective where overt domination might fail. The implicit message is that although woman is to be forgiven for her basically amoral sexual nature, she is to be always aware of, and on guard against, this unacceptable tendency. Even the best of women, the paragons like Wealhtheow and Hygd, need to be reminded of this from time to time - perhaps more than most, for they have the responsibility of setting an example for their lesser sisters.

Moreover, as half of the warriors slain in battle belonged to Freya,<sup>157</sup> she is also a goddess of death, and embodies in her person the inevitable linking of love and death that underlies mythology and literature. That Higelac should have been wearing this circlet in his fatal battle with the Frisians is significant, for it associates Hygd, who must have given it to him as a token, with his eventual undoing. He died during a raid,



defending the spoils of battle (1202b-05), a reported fact which echoes the implications of Freya's obsessive desire for the Brising treasure, and may imply that man's greed is connected with his desire to satisfy the demands of women, who provide a convenient object for the projection of this guilt-inducing trait. (If a woman desires costly articles, and a man can keep her well supplied with these things, perhaps then she will not be tempted to stray...)

Hygd's aspect of irreproachability, when seen against such a backdrop of symbolism, is amazing, until one recalls that it is highly unlikely that this innuendo was permitted to touch her, at least on a conscious level. In an overt sense, she was a fantasy figure, a creation of the men in her world out of their ideals of perfect womanhood, just as the other women in the poem were moulded along the lines of existing social precepts. Although she was not consciously or conspicuously manipulated to the extent of Freawaru and Hildeburh, and although her power seems to have exceeded that of Wealhtheow (for Hygd can, in fact, control the succession of her realm, as indicated by her power to offer the throne to Beowulf) this power is related to her desirability, and she, perhaps more than anyone else, bore the burden of the projection of men's highest fantasies of women. An ideal figure on the surface, Hygd seems to represent a projection of the Anima,<sup>158</sup> an extremely powerful archetype of the masculine psyche.



The Anima, described as a "semi-conscious psychic complex having partial autonomy of function,"<sup>159</sup> has her origins in a physiological understanding of psyche, for Jung has suggested that she arises, first of all, from the female genes carried in the man's body. (Her counterpart in the female psyche, is the Animus,<sup>160</sup> as exemplified in the presentation of Modthryth.)

The Anima is an extremely influential form, who appears constantly in literature written by men as a kind of cosmic guide, such as Shelley's muse in "Alastor," or the shadowy figure of Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci."<sup>161</sup> Jung has called her the "archetype of soul" (anima does, in fact, mean "soul") and, in accordance with his notion of the sexual nature of the spirit,<sup>162</sup> she stands as a projected element of the "chaotic urge to life,"<sup>163</sup> or the life instinct itself. The erotic content of the Anima is sometimes acknowledged, but often sublimated, in the course of her projection. Thus, she may be projected upon someone desirable, but unattainable, as is Hygd. Hygd's wisdom, both stated (1926b-27) and implied (as in her name, which means "thought") remarkable in one so young, is a classic attribute of the Anima projection, for she often seems to have a "timeless" quality, appearing young, but seeming to possess a "secret knowledge,"<sup>164</sup> which entices the hero with its promise of revelation and fulfillment.

A daimon, a poetic muse, an "incestuous image that stimulates the poet," <sup>165</sup> the Anima in this manifestation may be seen as the projection of the soul's striving, or an image of the soul itself, which, when projected upon a real woman "acquires that sensual libido which has hitherto adhered to the concrete object."<sup>166</sup> For, at its most basic level, the image of Woman conjured up by the Unconscious is mystical and religious. As Jung has declared, "the repressed erotic impression of the unconscious (actuates) the latent primordial image of the goddess." <sup>167</sup>

The moral, and often all-too-human woman upon whom this exalted notion of the Anima is projected, is seen as cherishing, satisfying, and exalting, the supreme embodiment of the beauty felt in the physical world. But, in her negative aspect, the Anima's power is felt to be enslaving and betraying. <sup>168</sup> Is there, perhaps, the subtlest hint of this element, too, in the passing of the Brising circlet from Hygd to Higelec, a healsbeag, "collar" (1195) which binds him to her ofer y~~s~~a ful (1208b), for which his life is ultimately forfeit?

The perceived responsibility of Woman for the tendency of the masculine unconscious to view her in such ambivalent fashion is associated with her Anima role as mystic guide.

Milton identifies and challenges this male projection in Paradise Lost X:146, when Christ confounds Adam by



asking, "was shee made thy guide?" The presumed answer would have to be no, that men have themselves created this image of woman out of their own psyches.

Nevertheless, Woman has readily, and often with alacrity, assumed this role, for it has been her main source of power. Wealhtheow, the other positive Anima-figure in Beowulf, exploits the non-sexual element of this power; her speaking appearances reveal her to be forthcoming with personal advice, counsel relating to the development of ego-consciousness or social values. This is her designated role, and she rules this realm by whatever means necessary. During the banquet that follows the defeat of Grendel, she reveals to Beowulf some of her womanly wisdom, and then indicates one of the ways in which she maintains control over her sphere of influence:

þegnas syndon gepwære      þeod ealgearo  
druncne dryhtguman      doþ swa ic bidde.      (1230-31)

The retainers are loyal, the people are willing,  
the warriors are flushed with drink; they do as  
I bid.

Aside from the humorous overtones of this speech, the passage evokes a much more primitive time, when women were the priestesses and magicians, and had control over



the medicines and sleeping potions, the drugs by which the mystical rites of passage were induced.<sup>169</sup> This ancient role is ritualized in Beowulf by the woman's duty to pass the ale cup.

<sup>170</sup>  
Wealhtheow is the first woman we meet in the poem, and it is appropriate that she is, first of all, a mother, for the first form of woman encountered by male or female is the mother figure. When, later that night, the image of Grendel's mother rises from the primordial waters of the mere to satisfy her instinctive maternal impulse, she enters a situation created by Wealhtheow, for Wealhtheow has not only passed the ale-cup herself, but has done so in the full knowledge of the power this "duty" has conferred upon her.<sup>171</sup>

Wealhtheow and Hygd have been given, and have in another (Promethean) sense, stolen, a measure of power, but it is attended by a corresponding responsibility that negates their free will, while Hildeburh and Freawaru, two other women in Beowulf, are constricted in an equal, but opposite, degree. They have been socially disenfranchised, but their position has been glorified and romanticised by their society so that they are cast in and identify with, the role of martyrs, an exaltation of passivity. Their

fundamental similarity has led Elaine Hansen to describe both types of women, the "paragons" and the "sufferers," as "symbols for human impotence."<sup>172</sup>

<sup>173</sup>  
Bernice Kliman notes that the position of women in Old English society (as inferred from the extant literature) is directly related to their usefulness to male-dominated society. The rationalization of this effective subjugation of women in the society of Beowulf may be, as Kliman suggests, their inferior physical strength, which renders them less "useful" on the battlefield, and, therefore, to the warrior society, less important in the overall scheme of things. Certainly, the scop of Beowulf makes this idea perfectly clear when speaking in propria persona of the female monster:

	Wæs se gryre læssa	
efne swa micle	swa biȝ mægpa craeft	
wiggryre wifes	be wæpnedmen	(1282-84)

The terror was less by just so much as the strength of a woman is less, the battle-terror of a woman compared with that of man.

Although this was demonstrably untrue - as, indeed, it may well have been in the society itself, when men and women may actually have faced one another on the battlefield - it may have sufficed as the initial reason for getting women off the battlefield and onto



the hearth. Following this move, their position as servants to the warrior group was consolidated. It remained to establish how best they might be employed. In times of strife, they may, like Hildeburh and Freawaru, be used as "peaceweavers," or, alternatively, as excuses for war, but in times of peace, as Kliman observes, their dangerous sexuality becomes once again the object of fear and loathing. This is strongly implied in the story of Modthryth, whose predilection for having her admirers executed is the subject of one of the digressions which expands and develops the main text of Beowulf.

The strong-minded Modthryth, whose name (mod, "spirit, temper, heart"; þryþ, "might, strength") implies passion, and whose nature exemplifies it, seems to have resented being seen as a sexual object: whenever any man nefne  
sinfrea (1943)<sup>174</sup> cast his eyes upon her, she had him summarily executed. Although the poet sees her behaviour as an over-reaction to a ligetorn, "fancied insult" (1943), Thryth clearly believed there was something to get angry about; it may be that she was rejecting the projection of the Anima upon her independent person.

As a fremu folces cwen, (1932), Thryth would have been an obvious choice as the object of an Anima-projection but, as is often the case when such projection is not willingly borne by the woman, she frustrates the stereo-



types and alienates male society by reflecting its actual, rather than its ideal values. Her chief sin does seem to have been that she behaved too much like a man.

This contention is supported by evidence that Modthryth, besides being the only female character who actually undergoes a character change in the poem, displays evidence of the activation of an archetype peculiar to the female psyche - the Animus. Jung tells us that when this archetype which, like the Anima, "gives prominence to those traits which are characteristic of the opposite sex,"<sup>175</sup> essentially holds forth, the woman behaves like a man - that is, "obstinate...dogmatic...argumentative and domineering,"<sup>176</sup> as well as overly concerned with structural and rational systems better left to the male.<sup>177</sup> The society of Beowulf might have agreed with this as an assessment of Thryth, before her "conversion," for her behaviour challenged the male structure on its own terms. Whether we agree with Svetislav Stefanović's interpretation of mundgripe (1938) as a reference to the practise of Thryth (or her father) to fight any prospective suitors,<sup>178</sup> or whether we choose to see it merely as a summary seizure of the offending warrior, her attempt to dominate men by violence and the wielding of a masculine power identified with that of Beowulf himself (cf. 1534), is clearly implied.

As the poet, in a masterpiece of delicate understatement, suggests:

Ne bið swylc cwēnlīc þēaw  
idese tō efnanne, þēah 7e hīo 7nlicu sȳ,  
þætte freoðuwebbe fēores onsȳce  
æfter ligetorne lēofne mannan. (1940b-43)

That is no queenly custom for a woman to practise, however beautiful she may be, that a peaceweaver should contest the life of a valued man, because of a fancied insult.

While this sort of retribution (for insults, real or imagined) might not be inappropriate for a king under similar circumstances, it is totally inappropriate to Thryth's designated role as freoðuwebbe, "peaceweaver" (1942). Naturally, this state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, and, indeed, it did not. Powerful though she was, Modthryth was still subject to the will of the patriarch, and she was given (OE passive wearyð gyfen is the form used in line 1948) in marriage to Offa, a dominant young warrior.

When be fæder lāre, (1950) Modthryth visited Offa's court ofer fealone flōd, (1950) she "suffered a sea change,"<sup>179</sup> and was so overcome by her outstanding young husband that she completely reformed, performing all her obligatory tasks to perfection, and observing total fidelity to her husband, so that the poet can speak of Eomaer as Offa's son, Hemminges mæg, /nefa Gārmundes (1960b-61).

Modthryth's come uppance was a source of much satis-



faction to the ealodrincende (1945) men of her time, whose beer-hall conversation applauded this subduing of her aggressive nature by the sexual powers of her husband; she, in turn, was compensated for her restraint by marriage to the garcene man, "spearbold man" (1958).

Not to downplay the importance and the reality of sexual love, it is a fine irony of Thryth's life that she should have been conquered by the power she sought to deny, her sexuality. Hoist with her own petard, you might say - an irony I suspect was not lost on the audience of Beowulf.

Modthryth has been further diminished by the critics, some of whom insist she didn't even exist.<sup>180</sup> The poet himself reveals that the warrior society limits and negates women's possibility for self-defining action in his depiction of Freawaru.

Freawaru's depersonalization is recognized and implied in the fact that she is not imbued with any personal attributes, but is described only in terms of her relationship to men, as fy wife (2028), seo bryd (2031) or se fæmnan (2059). Even her name comes to Beowulf through hearsay; they are not introduced, though she is a royal princess, and he an illustrious guest. Though she is Hrothgar's daughter, she is not mentioned in the poem until after Beowulf has returned to Higelac's court,



although, as we learn from his narrative, she was present at the festivities in Heorot. Her initial non-appearance there as a person in her own right parallels her position in the world at large, for she like most, if not all, royal women, is destined to be a pawn in the political manoeuvres of her father. The use of women as "peace-weavers" is criticised both directly and indirectly in Beowulf's declamation of the story of Freawaru. However, while Beowulf's overt criticism is utilitarian (it simply does not work) he presents a far more fundamental argument in his depiction of this nebulous princess and the tragic possibilities of her fate.

Freawaru (whose name, which means both "noble" and "watchful," incorporates both her status and her necessary existential position) has been betrothed to Ingeld as a means of securing peace between the Scyldings and the Heathobards.

In his role as visionary, Beowulf tells the story from the point of possibility, or likelihood. He acknowledges that such marriages seldom accomplish their intended purpose, peah seo bryd duge!, "however good the bride may be" (2031). In Freawaru's case, while her presence may, in itself, be irreproachable, the presence of her courtiers is nevertheless likely to cause further strife, placing her in a most vulnerable position:

...ofæt s̄æl cymeſt,  
pæt se f̄mnan þegn fore fæder d̄ædum  
æfter billes bite blōdf̄æg swefeſt,  
ealdres scyldig; him se oðer þonan  
losaſt (li)figende, con him land geare.  
Ponne bioſt (ab)rocene on bā healfe  
āſsweord eorla; (syſt)ſan Ingelde  
weallaſt w̄alnīſas, ond him wīflufan  
æfter cearw̄ælumum cōlran weorſaſt. (2058b-66)

...until the time comes that the woman's retainer sleeps stained with blood after the bite of the sword, having forfeited his life because of his father's deeds; the other escapes from there alive; he knows the land well. Then the oath of the chieftains is broken on both sides; afterwards, deadly hatred wells up in Ingeld, and his love for his wife grows cooler with the rising of care.

Freawaru's abandonment to her fate by both her father and her husband removes from her the protective isolation that was the natural accompaniment of her upbringing as a royal female. Effectively, she has been groomed as a sacrifice to the gods of war, her virginity protected as much to fulfill a subconscious ritual requirement as to ensure an honourable exchange [which may be why she does not converse with Beowulf, and at least partially what he means when he speaks of "good" in relation to "the bride" (2031)]. Her importance, or significance, is directly related to her success or failure in appeasing the warring factions, and yet this success or failure can in no way be



influenced by her innate ability to please or displease. (It is not Ingeld who renews hostilities, but one of his men, who, drunk and belligerent, instigates a mortal feud with one of Freawaru's retainers.) Yet, although she has no active power, she must share the consequences of others' actions, and lose not only the safety of her father's house, but the safety of her husband's affection, either or both of which are absolutely essential to her survival.

Pitiable as is the case of Freawaru, however, it is Hildeburh who is the classic representation of woman as "sufferer."<sup>181</sup> The story of Hildeburh, who is dramatically ineffective in her woman's role of peaceweaver between her people, the Scyldings, and the Frisians (to whose leader, Finn, she was married), is a study in powerlessness. Hildeburh is the extreme victim of men's battle games. Because of a quarrel between her father's and her husband's people, her brother and her son are slain. Later, in retribution, her husband is killed, and she is returned home to her people. Neither quarrel had anything to do with her; her marriage and her subsequent return were similarly outside her control. The matter-of-factness with which her misery is accepted by the warriors of Heorot is underscored by the immediate resumption of mirth and revelry following the singing of her tragic lay:

glēomannes gyd.	Lēoð was āsungen,
beorhtode bencswēg,	Gamen eft āstah,
wīn of wunderfatum.	byrelas sealdon
	(1159b-62a)

The song, the gleeman's tale, was sung.  
Merriment arose again, the sound of revelry  
was aloud and clear; cup-bearers offered wine  
from wonderful vessels.

It is as if it simply does not matter.

From a structural and thematic standpoint, the story of Hildeburh seems to represent a particularly poignant element of the poem's portrayal of heroic society, and it seems no coincidence that this episode is recounted by the scop in Heorot on the very eve of the attack by Grendel's mother. This impression is reinforced by the observation of parallel seasonal similes in the story of Hildeburh and the battle with the female monster (cf. 1132-37a and 1608-11), as well as the mention of fire (1122) and ice (1132), an important feature in the conflict with Grendel's mother, who yrme gemunde, "brooded over her sorrow" (1259).

By the time her attack occurs, we are almost emotionally prepared to sympathize with that hideous creature, who is, after all, only doing what Hildeburh herself would have done, had she had the power - avenging the death of her child. Whereas Hildeburh was by nature and conditioning forced to play the passive and impotent role so typical of warrior society that Maud Bodkin has typified it as the role of "woman mourner,"<sup>182</sup> the mother of Grendel,



by virtue of her anti-social status, is empowered to act out the rage and pain she feels at the destruction of her son.

When we are told that this she-monster gegān wolde/ sorhfulne sīȝ, sunu dēoȝ wrecan, "wanted to undertake a sorrowful journey to avenge the death of her son" (1277b-78) when we picture her terror, her desire to be gone as soon as she had repaid those who had hurt her, it is difficult to think of her as being all that different from any sorrowing human mother.

Indeed, it might even have been safe for the hall-dwellers to assume that this would be the last of her raids. That they did not expect her to return is confirmed by the fact that, rather than lie in wait, as he did for Grendel, Beowulf is challenged by Hrothgar to go instead to her lair, an infinitely more dangerous expedition, and one not necessary to enhance an already secure reputation. However, the pattern of revenge has been set in motion, a pattern which begins on the social level, as the story of Hildeburh illustrates, but extends into the farthest reaches of the psyche, confronting the intellectual concepts of justice and balance with the nihilistic emotions of pride and hatred, the rationalization of which provides the social sanction for vengeance.

Although the mother of Grendel is only doing what any

of the warriors of Heorot would have done in her place, she must be destroyed, not, in my opinion, because she may strike again, but because she has committed what is, for a woman, an unpardonable act. In undertaking a course of vengeance, she, like Modthryth, has usurped the role of the man. The outrageous violation of woman's role as freoðuwebbe, "peaceweaver" (1942) is seen to be even more heinous when projected onto the form of the merewīf.

The designation, merewīf, "Merewife," taken from line 1519, will be my formal reference for Grendel's mother because it contains certain important elements of this remarkable psychic form. First of all, the direct reference to the mere, in its function as a symbol of the Unconscious, serves to keep this concept active in all subsequent discussion, and to cast her in her archetypal role as "the mother from the sea-depths."<sup>183</sup> Secondly, wīf has a particular modern connotation of the sexuality I feel is integral to her interpretation. Finally, the resonance of the whole word, merewif, affirms the similarity<sup>184</sup> suggested by Robert Kaske to the later words mere-men, or merry-men, which he compares to the meremenen, the



sirena, a mermaid, of myth, a comparison which has particular relevance to this study of her as a maternal and a sexual being (as Thetis and Aphrodite could both have been envisioned, in part, as mermaids).

The poem itself gives only one clue to the Merewife's origins, but it is a significant one, and in keeping with the dynamics of her genesis. In speaking of Grendel, Hrothgar, patriarch of the Scyldings, says:

	nō hīe fæder cunnon,	
hwæp	per him ær nig was	æer ācenned
dynrnra gāsta.		(1355b-57)

They do not know his father, whether he had one, he who has been born of secret spirits.

The supernatural element introduced here mingles with the concept of paternity, in an inversion of the virgin birth, to produce, not just a chthonic shadow of Christ in the figure of Grendel, but a corresponding inversion in the shape of the Merewife.

Some scholars see her as a "primitive human,"<sup>185</sup> and, although she is, clearly, much more than this, the Merewife's origins do go back to the dawn of human awareness, when "woman the creatress and destructress"<sup>186</sup> was worshipped in the form of the old earth goddesses. The figure of Demeter is evoked, for me, by the mention of the

wicg wundenfeax (1400), ridden by Hrothgar to the mere, for the Demeter-aspect of this ancient mother goddess was worshipped by the Gallic Celts in the form of a mare.<sup>187</sup> The image of Hrothgar riding to the mere mounted upon the symbolic representation of this old corn goddess seems to epitomize the domination of the old earth mother by the patriarchal system of warrior society.

It may be, then, that the Merewife is the ellorgast, the "alien spirit" (1349) worshipped by the Celts, those "non-Teutonic goddess-worshipping strains"<sup>188</sup> living in Britain at the time of the poet. She has no discernible Scandinavian origins, for the Norse goddesses were clearly subordinate to Odin, the All-father, but we know that the Gallic Celts worshipped a female deity long before the coming of either the Teutonic or the Christian patriarchal gods. Her name was Epona, and the relics of her cult survived in Ireland until the 12th century. She was actually worshipped as a tri-partite goddess, the "Three Eponae," whose aspects followed the changes in the seasons of spring, summer, and winter.<sup>189</sup> The nature of the Three Eponae closely parallels that of the Greek triad, Aphrodite, Demeter, and Hecate, who personify the three phases of the moon in its waxing, full, and waning state,<sup>190</sup> an association doubtless derived from the lunar pattern of woman's menstrual cycle, a source of mystery and taboo in primitive cultures.



The Welsh, too, observed the rites of a female goddess whose story, first recorded in the 13th century from a primitive original said to date back to the 9th century,<sup>191</sup> strikes a very familiar chord in the theme of Beowulf's involvement with the Grendel kin. Cerridwen (or Caridwen) was worshipped by the Welsh as, initially, a grain, or corn, goddess. Like Demeter, she is often spoken of as a white sow,<sup>192</sup> the domestic equivalent of the wild boar whose image the Teutonic warriors wore on their helmets.

The wife of a nobleman, Cerridwen, or Arianhrod, as she was also called, had two children. Her daughter was the most beautiful girl in the world, but her son was the ugliest boy. In order to compensate for this physical defect, Cerridwen boiled up a cauldron of wisdom, which she proposed to feed to her son. Leaving a local boy, Gwion, to stir the broth, she then went off to attend to the work of the fields. Gwion, testing the brew with his finger, burned himself, and putting his finger into his mouth to relieve the pain, was instantly imbued with all knowledge. Furious, Cerridwen pursued the boy, first as a screaming hag, and then through a series of mutual shape changes, until he had turned himself into a grain of wheat, whereupon she became a black hen, and devoured him. Upon returning to her normal shape, she found herself pregnant with Gwion, to whom she eventually gave birth.

He was so beautiful that she could not then kill him, but tied him in a leather bag, and threw him into the sea. He was eventually caught by the fishing net of Prince Elphin of North Wales (a detail which evokes the mermaid motif), renamed Taliesin, and brought up at court. 193

Some of the motifs of the Cerridwen story are echoed in Beowulf. Her two sons, Morvran (formerly Afagddu) and Taliesin (formerly Gwion) parallel Grendel and Beowulf in their innate, but divided relationship, as well as in their physical characteristics, for Grendel is repulsively ugly, while Beowulf is described by the Danish coastguard as "peerless":

wæpnum geweorðad,  
ænlic ansyn.

nis þæt seldguma,  
nefne him his wlite lēoge,  
(249b-51)

that is no mere retainer, dignified by his weapons, unless his appearance, his peerless form, belies him.

The name, "Morvran," means "black raven," reminding one of the raven which is the symbol of Cain, with whom Grendel is specifically linked, while Taliesin means "radiant brow," which, as Robert Graves points out, is a sign of Apollo,<sup>194</sup> who fought the dragon Python at the "navel shrine" of Delphi, possibly a shrine of Mother



Earth. Graves also points out that the syllable "Tal" also figured in the primitive names of Hercules, or Heracles, to whom Beowulf, as a bearson figure, has often been compared. Heracles, a devotee of Apollo, was ordered by the Oracle at Delphi to atone for the wanton murder, motivated by sexual jealousy, of Iphitus, by going into slavery for one year. Accordingly, he was sold to Omphale, queen of Lydia, and set to doing women's work, while Omphale assumed his lion's skin and club, and, presumably, his role.<sup>196</sup> Such associations seem to suggest an inherently sexual meaning in Beowulf's battle with the Merewife. 195

A later detail of the Cerridwen story places it as at least concurrent to the story of Beowulf. Taliesin, whose skill at riddles parallels Beowulf's own verbal facility, is said to have confounded the twenty-four court bards of Maelgwyn with his wisdom. (Maelgwyn's sycophantic bards are also mentioned by the 8th century historian, Nennius, which establishes the Cerridwen legend as a living tradition of that period.) One of these riddles, which may be a later addition, is remarkable, if only as a startling coincidence:

"Discover what it is  
The strong creature from before the Flood..." <sup>197</sup>

The Flood myth, native to many of the world's mythologies, is introduced dramatically in Beowulf by

the inscription found on the magic sword in the Merewife's cave:

ealde lāfe,	on	hilt scēawode,	
fryngewinnes,	<del>þæt</del> <del>wæs</del> <del>ōr</del> <del>writen</del>	syðpan flōd ofslōh,	
gifen gēotende		gīganta cyn,	
frēcne geferdon;		þæt <del>wæs</del> fremde þēod	
ēcean Dryhtne;		him þæs endelēan	
þurh <del>wæ</del> teres wylm		Waldend sealde.	(1687b-93)

... he scrutinized the hilt, the ancient heirloom, upon which was inscribed the rise of the primeval strife when the flood, the rushing deep, destroyed the brood of giants. They suffered terribly; that was a race alien from the eternal Lord, (and) for that the Sovereign Ruler gave them a final retribution by the surging water. (Clark Hall)

In Christian myth, the story of the Flood is a study of evil as present within the psyche of mankind, drowned in unconsciousness, but not annihilated. Evil continues to flourish in the aftermath of the Flood, not merely in Grendel's subdiluvian lair, but also on the wlitebeorhtne wang, swa ~~wæ~~ter bebuget, "the bright and beautiful plain surrounded by water" (93) where Noah himself, sinking into drunken and naked slumber (Gen. 9:20-27), reinstated shameful excess as an integer of human behavior. It was not just by going "underwater" (in a reptilian reversion, perhaps) that evil survived the Flood, but by repression in the psyche, as well. Thus, man could deny this element



of his nature until, aided by intoxicants, the inhibitions are lifted, and the unrestrained impulses released.

The recurrent, and critical, references to drunkenness in Beowulf seem to indicate a definite association of medu, ealu, and beor with the forces for chaos and destruction - in other words, with evil. Beowulf's taunt to Unferth, and a rather subtle piece of sarcasm employed by the poet in his description of the fight between Beowulf and Grendel [which contains, in the word ealuscerwen (769) a direct linking of ale (or, by virtue of its power to confer false courage, the lack of it) with terror and distress] are the most overt of the poet's comments. Added to this is the implication of the very drunken state of the warriors on the night of the Merewife's raid, as indicated by Wealhtheow (1231) and emphasised in Beowulf's report to Higelac (2016), and the drunken quarrel which Beowulf predicts will be the cause of Freawaru's troubles, all of which forms a cumulative impression that drunkenness plays no small part in the catastrophies, both natural and supernatural, that beset the warrior tribes.

When we remember that it is the particular role of women to pass the ale-cup, and when we recall that the old earth goddesses were corn and grain goddesses, and note that these were the substances out of which ale is made, the woman's job of passing the ale-cup takes on a sinister overtone, and it is impossible to avoid the

obvious suggestion of the poem's presentation of drunkenness: it is another variation on the theme of woman as the means by which evil is permitted to do its work in the world of man.

In the establishment of intoxicants as a disruptive and negative influence,<sup>198</sup> a "reason" has been found to morally judge the results of the corn-goddess's supremacy, to force her underground (as was the Earth Mother at Delphi) or underwater (as was the Merewife) and to link her irrevocably with evil. She then becomes a grundwyrgen,<sup>199</sup> literally, an "accursed creature of the earth" (1518), a monstrous inversion of her former self. The necessity of seeing this creature as wholly evil is associated with her deposition by the masculine war gods, for, when an established system is overthrown, the first task of the successor is to discredit the former powers. As Shelley has observed, "the conqueror can call the conquered evil."

However, the nature of the earth goddess, of whom the Merewife is the chthonic remnant, initially included elements of good and evil, for she bore the projection of an image of woman which derives from the Unconscious. In her archetypal form, this Great Mother was all-powerful, just as, to the infant, his own mother is the source of all pleasure (satisfaction of his primary desires) and pain (the refusal, or delay, of this same satisfaction).<sup>200</sup>



This primary contact, reinforced by aeons of human development, produces an image of woman which is registered at the deepest level of the psyche; in this sense, the Merewife is Beowulf's mother. Not, of course, the "good mother" of fairy tale and ego-consciousness, the mother idealised by society, but the "terrible mother,"<sup>201</sup> Beowulf's by virtue of his intrinsic relationship to Grendel, but his, also, by virtue of his humanity: she is the primordial mother of all mankind, the archetypal form of Woman which exists, in all its terrifying power, as the most powerful archetype of the Collective Unconscious; the Eternal Mother.<sup>202</sup> That this image of woman as Mother should terrify is not indefensible.

The residual memory of the womb may give rise to a formidable psychic impression of Mother as engulfing, and, by virtue of the fact that emergence from the womb officially signifies the beginning of life (i.e. conscious awareness), the death-state may be also associated with Mother in the form of a fear of being sucked back into the womb, into that state of unconsciousness, which gives rise to an image of Mother as consuming. This concept is primitively rendered in the Cerridwen legend, or myth, by her eating of the grain of wheat which is Gwion and becomes Taliesin, incorporating an initial, and an ultimate, devouring of the child, but illustrating, also, the essence of the Welsh

goddess's identity as the goddess of Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death,<sup>203</sup> for the former is pre-birth, while the latter is rebirth.

Beowulf's descent to the bottom of the terrible mere,<sup>204</sup> with its swirling eddies of blood (either menstrual or birthing) and hātan heolfre, "hot gore" (1423) may, in one sense, signify the terrifying return to the womb, conceived as a cave, the warmth of incubation suggested by the fire he finds there, and the primary security by his rescue (for she finds him in the water, and carries him to her lair) from all terror but that of herself. Yet, in an integral sense, as the phonetic association of "womb" and "tomb" seems to suggest, this same descent may be seen as voluntarily entering the death-state, the tomb, also conceived as a cave, its terrors nameless, as the Merewife is nameless. Beowulf's harrowing of this grundwyrgen is then the only means by which he may make his ascent, or be reborn, in a "new" and beautiful form. The archetypal pattern of descent and ascent is a feature of classical mythology, appearing in both the Odyssey and the Aeneid, and, like all elements of myth, it serves a particular psychological goal, as well as a transcendent psychic purpose. On the psychological level, Beowulf's descent into the underwater cave is a symbolic descent into the underworld of the Unconscious to face the monsters of



instinct which surface to attack the constructs of consciousness. On the psychic level, it is a ritual of transformation, by means of which the individual advances spiritually. Both purposes are simultaneously effected in Beowulf's battle with Grendles modor (1258), for this confrontation represents one of the major patterns of the maturation process, having as its psychological goal the resolution of the Oedipal conflict.<sup>205</sup>

While the aggressive instinct presents a problem for man from early childhood, when he must begin to assert his distinct being, the sexual instinct only becomes a source of consternation from puberty, when the rising of the sexual impulse stimulates in the adolescent the need to distinguish between "right" and "wrong" forms of sexual behaviour. Jung has suggested that this is the period of life in which the final "fragmentation" of personality occurs, and this perception ties in with the Genesis myth, in which the creation of two distinct sexes was the real beginning of Adam's (or man's) separation from God. If there had been no Eve, it is implied, there would have been no temptation, no rebellion, and consequently, no Fall. Whether this implication is "true" or not, the awakening of sexual feeling brings with it a complex of instinct and reason that further complicates the being of

sapient life and generates in the individual a conflict which demands a resolution.

In suggesting that the conflict between Beowulf and the Merewife enacts the ultimate resolution of the Oedipal conflict, I mean to include not merely the Oedipal conflict between son and mother, but also that between daughter and father (sometimes referred to as the Electra complex<sup>206</sup> and recognized in the Bible in the story of the daughters of Lot), for, in his purest function as Hero, Beowulf represents an aspect of the human spirit which has found expression at a level where "differences between male and female cease to be important."<sup>207</sup> Thus, he acts for both male and female in conflict with these instinctual drives, which threaten to consume and destroy the values and relationships established by the conscious mind. It is perhaps partially for this reason that Beowulf both symbolically rapes, and actually kills, the primordial sexual being, which, in its purest form, is similarly androgynous, combining aspects of both male and female. The actual text of the poem, whether by scribal accident or poetic design, suggests this, for the monster is sometimes referred to as se (1260, 1392, 1394, 1497) in addition to seo, although the overt intention of the poet is clearly to represent a female form.

In his transcendent heroic role, then, Beowulf acts



for both son and daughter in conflict with the oedipal desire for the parent of the opposite sex. The classic tale of Oedipus, who (unconsciously) kills his father, and marries his mother, is the mythological prototype of this psychic situation, which arises from the projection of the sexual instinct upon what is, essentially, the first correlative object with which it comes in contact. Normal and inevitable as this projection may be, it is not acceptable in most societies, and strong taboos have existed against its fulfillment since antiquity. It is, therefore, the first function of the maturing young man, or woman, to achieve separation from this attachment.<sup>208</sup>

This process, as mythologized in Beowulf, entails an epic struggle, a necessity of identifying primary sexual desire as intrinsically evil, and an act of destruction which cleanses the spirit, as the mere was eal gefælsod, "all cleansed" (1620); it leads to a "rebirth," or transformation from purely instinctual to higher mental or spiritual being. To achieve this, the hero must descend into the fecund depths of his own Unconscious as Beowulf descended into the seething depths of the mere, struggle with the archetypal form of his own desire, as did Beowulf with the monstrous female, symbolically fulfill that desire, and, thereby, liberate himself from it, as depicted in the mythic battle, with its final and absolute, results.

In her tri-partite form of Woman as Mother, sexual object (Mistress, or Wife) and Hag, the Merewife is a particularly militant form, aggressive, challenging, repulsive, and, most frightening of all, potentially dominant. She, in fact, almost wins the battle, which in certain suggestive elements could be read as a sexual encounter - a somewhat violent one, perhaps, but one which, given the dynamics of the situation, is appropriate to the resolution of the conflict.

The tendency of warriors to regard sexual relationships as just another kind of battle is indicated by primitive rituals of manhood, which have always placed great store in violence, and by the conventional phallic symbolism of weapons such as the knife (seax = sex).

The implied hostility of such symbology is mitigated by the awareness that man, to a great extent, defines himself by his power to act and to effect. The symbols of man's action in an agricultural society are his tools, and, in a warrior society such as that of Beowulf, his weapons. Woman, on the other hand, is seen by the paternalistic male as a receptacle, first of all of his physical being, as the container of his "seed" and secondly, of his spiritual being, as the container of his life essence. Her symbol, in Beowulf is the cup, perhaps the fæted wege (2282) through which fate finally overtakes the hero.

From the suggestive name of Hrunting,<sup>209</sup> the sword



with which Beowulf makes his initial onslaught, to the failure of this obvious phallic symbol (evoking the male fear of impotence) to the Merewife's assumption of the dominant position and her drawing of her seax,<sup>210</sup> which may represent her aggressive sexuality (a trait officially attributed only to the male, as this use of the male phallic symbol in the service of a woman indicates) to Beowulf's seemingly miraculous triumph, sypðan he eft astod "after he stood up again" (1556) by means of a magic sword (for sexual magic is invoked as a means of protection against danger) the battle may as easily be envisioned in sexual terms as in aggressive. Then, too, its culmination in the death of the female, establishing the supremacy of the male, may be symbolic of sexual climax, which is often associated with death (the Italians, for example, call orgasm "the little death," and the metaphysical poet and theologian, John Donne, often used the word "die" in a sexual sense).

In struggling thus with this archetypal triple form of Woman, Beowulf is battling with the power of her image to hold him in thrall, to negate his own powers of action (for her powers are basically passive: it is only when roused by the pain of her son's murder that she undertakes an active course) and to devour him, both literally (one assumes that, like her son, she consumes human flesh)

and symbolically, out of a perverted protective instinct associated with her maternal onnipotence. Defeating the paralysing power of this archetype liberates the psyche to continue its quest for individuation and immortality, as it liberates the youth to pursue an independent life. The pattern of psychic behaviour required to fulfill the emotional requirements of this transcendence appears in primitive culture as a "rite of passage," and in myth as a "rebirth pattern."<sup>211</sup>

The rebirth pattern, or, as Maud Bodkin has termed it, affirming the experiential nature of the archetype, the "Rebirth archetype,"<sup>212</sup> is a pattern of symbolic behaviour undertaken by the psyche in its drive towards individuation. Characterized by the descent-ascent motif, with its psychological implications of conquest of the dark powers within and without the mind, this pattern leads to a transformation in the psyche of the protagonist, in which certain apparently paradoxical and irreconcilable elements are experientially resolved on a symbolic level which is accessible to conscious apprehension. Early symbols of psychic transformation appear in the description of Beowulf's descent and battle, in the form of the serpents, those nicoras who attack Beowulf in the water; the fire, which burns both on the surface and in the depths; the cave, in which the mythic battle takes place;



and the cross, which suggests itself to me as the "didactic hilt"<sup>213</sup> of the magic sword with which Beowulf finally prevailed. This magic sword may also in part represent the power of the "unknown force" within the soul, by means of which man is empowered and raised above and beyond his animal nature.

A passage through, or over, water is another recurring element of the rebirth archetype that appears in Beowulf's journey to the Merewife's cave. The classic use of this archetypal symbol is the thematic image in the story of Jonah and the whale, in which Leviathan's belly may be seen as an underwater cavern. The Aeneid, too, represents the underworld as a subterranean cave reached by means of water, the rivers of hell. In the approach to this realm of experience, the symbolic slaying of a beast is required. Both Odysseus and Aeneas must sacrifice an animal before they may enter the underworld (Odyssey 11, Aeneid 6). In Beowulf, this ritual sacrifice was performed by the hero (1432b-36) and provides the essential religious element.

The fyr on flode (1366) of the dismal mere suggests a very powerful and mystical element of the rebirth archetype, one which appears as the "ice bound seas and stagnant water burning"<sup>214</sup> of the Ancient Mariner and Dante's Hell. This combination of fire and water on one level symbolizes the "union of irreconcilable opposites"<sup>215</sup> which signifies

the attainment of psychic unity, and without which nothing is, or can be, whole. In our present discussion, the relevant opposites are the male and female element of both soma and psyche, for, besides enacting the necessary rites of passage for the successful resolution of the Oedipal conflict, Beowulf must come to terms with the innate female element of his own nature. As Jung has suggested, before a renewal of life can come about, there must be an acceptance of the possibilities that lie in the unconscious contents, "activated through regression... and disfigured by the slime of the deep."<sup>216</sup> The feminine element of the male psyche, which manifests itself in sublimated, or exalted, form, as the Anima, takes on terrifying proportions in its libidinal state. Thus, in the murky depths of the mere there is the feeling of stagnation and corruption, "where even radiance is foul,"<sup>217</sup> suggested by the fire which burns in the cave (1515b-17b). This light, described by John Clark Hall as a "lurid flame,"<sup>218</sup> leaps into new brilliance after the Merewife has been destroyed; the light is then compared to that of the sun, whereby the heavenly kingdom of the patriarchal sky god is invoked:

Līxte se lēoma  
efne swā of hefene  
rodores candel.

lēoht inne stōd  
hādre scine~~ð~~  
(1570-72)



A gleam flashed forth, light was diffused within,  
as when the candle of the firmament shines brightly  
from heaven. (Clark Hall)

This is a fitting simile, because Beowulf has completed the destruction of the ancient earth goddess, as Apollo destroyed the Python (ess) at Omphalos (appropriately called the "navel of the world."<sup>219</sup>) Apollo's symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord is rather more crudely, but perhaps more effectively, accomplished in Beowulf's shattering of the bānhringas, the "bone rings" (1567) of the Merewife's neck. With this his penultimate blow, the patriarchal structure symbolized by Heorot moves into ever more secure control of the life and destiny of human society, just as the (male) individual moves into more complete control of his own existence through resolution of the Oedipal conflict.

The final act of the battle amounts to an inversion of Creation, and, as God is said to have been pleased with His work, it is said of Beowulf, likewise, that secg weorc gefeh, "the man (or, it may be, the sword) rejoiced in his (its) work" (1569).

The natural return to unconsciousness of the archetypal forms and patterns which irrupted into ritual activity through the engagement of the Ego and the Hero is indicated in the poet's description of the mere following the battle:

Lagu drūsade,  
wæter under wolcnum, wældrēore fāg. (1630b-31)

The lake's waters, stained with blood,  
drowed under the sky.

This return to a state of somnolence reflects a necessary decision of ego-consciousness to suppress,<sup>220</sup> rather than repress, many of the details of the primary experience, in order to accomplish its conscious aims. In this instance the moral imperatives of Beowulf's social conscience are taken, as a part of consciousness, into the anarchic world of the Unconscious, applied to the shapes found therein, and validated. Thus, Beowulf justifies the supremacy of the new regime as being absolutely essential to the protection, continuation, and renewal of society. His return to Heorot with the head of Grendel, rather than a trophy of the Merewife, while it establishes the continuing threat to society as existing materially in the aggressive tendencies of the warrior powers, completes her absolute conquest, for she will not surface again, and even the memory of her power is denied.

The exigencies of such a mission, however, dictate certain resultant conditions. First of these is the necessary identification of the female as, in some fundamental sense, evil; sexuality, therefore becomes



a source of guilt and shame. The battle-rape of the Merewife is a natural act under such circumstances, for Beowulf is battling his instinctual desire for union with a creature he has had to define as evil. Secondly, rather than accept and assimilate the feminine element in his own nature, Beowulf has been forced to annihilate it. All the more understandable, then, is the reluctance of the hart, which, as both a sexual symbol<sup>221</sup> and a symbol of the soul,<sup>222</sup> is a symbol of the Anima in its libidinal aspect, to risk its absolute being in the abyss of the deep Unconscious. In negating his feminine nature, it may be that Beowulf becomes unable to project even the positive form of his Anima upon women in the "real" world. Thus, he may be unable to fall in love, to find true sexual fulfillment, and to thereby fulfill his procreative function.

This hypothesis is supported by the fact that he had no heirs. Seen by these warriors as a sign that God did not favour them, the failure to produce an heir, to be fruitful, implies a fundamental abortion of the sexual function.

The notion of celibacy, which attempts to harness sexual energy to religious feeling, is based upon the intuition that, sublimated, the sexual instinct becomes a vehicle for artistic, or religious experience. The function of the Anima, in her role as spiritual guide,

is directly related to this possibility. Yet the process of sublimation implies a subversion of primary goals.

The subversion, or subjugation, of animal instinct has been a theme of Beowulf from the hero's first battle with the unacceptable elements of his aggressive instinct, as personified in Grendel. It is not, therefore, surprising that the perceived necessity of subduing the instinctual drives should extend to the sexual sphere. However, just as the aggressive instinct has a positive function in that it is the source of energy by which man acts, so the sexual instinct has a particular and universal purpose, which is validated in its physical expression and result, and sublimated as love.

Love, the ultimate expression of the sexual instinct in human beings, does not go unmentioned in Beowulf, but it receives very particularized treatment. The love of man for God is approved and exalted; the love of man for man is elevated into a social system, based upon the warrior society's structural relationship of comitatus; the love of man for woman, or woman for man, is, in contrast, shown to be a relationship of domination, manipulation, separation, and death: Modthryth's love for her husband causes her to come completely under his power; Ingeld's love for Freawaru will degenerate into blōdfāg swefeo<sup>x</sup> (2060) when she fails to accomplish her



purpose as "peaceweaver;" Hygd's love for Higelac, and his for her, ends in bloody and isolated death; and Hildeburh, whose son fulfilled the creative promise of sexual love, lives to see that fulfillment of love destroyed by war. These situational motifs provide clues to the failure of erotic love in the world of Beowulf, but they may all be reduced to a fear that haunts the individual consciousness: the fear of annihilation, either by another consciousness (as with Modthryth) or by the final force of unconsciousness, death.

The relationship of lovers, which is integrally physical, is inevitably associated with death, because, born in the body, it must logically die with the body. The concept and the possibilities of sexual love seem more limited in the warrior world, in which the stark phenomenological reality of pain and physical annihilation is an everyday fact of life, than in the agricultural realm of the earth goddess, in which the seasonal patterns themselves were an affirmation of the cycle of rebirth.

Yet, although the possibility of untimely death is multiplied many times by the rationale for warrior society itself, the ethic to which these warriors subscribed managed to console them in part for its inevitability. The hope of glorious death in battle, and the belief in the warrior's subsequent transportation to Valhalla, where

he would do battle all day, then feast all night, die and rise to fight again, provided a fantasy that replaced love with war, but this fantasy permitted him to distance his fear of the cold realities of death in battle. Not so the actuality of death itself. Of this he continued to be reminded by the woman in his life. The pain of birth, and the physical and emotional tensions that accompany the monthly menstrual cycle, bring the female into continuous and intimate contact with the realities of physical being, and these realities include the fact of mortality, for which, in both Norse and Christian mythology, she is considered responsible.

It should be noted that, even in mythology, this perceived responsibility is rather more symbolic than actual, and derives from the fact that the observing consciousness has traditionally been masculine. A man, contemplating the metaphysical implications of sexuality, can only do so in terms of its relation to the object of his sexual desire, woman. Therefore, even though it is a well-worn cliché that Saint Paul rejected sexuality for himself in his oft-quoted maxim, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman..." (I Cor. 7:1) and railed against the sins of the flesh to which he felt especially vulnerable (Rom. 7:23-4) his reasons for doing so may be related, not to any intrinsic dislike of women, but to an awareness of the meaning of the Biblical account of the end of Paradise, when, as Otto Rank interprets it, the discovery of sex brought death into the world.<sup>223</sup>



Man's need to triumph over his sexuality may be, as Ernest Becker contends, a need to create a distinctly human personality, and may arise from his awareness that sexual self-denial allows him to "impose the cultural map for personal immortality over the animal body." Because sex represents "species consciousness and, as such, the defeat of individuality," the sexual act itself represents a "double negation" both in physical death and in the loss of distinctly personal qualities.<sup>224</sup>

Man's resistance to sexuality may therefore be seen as a natural product of his developing consciousness, not only by virtue of its symbolic resistance of death, but also in its relation to the function to consciousness, which seeks to establish the supremacy of mind over body, in order to perpetuate its own existence.

Paradoxically, of course, sexual love has traditionally been seen as that aspect of the male-female relationship which holds "the key to Paradise,"<sup>225</sup> and the positive implications of sexuality include a cognizance and interpretation of death and rebirth. John Donne, in "The Canonization," envisions sexual climax as a kind of death into a new form of life, in which, for a brief but infinite moment, a new being is created out of disparate and opposing principles. And Jung would affirm that "only together are man and woman the image of God."<sup>226</sup>

Such associations suggest that the sexual instinct operates on a transcendent plane to energize the desire

of man and woman to achieve physical and psychic unity in and through each other. The mystical and religious interpretations of sexuality acknowledge this primal impulse, and in this sense the religious instinct may be seen as the psychic counterpart of the sexual instinct. As the sexual function is to ensure the continuation of the physical components of the human body, the religious function is to ensure the psychic continuity of the human spirit; the integral relationship of both these instincts is reflected in the essential likeness of the goals, for both seek unity with another entity as a means of achieving immortality. Yet, just as the achievement of sexual unity implies a kind of "surrender," or "death," of the individual being, so the overall goal of psychic unity, individuation, requires the surrender, and death, of the infantile ego personality, (which is limited by notions of time, space, and matter that do not exist in the Unconscious) and a subsequent rebirth as a transcendent, more fully realized being who approaches the realization of the archetype of psychic wholeness Jung calls the Self.

This process, for man or woman, is essentially a solitary one, but it must be undertaken with the soul (the Anima) as guide, and the image of God as the ultimate goal, as God lives most purely in the Self as the unity before and after the creation of the world which is the source and goal of all psychic energy.



In this sense, therefore, the requirements of spirituality take precedence over those of the body. Nevertheless, the ultimate unity, as Saint Paul suggests in his doctrine of the spiritual body (I Cor. 15:14) may be both psychic and physical, and the corresponding opposites of its physical unity must be male and female, which exist in equal and balanced measure in the divine "body" of God incorporated as Christ. Thus, the explanation of Beowulf's (and Christ's) perceived androgyny may be that it results from the apprehension and experience of the resolution of opposites that accompanies the process of individuation and leads to a perception of the Self.<sup>227</sup>

This moment occurs symbolically for Beowulf when the marvellous sword with which he has destroyed the two monsters of instinct melts into hildegicelum (1606):

æfter heaposwāte	þā þæt sweord ongan
wīgbil wanian;	hildegicelum,
þæt hit eal gemealt	þæt wæs wundra sum,
ðonne forstes bend	īse gelīcost
onwinded̅ wælrapas,	Fæder onlāteð,
sāla ond mēla;	se geweald hafa
	þæt is soð Metod. (1605-11)

Then that sword, the war blade, began to waste away in icicles of war, because of the blood of battle; that was a great wonder, that it all melted, just like ice when the Father loosens the bond of frost, unwinds the flood-ropes. He has power over times and seasons; he is the true Ruler.

This epic simile states a recurring theme of paradox, fire and ice being the absolutely opposing cosmic principles, containing the polarities of heat and cold, light and dark, wet and dry. At the same time, it resolves that paradox physically and metaphysically, because, implicit in equal measure in both fire and ice, are the notions of life and death, which evokes the nature of the mother goddess as the representation of Life-in-Death and Death-in-Life. However, this symbolic structure, which also includes both principles in the destructive power of Grendel's heaðoswat, is ascribed to Metod in his patriarchal role of Fæder, who, in his power over sala ond mala, has control over time and matter. In its turn, heat displaces cold, and cold negates heat, in a cyclic pattern that reveals the nature of deity. The concepts of change and renewal implicit in this image are given their physical reality in the world of nature and time, and the pattern of birth, death, and rebirth is established even on the temporal plane of physical being. On the psychic, or spiritual level, these same concepts are perceived as integral to absolute Being, for constant change is the final paradox contained in the supreme energy source, or force, which is perceived to be the essence of God.

That this seasonal pattern should be specifically attributed to God the Father, establishing the dominion



of the patriarchal sky god over the former realm of the Earth Mother, is a significant note in this very powerful movement of image and theme, which is central to Beowulf's rebirth as a spiritual being, and should have been a moment of psycho-sexual wholeness in which the antinomies are experientially resolved, and, like the sword blade dissolved. Yet the dissolving of the blade in Grendel's blood, rather than in the Merewife's, seem to indicate that the poet is instinctively aware of the essential invalidity of some of the assumptions that might arise from the story of this conquest. In substituting a male form of god for a female form, no moral advancement is seen to have been achieved; evil may still work to negate the active power of the will to good represented by the magic sword blade. And men are to continue to be blind to the lessons of history: the story of the Flood is cryptic, and open to willful misinterpretation in the desire to achieve righteous power; the patterns of the past will be repeated until Heorot, the warrior society, is destroyed in laȝan liges (83), not by Flood, but by fire, ecghete (84) and wælniȝ (85).

The "woman mourner" who appears in her final form at the end of Beowulf is, therefore, an important figure in the light of the poem's understanding of women, for

she represents a responsive and prophetic element of this warrior society.

This aspect of woman, which Maud Bodkin has likened to "the goddess Ishtar, or Innini, the visionary leader of the lament,"<sup>228</sup> is revealed with subtlety and precision in Beowulf. In essence, the woman mourner is the vestigial remnant of the ancient and divine mother goddesses - Ishtar, Demeter, perhaps Thetis - whose stories end in "mourning for the divine child and husband that made her glad and fertile."<sup>229</sup> Although she may be a youthful victim of tragedy, like Hildeburh, most often this figure is represented by an old woman, the final victim of warrior society.

While old men occupied a central position of respect in the world of Beowulf, as illustrated by their role as seleradende, "counsellors in the hall" (52) and the respect according to the duguð, old women seem to have been relegated to the fringe of life. Her usefulness to society having depended upon the power of her sexual attraction, (which facilitated the fulfillment of her social role as peace-weaver, and her domestic role as wife, mistress, and mother) in old age, a woman was still further diminished in both power and presence. Those who maintain that the woman mourner at Beowulf's funeral was actually Hygd<sup>230</sup> would have to agree with this inference, for in old age she is



not mentioned by name, nor identified in any way that might remind one of the glorious youth of this woman. She is simply g(eo)meowle (3150), a word which, by virtue of its feline resonances, may as easily read "old pussy" as "old woman," and she is described as bundenheorde, "with hair bound up" (3151), to indicate her lack of sexual appeal, hair being a symbol of a woman's sexual attractiveness. Time, too, seems to have played more than a passing part in erasing her being, for the manuscript is all but indecipherable at this point.

In a note to her lament, Klaeber says that the fact that the song of lament "should be uttered by a woman is what we expect,"<sup>231</sup> citing as his reason the prospective fate of women following the death or defeat of their men, described in lines 3016-21. Although this is undoubtedly part of the reason, it implies that her lament is occasioned only by personal fear and loss. But the old woman who laments the death of Beowulf is not crying only for herself; (she is, after all, old, and near the end of her life); she is also crying for the future of her race, which, on the broader scale, is the whole of the human race. The values lost by the death of Beowulf, and, in fact, by the passage of time, in which the patriarchal system and its warrior ethic gains ever stronger control, are values which

were imparted to him in some measure by the women in his life. As their influence fades, or is negated, growing weaker with each succeeding generation as the warrior society weox under wolcnum (8), peace becomes a vanishing dream, and war and exile the material reality.

In Beowulf, the figure of the "woman mourner" as she appears both in the person of Hildeburh (1117b) and in her final form at the end of the poem, seems to be a constant and visionary element of the warrior society. The ritual lamentation for the dead son, husband, or king reveals a continuing fact of such society, in which women play a particular role, and suffer definite consequences, but over which they have no actual control. Just as the seer can predict, but cannot influence, the course of events (illustrated by the myth of Cassandra, who foretold the doom of Troy to deaf ears) the woman mourner's power to envision the future is negated by her essential position of powerlessness: in this sense, the future is already the past, the mistakes of the past an inevitable part of the future, and her lament of both laments also the continuing present reality, experienced as the existential position of women in the world.

A recurring figure of myth and history, the woman mourner remains a shadowy figure, more sound than substance,



almost an echo of the cry of protest that must have sounded in the soul of woman at her degradation from goddess to impotent pawn in the beadulācan (1561), those battlegames necessary to appease the masculine war gods raised up by the patriarchal revolution.

CHAPTER IV

BEOWULF AND THE WYRM: The Religious Struggle



"The Unconscious needs a god."

C. G. Jung

As Beowulf moves closer and closer to the end of his dogera dægrim (823), the symbolic forms by means of which his Unconscious pursues its destiny become more and more pure, and yet, more and more complex. At the end, he is left with two unconscious projections, one of which, the Wyrm, embodies all that he has come to reject both in his own nature and that of the manifest universe, and the other, the Hord (in its combined sense of "treasure" and "what is hidden") all that he has come to value.

The other forms, by means of which he has come to realise his values, have split, the positive features

having been incorporated into his ego-consciousness, and the negative having been consigned to the deepest Unconscious, to aggregate to the form which presents itself at the end of his life as the Worm. Yet, although his conscious affirmations of value have been assimilated by the Ego to a great extent, there remains one final assimilation, a goal which may perhaps be reduced to the desire of the human spirit to be one with its true values. The Worm, as the negative principle, stands firmly between Beowulf and the realisation of this goal.

This necessary positioning creates the dynamic which gives rise to the final conflict of Beowulf's life: his struggle with the Worm as the projection of the darkest, most destructive impulses of his own animal being (which includes the body's will towards death in the notion of the "death-wish") to achieve the treasure, which as the symbol of the Self, is the objective validation of his highest, most creative possibilities (which include the soul's will towards life, in the notion of immortality). In this struggle, he is armed with his sword, as a symbol of the energetic qualities of the soul; his knife, a sacrificial tool; the love and loyalty of one of his fellow men; and his own indomitable courage in the face of the final threat to ego-consciousness, the manifest reality of death.



In a poetic affirmation of the transcendent power of spirit over matter, Beowulf's heroic spirit is sustained to the end of his life, reaching its zenith as his body's vitality plunges downward into darkness. His final battlefield is the antechamber to eternity, a field on which the quaternary symbols of spiritual transcendence fuse with the circular motif of psychic wholeness to form a mandala, the "squared circle" which represents, in alchemical lore, the mystic condition of absolute unity of being.<sup>232</sup>

The quaternity, which appears most strikingly in the Christian Cross, is also present in Revelation as the four beasts (Rev. 4:6) and the four horsemen (Rev. 6:1-8). It may be discerned in Beowulf's final battle as the four elements: earth, in the Pauline image of the harne stan, the "grey rock" (2553, 2744) as well as in the eorþscraef, the "earth cave" (3046) out of which the dragon emerges; air, in the flight of the dragon, and in the suggestive name of the fight's location, Earnanæs, "Eaglesness" (3031); the admixture of fire and water which is a recurring thematic image of the poem is found in the ligyðum, "waves of fire" (2672), and the burnan walm/heaðofyrum hat, "burning flood of hot battle fire" (2547-48) that issues from the dragon's mouth. The circle is represented there by the

coils of the serpent, the golden rings of the treasure hoard, and the magic circle in which the treasure is enclosed, implied in galdre bewunden, "encircled by a spell" (3052). God sylfa, "God Himself" (3054) is identified as the keeper of that spell, and as the power by which it may be broken; and in the dragon's breath, which, described as hat hildeswat, "hot vapour of battle" (2558) incorporates air, fire and water, but not the "feminine" element of earth, there is a suggestive image of the masculine Trinity.

Such symbolism creates both a mystical and a didactic vision of the apocalyptic moment, in which all disparate and opposing elements of matter and spirit come together, signifying the culmination and resolution of the individual life process. It is the successful resolution of this process towards which the religious instinct strives.

The religious instinct has been characterized by Jung as "a dynamic existence or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will",<sup>233</sup> an instinct which "seizes and controls its human subject"<sup>234</sup> who is thus "always rather its victim than its creator."<sup>235</sup> Although its function is not physically grounded, the religious instinct is as dedicated to man's survival as a psychic entity as the



instincts of aggression and sexuality are to his survival as a physical being.<sup>236</sup> Just as the body's need for protection and sustenance both derives from, and is fulfilled by, the aggressive instinct, while its urge for continuance and renewal is both stimulated and satisfied by the sexual instinct, the psyche, too, seems to call upon its own energetic force which both impels, and informs, the search for psychic unity. In their affirmation of the primacy of this search, which takes precedence even over physical survival, philosophers and post-Freudian psychologists have come to view man as a theological, rather than a biological, being - a "fact" that poets have known for millenia.

The quest of the hero for individuation is, therefore, essentially a religious quest, and in recognition of this the hero has been seen as man's sense of Self in relation (and opposition) to "God, Fate, and the Devil."<sup>237</sup> There is a sense in which this description stands as a touchstone for all the feelings, impressions, and ideas that combine to create the heroic protagonist of Beowulf, who, in accordance with the psychic goal of individuation, in the service of which all three primary instincts operate, is led by the religious instinct through a "living process of the unconscious in the form of the drama of repentance, sacrifice, and redemption."<sup>238</sup>

Once this drama has been enacted symbolically, and thus truly experienced psychically, the archetype of psychic wholeness, the Self, becomes manifest.<sup>239</sup>

Jung has compared the idea of the Self to the idea of God,<sup>240</sup> and it is possible, within the frame of Jungian reference, to discuss man's relationship with God in terms of the relationship of the Ego to the Self. However, before doing so, it should be noted that Jung's notion of God is not confined to Christian ideology. On the contrary, his vision of the Self (or God) derives largely from Eastern philosophy and mysticism, in which good and evil are subsumed in an absolute entity which may, perhaps, be most closely represented in *Beowulf* by the idea of Wyrð, or Fate. This is not to say that the *Beowulf* poet shared this view. He certainly did not, at least not on a conscious level. It is important to recognize this, because, perhaps more than any of the earlier discussions, a discussion of the religious elements in *Beowulf* must acknowledge the consciousness of the author himself, if only because a man's religion is personal and integral to his vision of the world, and he will naturally tend to superimpose his personal and conscious vision upon the world that he creates out of the contents of his Unconscious. This is because religious thoughts, which follow the awareness of religious feeling,



reflect on one level the response of consciousness to the stimulation of the Unconscious, and, on another level, the projection of that response onto the world in which it functions. In that sense, man, to a very great extent, creates his own world. It is, therefore, necessary to take into consideration what Klaeber calls the "didactic and emotional nature of the author himself,"<sup>241</sup> for both elements are central to any discussion of a religious nature.

The Beowulf poet was a Christian, as the first reading of the poem will attest, but the poem itself straddles two ideological, or imaginative, worlds: the pagan and the Christian. While we know little else about the poet, we may infer, from his seemingly casual reference to Danish history, legend, and myth, that he was stimulated by the stories of religious devotion to the gods of his ancestors, who were, in fact, still worshipped in Sweden, Denmark, and parts of his own country, at the time the manuscript is said to be dated.<sup>242</sup> We must assume that these old gods died hard, and that their vestiges continued, in ritual and concept, in the developing symbols of Christianity.

The background of Norse myth imparts a basic feeling-tone to Beowulf, highlighting, by its darkness and sensuality, the light and spirituality of the Christian

story which supersedes it. In some ways, it is as if the intrinsically Christian motif of Beowulf anticipates the Teutonic world after Ragnarok, the final battle of the gods of Asgard with the forces of evil. After this Norse Armageddon, Odin's son, Balder, the closest one comes to a Christ-figure in Norse myth, lives again, and a newer, more beautiful world emerges.<sup>243</sup> The poetic vision of Beowulf's heroic psyche seems to be a vision of the possibilities of the new Christian world; as a heroic traveller in his own mental landscape, Beowulf is in many ways like Odin, who, hanging suspended from a tree, is granted a vision of a future which will not include him.<sup>244</sup>

For Odin, relic of pagan consciousness, the prospect of a future without him is mitigated by the continuance and renewal of his son; but for Beowulf, who, like Christ, has no son, and will therefore project nothing of his physical being into the world of time and matter, the Christian promise of individual salvation selfes mihtum, "through the might of one" (700), and of rebirth in new and beautiful form in the eternal keeping of a Father-god who was, is, and always will be, answers the deepest need of his psyche. In acknowledging this need, the very resolution of which depends upon its recognition as such, Beowulf is acknowledging in his own nature the divine element that seeks its own fulfillment; it is



this, more than anything else, that makes him a Christ figure in action and reflection, and it is the apparent resolution of this need that makes Christianity a potent touchstone for the truths of the Unconscious, because its archetypal symbols, from Christ Himself to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, are the refraction of those primal aspects of psyche which combine to form an archetypal unity.

All archetypes of the Unconscious engage in a "living process"<sup>245</sup> of interaction and conflict the aim of which is, ultimately, to reconstruct the archetype (or, in St. Thomas Aquinas' term, the prototype<sup>246</sup>) of physical and psychical wholeness contained in the notion of God, or the Self. In battling with the serpent (the Wurm) Beowulf, in his role as archetypal Hero, is actively affirming his unique being in opposition to the negative, and negating, elements of phenomenological and sensory evidence which attain a supernatural power over his life and being. In this sense, he is struggling against the evidence that his free will is limited, because this evidence contradicts the Ego's subjective feeling of freedom. But, just as free will clashes with necessity in the outside world, it also finds its limits outside the field of consciousness, in the subjective inner world. In this sense, it may be that the element of negation resides within the psyche as well, and

it is by this measure that the Self may be seen as the source of all "supernatural" entities, good or evil, which may themselves be the fragmented projections of "the inside of the unknown man."<sup>247</sup> These elements, though perceived to be related to man's life and death, are not understood by consciousness; it is precisely because they are not understood that they are projected onto supernatural figures.

According to Jung, conscious knowledge develops through the "withdrawal of projections,"<sup>248</sup> whereas, conversely, "all gaps in actual knowledge are still filled by them."<sup>249</sup> As consciousness expands, and the undeniable reality of darkness and evil can no longer be attributed solely to metaphysical beings, there seems "no alternative but to make man responsible for it."<sup>250</sup> Because of the cherished ego-ideal of free will, the correlative of which is absolute responsibility, man must inevitably grow in the awareness that "everything of a divine or demonic character must return to the soul,"<sup>251</sup> and the result of this awareness is that he must therefore assume that everything that is wrong in the world derives from himself. This leads inevitably to a feeling of responsibility or guilt, much like the obscure sense of guilt that troubled Beowulf when he was confronted with the direct and personal attack of the Wurm:



Þā wæs Biowulfe                    brōga gecyðed  
snūde to sōðe,                    þæt his sylfes hām,  
bolda sēlest                    brynewylmum mealt,  
gifstōl Gēata.                    Þæt þam godan wæs  
hrēow on hreðre,                    hygesorga mæst;  
wēnde se wīsa,                    þæt hē Wealdende  
ofer ealde riht                    ēcean Dryhtne  
bitre gebulge;                    brēost innan wēoll  
þēostrum geþoncum,                    swā him gepýwe ne wæs. (2324-32)

Then the truth of the horror was quickly made known to Beowulf, that his own home, the best of buildings, the gift-throne of the Geats, was melting in waves of fire. That was a grief for the great man's soul, greatest of heart sorrows: the wise chief thought that he had grievously angered the Almighty, the everlasting Lord, contrary to the ancient law; his breast surged within with gloomy thoughts, which was not usual to him.

Klaeber interprets these lines to mean that Beowulf was "searching his heart for sins he may have unwittingly committed"<sup>252</sup> and the poet's observation that this "was not usual to him" seems to bear this out, because Beowulf is not used to thinking of himself as in any way sinful; indeed, quite the opposite. In his first mythic battle with Grendel, he describes himself as unsynnig (2082) a moral position which gave him that necessary sense of right out of which he could act decisively and in confidence. Throughout his life, he had followed the advice of Hrothgar, whose age and latter-day adversities led him to conclude that the real purpose of life was to prepare for the after-life. In his admonition to Beowulf, Hrothgar reminded

him that he, too, would inevitably die, and urged him to live a moral life (as negatively defined by the example of Heremod) in preparation for a righteous death without fear, secure in the knowledge that he had done his duty. This Beowulf does. But still, at the end of his life, the direct attack of the fyr-wyrm upon his own home awakens in him a terrible anxiety.

The power of the feeling of guilt, which carries far more emotional weight than the mere idea of guilt, derives from the importance of feeling itself as an important rational function of consciousness.<sup>253</sup> This "feeling function"<sup>254</sup> is an important element in Christianity<sup>255</sup> which is especially concerned with human relationships, with value, and lack of value; in other words, with good and evil. Because of this fundamental tendency of feeling as a pure function, its development in Western man seems to have "forced a choice on him which led to the moral splitting of the divinity into two halves,"<sup>256</sup> and it was perhaps because of this that "the morally ambiguous Yahweh became an exclusively good God, while everything evil was united in the devil."<sup>257</sup> However, the symbolic content of the serpent, as the prevailing form of the devil, seems to indicate that this distinction only operates upon a conscious level.

While the Wyrms, the serpent form in Beowulf, seems



clearly to stand for all that is evil, anti-human, or absolutely Other, if one examines the historical and mythological manifestations of draconitas it becomes apparent that "in all major serpent-dragon symbols the good and bad are delicately balanced." <sup>258</sup>

The serpent figures prominently in Hebrew legend (from Moses' lifting the serpent in the desert to Jesus being raised as Moses raised the serpent <sup>259</sup> ) not only as a symbol of immortality (deriving from its tendency to shed its skin and emerge "renewed") but also as the focus of attention onto which a group of religious devotees may project and objectify its values. <sup>260</sup> The Ophites, a Gnostic sect dating from the first century A.D., believe that the serpent was sent by the High God (possibly corresponding to the notion of Wyrd in Beowulf) so that man might escape the bondage of ignorance imposed upon him by the Jewish Yahweh, who was not the real God at all, but a vengeful, ill-tempered father of evil. To the Ophites, Christ was the serpent. <sup>261</sup> The Anglo-Saxon language contains a suggestive orthographic and phonetic similiarity in the words wyrd and wyrm which does seem to hint at some linguistic, if not theological, connection between these two concepts.

The theme of the final battle, that of man attempting to take something precious from a tree or cave guarded

by a dragon, is a recurring one in myth and folk-tale, and the identity of the dragon as the hostile guardian of a "treasure hard to attain"<sup>262</sup> is a prevailing motif of medieval literature and art, so it would seem that this archetypal form as, first and foremost, the embodiment of the power of evil, held great power over both the conscious and the unconscious minds of the audience of Beowulf. If the dramatic entry in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 793<sup>263</sup> is to be taken literally, it is likely that the Anglo-Saxons believed in the existence of monsters and dragons, and there is also the possibility that, in certain forms, these creatures actually did exist (after all, think of the Giant Squid) so that the monster was not only a product of mind, but an introjection of an objective reality of man's primitive world, perhaps a composite of a large reptile (dinosaur) and an erupting, or active, volcano near which it might have had its habitat. The difference between the mere monster and the dragon - or serpent, or Wyrml - however, seems to lie in the transcendental nature of draconitas as the embodiment of paradox.

This image seems to have developed along independent lines in many mythologies, not only Jewish, but Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Oriental, and Scandinavian. The power of the Wyrml was invoked as often as it was rejected, especially in Teutonic culture. In the world of Beowulf,



the image of the serpent adorned the swords (wyrm-fah) in an attempt to call upon the power of this archetypal form, and the ancient Teutons themselves used to keep a "house-snake" as a minor guardian house spirit and rat-catcher.<sup>264</sup>

Unlike its Teutonic cynne, the Beowulf dragon is no benevolent house pet, and its positive attributes are not explored in the poem, but, as Alvin Lee has pointed out, Beowulf and the fyr-wyrm are frequently described in the same terms,<sup>265</sup> indicating a fundamental connection between them which goes beyond the necessary antagonism dictated by their polarisation as archetypal forms. And, although most myths do represent the hero as elementally opposed to the dragon, Scandinavian myth often links the two, and the hero may display attributes of the wyrm. Sigurd, for example, was called "Ormr  $\hat{u}$  Auga"<sup>266</sup> - which means "Snake's Eyes." Jung has said that the hero "is himself the snake, himself the sacrificer and the sacrificed."<sup>267</sup> It would therefore seem that the dragon represents an aspect of man's own nature, and its recognition as such provides a necessary key to the nature of the dualism which is at the root of man's primary existential anxiety.

It is only when this dualism is resolved through the experience of both good and evil that man can attain the

unity of which immortality is a conceived component, just as it is only by defeating the dragon that Beowulf can attain the treasure. And, because the existence of evil implies its necessity, it is suggested that its active and emotional expressions - sin and guilt - function as necessary agents of this experience, for only through the "agony of conflict with a false divinity"<sup>268</sup> can the individual spirit achieve "the glory of union with its true values."<sup>269</sup> It is as the final unmasking of these false values that the fyr-wyrm manifests itself in destructive acts against the foundation of Beowulf's life, his people and his home (i.e., his society and his own physical being). Confronted thus with the Wyrms, Beowulf must acknowledge that its very existence arose from his own being. In facing this existential possibility, the Hero takes the penultimate step towards Self-realisation; and, in rejecting and overcoming that aspect of himself which causes the separation by sacrificing both himself and the dragon to an unconscious image of unity, which the treasure, by virtue of its invisibility represents, he actualizes his own redemption.

The importance of the feeling of guilt, or the awareness of sin, to this process, seems to derive from the Judeo-Christian concept of man's relationship to God, which emphasises the notion of "original sin." Such



a premise was not a part of the "pagan" consciousness, even one as complex and differentiated as that of Aristotle, for whom the imperfections of the hero need not be related to his fall, which was brought about, not by a tragic flaw in his character, but by hamartia, a simple error. In Beowulf, this may merely have been his acceptance of the golden cup from the slave, which brought down the wrath of the Wyrms upon his head. The concept of the tragic flaw, not found in Aristotle, seems to have some connection with Christian ethics and didactic literature, and it could be argued that this form of guilt was not a major preoccupation of the society portrayed in Beowulf, (as opposed to the society which comprised its audience). Actual, or legal, guilt was, of course, a concept, but such guilt could be paid off in money, the wergild, releasing the transgressor from further retribution. Moral guilt, on the other hand, was a far more nebulous concept, requiring an extra effort of mind to comprehend, and indicating a mental refinement that may derive from conflict in the conscious mind between the ideas of free will and fatalism. That this conflict does take place in Beowulf's mind is implicit in his retelling of the story of Herebeald and Hathcyn, because the question of guilt and retribution is here less clear cut, and it is finally resolved, not by the aggrieved party, but by fate.

The operation of fate, or Wyrds, while it may appear to be random, is nevertheless somehow perceived as directly relating to the affairs of men, so that a causal

connection may be made between two separate events in time which satisfies man's own sense of the significance of his own actions, whether the resolution is favourable or devastating. Thus, Hathcyn's accidental killing of Herebeald, an apparently random act of fate, sets off a chain of events, starting with the withdrawal of Hrethel and his early demise, and leading to an exchange of hostilities during which the "innocent" killer is himself killed (2472-85).

The incident also provides a classical motivation for Beowulf's impending doom, for he can be seen to be the victim of a fate set in motion by events with which he had no moral connection, in the same way that Oedipus was the victim of a curse precipitated by a crime for which he had no moral responsibility. The inevitable death of Beowulf could be explained as a predestined calamity that was the natural result of the unavenged blood-guilt which preceded his ascendance to the throne of the Geats.

Herebeald and Hathcyn were Beowulf's uncles, as was Higelac, their brother, who later became king. Beowulf himself came to the throne by rightful ascendancy upon the death of Heardred, Higelac's son, and, having no sons, he would then have to be the recipient of the ultimate vengeance unleashed by the fates. His hamartia, or error, in accepting



the cup, could then be seen as the fulfillment of fate. In recollecting this long-ago incident, Beowulf does seem rather more overwhelmed with a sense of man's vulnerability to fate than he is judgemental of Hathcyn, whose brother, Higelac, rewarded Eofor for avenging his killing (2484-89).

However, although in recollecting this incident Beowulf does raise the possibility that fate has played a large role in his meeting with the Wurm, his determination to continue in spite of the opposing evidence of fate, or "accident," which seems to negate all man's possibilities for freedom, suggests that he has not completely accepted the finality of fate, and, in fact, that he continues to believe in the possibility that his actions have been, and will be, meaningful. It is on this premise that the notion of final guilt rests, and it may be partly for this reason that guilt is a necessary component of self-actualisation.

It may also be, as Kant insists, that a man of good will, such as Beowulf was, is inherently good, and should not, therefore, have cause to feel guilty. If such a man performs an act which, by his own precepts, is right, then he is himself in a position of right: it is intent, or motivation, that identifies man with evil. The accidental killing of Herebeald by Hathcyn, which parallels the tragic death of Balder through an error on the part of his blind brother,

Hodur,<sup>270</sup> introduces intent as a necessary element in establishing moral guilt, and separates, in a primary way, the act from the doer. This distinction is made clearer by contrast with the story of Cain, a natural one in view of their common theme of fratricide. Although the story of Cain indicates that man can have an evil intent, the stories of Hathcyn and Hodur indicate that it is possible for evil to operate through man, without being intrinsic to him. This perception lies behind Beowulf's deathbed speech, which is not a confession, but a self-justification:

fīftig wintra;	Ic ȝās lēode hēold
ymbesittendra	næs sē folccyning,
þē mec gūȝwinum	ȝnig ȝāra,
egesān ȝeon.	grētan dorste,
mālgescēafta,	Ic on earde bād
ne sōhte searonȝas,	hēold mīn tela,
āȝa on unriht.	nē mē swōr fela
feorhbennum sēoc	Ic ȝas ealles mȝg
forȝam me wītan ne ȝearf	gefēan habban;
morȝorbealo māga,	Waldend fīra
līf of līce.	þonne mīn sceaceȝ
	(2732b-43a)

I protected this people  
For fifty years; there was no king  
Of any of the nations round about  
Who dared come against me with swords  
Or terrorize me with threats.  
In my home I awaited  
What destiny might bring, held my own well,  
Sought no treacherous quarrels, nor swore any  
Oaths unjustly. Sick with mortal wounds,  
I may take solace in all this  
Because the Ruler of men will have no cause  
To accuse me of the murder of kinsmen  
When my life departs from my body.



By his own standards, Beowulf has behaved as he ought, and in a certain sense it is anachronistic to superimpose upon his being the mores of the Christian poet.<sup>271</sup> However, it would be short-sighted to overlook the Christian implications of Beowulf's acts, because, to the poet, these implications are all-important.

In Christian terms, it might be said that Beowulf is guilty of two of the "Seven Deadly Sins" so despised by later medieval society. In a Christian interpretation such as the translation of Raffel, the implication is that Beowulf was guilty of the sin of greed, or avarice:

Swā hit oð dōmes dæg      dīope benemdon  
þēodnas mære,      þā ȝæt þær dydon,  
þæt se secg wære      synnum scildig,  
hergum geheaȝerod,      hellbendum fæst,  
womnum gewitnad,      sē ȝone wong strude,  
neafne goldhwate      gearwor hæfde  
Āgendes ēst      ær gescēawod.  
Wiglāf maȝelode,      Wihstānes sunu:  
'Oft sceall eorl monig      ānes willan  
wræc ādrēogan,      swa ūs geworden is.      (3069-78)

So the spell was solemnly laid, by men  
long dead; it was meant to last till the day  
Of judgment. Whoever stole their jewels,  
Their gold, would be cursed with the flames of hell,  
Heaped high with sin and guilt, if greed  
Was what brought him: God alone could break  
Their magic, open His grace to man.

Then Wiglaf spoke, Wextan's son:

"How often an entire country suffers  
On one man's account! That time has come to us... 272

However Raffel's "argument" seems to require a suppression of the poet's own clear statement in this passage that næfne goldhwæte gearwor hæfde/ Agendes est ~~ær~~ gesceawod (3074-75) which Clark Hall translates as "Yet by no means too eagerly had Beowulf before gazed upon its owner's treasure of gold with the curse on it,"<sup>273</sup> a line which seems clearly to indicate that Beowulf's desire for the treasure was not disproportionate. I am also inclined to reject avarice as a possible motive for Beowulf, if only because this sin itself is so conventional, commonplace, and unfitting to the nature of the hero himself. Beowulf does not display any evidence of avariciousness, either in Heorot, or later, at Higelac's court, when he presents his gifts from Hrothgar to his king and Wealhtheow's gift of the Brising necklace to Hygd. Loyalty, generosity, and the spirit of comitatus take precedence over material things for him, and in those instances in which the material object becomes important, it is as a symbol, not as an object, that it becomes so.

It might more persuasively be argued that Beowulf was susceptible to the sin of pride, for the element of pride is essential to the character of the hero. Beowulf's pride was an important and highly visible element of his presence, and, therefore, far more liable to perversion than a trait he hardly possessed in the first place. That corruption has,



in fact, taken place, is implicit in the story of ~~Dæ~~ghrefn, which he himself relates following his reflections on the repercussions of fratricide that followed the killing of Herebeald. Through the story of ~~Dæ~~ghrefn, Beowulf is shown, by the facts of his own life, to be guilty of sin in the Christian sense, for, in both action and intent he, like Cain, displayed a murderous pride.

In fighting ~~Dæ~~ghrefn, Beowulf was not pitting his superhuman strength against a supernatural (or natural) power of evil, but against a fellow human being who was not evil, who was, in fact, as Beowulf acknowledges, apeling on elne, "a noble in every respect" (2506). The fight was ostensibly undertaken to protect Higelac's treasure, the breostweorðung (2504) (most probably the Brisingamen), a motive that might be interpreted as avarice; but we may speculate that, in wishing to retain the Brising necklace at the cost of ~~Dæ~~ghrefn's life Beowulf was really acting out of a desire for revenge, with the intention of saving Higelac's reputation from the total ignomy implied in the loss of the treasure - in short, out of pride, both on his own behalf and that of his dead lord. While this was hardly an exalted motive for such a slaughter, it was not, it appears, a source of conscious shame to Beowulf - on the contrary, it, too, was a source of pride: Beowulf claims to have slain

Dæghrefn for duge~~um~~ "for glory" (2501). However, Jung notes that although the law and the church are concerned only with sins of which the individual is conscious, "nature is not at all lenient with unconscious sinners. She punishes them just as severely as if they had committed a conscious offence."<sup>274</sup> It is exactly because Beowulf was a man of good will that the subconscious awareness of something "wrong" should haunt his conscience; and the final significance of this incident is established by the fact that Beowulf mentions it at all at such a crucial point in his life. Whether he consciously perceived it in these terms or not, Beowulf cannot have been oblivious to the patently unheroic element of his slaughter of Dæghrefn, for, after that fight he seemed to reject his own particular source of strength, his hildegrap (2507), in favour of the sword that, as Klaeber infers, he "won" from Dæghregn.<sup>275</sup> It may have been at this point that he began, subconsciously and symbolically, to carry the burden of this sin, to question the precepts of the heroic ideal, and to doubt the validity of judging his own interests as inherently morally superior to the interests of another. From an objective standpoint, in fact, it might appear that in that battle it was Dæghrefn, not Beowulf, who was fighting on the side of right, because Higelac and Beowulf were invaders in the land of the



Frisians, on an errand of wlenco, "pride, reckless daring" (1206). Thus, in motivation and in action Beowulf is here associated with the exercise of negative aggression, the crime of Grendel and his ancestor, Cain. The symbol of that association is Nægling, to which he refers in his attempt to psyche himself up for the impending battle:

'...ond swā tō aldre sceall  
sæcce fremman þenden þis sweord þolað,  
þæt mec ær ond sið, oft gelæste,  
syððan ic for dugeðum Dæghrefne wearð  
tō handbonan, Hūga cempa;-  
nalles hē ðā frætwe Frēscyning[e],  
brēostwearðunge bringan mōste,  
ac in campe gecrong cumbles hyrde,  
peling on elne; ne wæs ecg bona,  
ac him hildegrāp heortan wylmas,  
bānhūs gebræc. Nū sceall billes ecg,  
honb ond heard sword ymb hord wigan.' (2498b-2509)

And so through life I shall do battle, while this sword lasts, which has often done me service, early and late, since by valour I became the slayer of Dæghrefn, champion of the Hugas. He could not bring the adornments, the breast-decoration, to the Frisian king; but he, the standard-bearer, sank in battle, a noble in prowess. Nor was the sword his slayer, but my unfriendly grasp crushed his body, the surgings of his heart.

Now shall weapon's edge, hand and hard sword, do battle for the hoard. (Clark Hall)

The name, Dæghrefn, itself invokes the spirit of Cain, for the hrefn, "raven" is a symbol of Cain, as well as a symbol of evil, and the idea of "day" seems to imply

a bringing to light (i.e. consciousness) of evil. *Dæghrefn* may thus be the focus of the evil in Beowulf's own psyche, a long ago encounter that remains with him, never fully assimilated or comprehended until his dying day, when his trophy of this ignoble conquest fails him in his time of need. In this sense, *Nægling* acts as a symbol of Beowulf's own synbysig soul.

Yet, although his soul is indeed "confused by sin," Beowulf, in his instinctive linking of sword and treasure, shows that he is aware of its existence, and of its necessary relationship to the divine form represented by the treasure hoard for which he must fight. This awareness of the existence of his soul as an active psychic entity perhaps began in the Merewife's cave with his vision of the magic sword.

The bringing to consciousness of the archetype of Soul, a process which Yeats, in his "Dialogue of Self and Soul,"<sup>277</sup> sees as a form of dialectic, is an important function of the Ego, for Soul, as Jung has defined it, is the "inner personality"<sup>278</sup> which is correlative to the outer personality of the Persona. Just as the Persona is the characteristic attitude that an individual turns towards society, so the Soul, or the Anima, is turned



towards the psychic processes of the inner world.<sup>279</sup>

The identification of the Persona as an incomplete personality generates a process of self-examination that leads to a growing awareness of a necessarily complementary personality which resides on the other side of consciousness, in the Unconscious, because this personality manifests itself when the integrity of the whole organism is threatened, as in the unconscious realm of the Merewife. The Soul, or the Anima, bears the same relationship to the Self that the Persona does to the Ego: it identifies with, and participates in the nature of, that central psychic entity.<sup>280</sup>

It has been contended that the sword which Beowulf carried into battle is a symbol of his Soul, and, as a representative of the swords found in the treasure hoard the sword does participate in the nature of the treasure, which stands as a symbol of God, or the Self. There may seem to be some inconsistencies in this interpretation arising from the general understanding of the Anima as an intrinsically feminine entity, more properly represented in a man's psyche (though not in a woman's) by a less phallic symbol such as, most appropriately, the cup stolen by the slave which provides Beowulf's first vision of the treasure. However, the image of the Soul as Anima, in which the female, or feminine, symbol is seen as a mystic guide reflects only a part of the archetypal complex of Soul.

The partial vision of the treasure hoard afforded by the cup is a passive one, and the Soul-image is incomplete without the driving energy needed to make the vision a reality. This energy is provided by Nægling.

The sword represents that energetic aspect of Soul which is not present in its Anima incarnation - one might almost say its "masculine" side, bearing in mind its patronymic suffix, "-ing,"<sup>281</sup> and the phallic symbolism of the sword as weapon. This energetic element is vital to the function of the Soul, for it is its purpose to act most specifically in the service of the religious instinct to change and transform the whole organism, a process which must be effected by the breaking down of existing patterns, by mortifying the flesh, and by engaging and extending the will of its possessor.

As the Soul represents the actual desire of the Unconscious for a god, as well as an aspect of that divinity which the Ego can admit as a possibility within its own range of awareness, it may be the Soul which, in seeking conscious, or objective, validation of its own psychic disposition, is compelled either to deny the phenomenological evidence of death as applicable to psyche, or to transmute the physical reality of death into a psychical experience of transcendence.

The active nature of this psychic drive, its properties



of divinity, and its iconoclastic energy seem to be apotheosized in the magic sword by means of which Beowulf overcomes the threat of annihilation at the hands of the Merewife. The magical nature of that particular sword seems clearly to point towards a power greater than itself, of which the sword is both the agent and an image. However, even that sword was vulnerable to the power of evil, and it wasted away in the corrosive blood of Grendel; for just as the sword, whether magical or mundane, carries death as its corollary, the Soul, like the Persona, has a dark shadow: sin. The Platonic notion of the "plastic soul," which postulates that the soul will take the shape of its psychic environment, informs the development of this idea, for we may note that Unferth's sword, perhaps "deformed" by his discordant and negative psyche, is of no use to Beowulf, while Nægling, Beowulf's own sword, fails to overcome the dragon, and breaks at the ultimate moment:

	Nægling forberst,	
geswāc æt sæcce	sweord Bīowulfes	
gomol ond grægmæl.	Him þæt gifeðe ne wæs,	
þæt him irenna	ecge mihton	
helpan æt hilde;	wæs sīo hond tō strong,	
sē ðe mēca gehwane	mīne gefræge	
swenge ofersōhte,	þonne hē to sæcce bæc	
wæpen wund[r]um heard;	næs him wihte ðe sēl.	
þa wæs þeodsceaða	þridan sīðe,	
frēcne fýrdraca	fēhða gemyndig,	
ræde on ðone rōfan,	þā him rūm āgeald,	
hāt ond heaðogrim,	heals ealne ymbefēng	
biteran bānum;	he geblōdegod wearð	
sāwuldrīore,	swāt yðum wēoll.	(2680b-93)

Nægling snapped! Beowulf's old, grey-hued sword failed him in the fray. It was not granted to him that iron blades should help him in the fight. The hand was too strong which, so I have heard, by its stroke overstrained every sword, when he bore to the fray a weapon wondrous hard; it was none the better for him.

Then a third time the people's foe, the dread fiery dragon, was intent on fighting. He rushed upon the hero, when occasion favoured him, hot and fierce in battle, and enclosed his whole neck between his sharp teeth; he was bathed in life-blood - the gore rushed out in streams. (Clark Hall)

With the breaking of Nægling, Beowulf is totally vulnerable to the dragon, which here represents the animal nature of the Unconscious. Its poisonous bite takes the battle onto an entirely new level, on which the Ego is exposed to the full power of the Unconscious, a power that includes the will to death.

The bite of the dragon is a ritual requirement of the archetype of transformation, a pattern of creative change which began for Beowulf when his decision to undertake the battle was made. Although this archetypal pattern may arise at any point when an "unsatisfactory psychic situation must be replaced with a satisfactory one,"<sup>282</sup> it is of particular relevance to the aims of the religious instinct, which crowns the psychological process of individuation with an out-reaching desire for transcendence. The dragon, as the representative of Beowulf's own animal nature, may



be perceived, from a religious perspective, as the final inhibitor of his personal transcendence; the necessity of enduring the bite of the dragon, without identifying with it (and thus becoming possessed by it, as in the case of the werewolf) and without running away, <sup>283</sup> seems to parallel the necessary meeting of both consciousness and the Unconscious with the inevitable fact of death, embodied as the Wurm.

The obvious identification of the Wurm as the embodiment of death in Beowulf is, however, complicated by the revelation that the same fate which has drawn Beowulf towards the treasure is operative upon the Wurm as well:

(ho)r(d on) hrusan,	He gesecean sceall
waraꝥ wintrum frōd;	þær hē hæðen gold
	ne byð him wihte ȝȳ sēl. (2275b-78)

He was fated to seek out the hoard under the earth, where, old in winters, he must keep watch over the heathen gold, - and be not one whit the better for it. (Clark Hall)

Since both are fated to die in the struggle for the treasure, it is equally true that, while the Wurm may embody death for Beowulf, the converse is also true. Beowulf is also frod, "old" (2209), had ruled his people for fiftig

wintra, "fifty winters" (2209) and the wæpen wund[r]um heard;/ næs him wihte ðe sel, "The weapon wondrous hard (was) none the better for him" (2687).

Because of this integral identification, it is suggested that the Wyrm is a mirror image of man's own nature, and most particularly of that element in man which is perceived to be the cause of his own death, not just of the body, but also of the spirit. As such, it reflects the negative aspects of man's duality.

Man, as Erich Fromm has suggested, is essentially of a paradoxical nature, "half-animal, and half symbolic."<sup>284</sup> On the one hand, he is a creator, with a mind that can contemplate itself, its being in the world, and the possibility of greater being. On the other hand, as Ernest Becker uncompromisingly observes, man is "a worm, and food for worms."<sup>285</sup> This devastating paradox, which affirms man's god-like attributes, yet weds them to the primordial slime of his physical nature, is considered by Saint Paul<sup>286</sup> to be the result of man's fall into sin, which is itself characterised by the tendency to dwell too much in the body, and to place too much value upon physical, or material things.

As the archetypal form of man's sensual and material nature, the dragon is, and must be, a terrifying figure, for the first and last reality of all physical being



is its subjection to the final law of nature: death. In this aspect, the Wyrn is a living death which, like Jormungand, the "world serpent" of Norse myth,<sup>287</sup> grows larger and fatter sustained by nothing more than the certain knowledge of its own inevitable fulfillment. The poet's picture of the Wyrn, nacod niðdraca, "the naked, malicious dragon" (2273), emphasises this malevolent sensuality, and its mindless attachment to the treasure reveals its nature to be materialistic, a system of value based entirely upon physical considerations. In this sense, the Wyrn is the "body of sin"<sup>288</sup> into which man's soul may plunge to its destruction, as did Nægling.

This complex, crucial and inevitable point constitutes a moment of crisis for Beowulf, and signifies the culmination of a process that may be said to have begun with his near-defeat in the Merewife's cave. It was there that he uncovered "an underground lake of guilt in the soul,"<sup>289</sup> a sense of his own vulnerability to an evil so powerful that it defied his will to effect good. It was the knowledge of this evil that caused the hart, a symbol of the pure soul, to give up its life rather than expose its spirit to the corruption of the dismal mere. But Beowulf was not a pure spirit, he was a man, albeit a superior sort of man, and the life of a man involves the risk, and the necessity, of exposure to evil, as the poet himself observes:

lēofes ond lāpes                      Fela sceal gibīdan  
on ƿyssum windagum                sē þe longe hēr  
   worolde brūceð!    (1060b-62)

He must experience much of good and evil who  
labours long here in the troubled days of this world!

When Beowulf arrived at Earnesness, he had already passed through a lifetime of such experiences, and had resolved the struggle with himself touched off by his sudden awareness of the awful meaning of the dragon. He arrived upon that battlefield as a Hero, not as the complexity of fear, weakness, and desire that characterized him as a man among men. These things seemed to fall away from his spirit, his fears (though not his regrets) left him, and the impending battle became once again a clearly defined battle between good and evil, leofes ond laðes, "the loved and the loathed" (2910, cf.1061).

This was because his consciousness had committed itself to its ideal in a supreme act of will, mastering its own desires in submission to a higher Will which it had affirmed as good. In the service now of this unconscious (or it may be supremely conscious) Will, the Hero is bound by his identification with ego-consciousness to the extent that he must fight for good; but he is relieved of the burden to decide between good and evil, and simply



becomes Good, in a final justification by faith. Nevertheless, he is not the same Beowulf of his earlier battles, the confident young warrior who plunged into the fray without a backward glance. This time, he knows his own weaknesses and the power of his adversary, and reveals a need for protection. The Hero has been changed by consciousness from an infantile personality to the mature manifestation of the archetype, the Old Wise Man. This late form of the Hero archetype seems to add the powers of consciousness to those of the Unconscious in its function as the "archetype of meaning"<sup>290</sup> and the possibility of this conjunction may itself be a part of the contents of that meaning.

It is the active sense of Self that inspires the Hero archetype, but it is effective self-knowledge that influences his development into the Old Wise Man, who is often viewed as a manifestation of the Self.<sup>291</sup> Self-knowledge is a function of ego-consciousness, in which objective fact may not be overlooked. Accordingly, Beowulf does not disdain the use of every weapon, as he did in his battle with Grendel; nor does he take a sword at the submissive request of a humiliated foe, as if only to spare him further embarrassment, as he did on the occasion of his battle with the Merewife. In his final conflict, he acknowledges the realities: that he is old, that the dragon breathes fire, that the fight is uneven,

that he might not win. Accordingly, he equips himself with a special means of defence: an iron shield, a creative innovation at a time when linden-wood shields were standard issue; and a sword, the symbolic representation of the energetic qualities of his own soul, which in a final analysis, may stand for the active manifestation of his faith. When ~~Nægling~~ fails, it may be that Beowulf's faith, too, falters, leaving him vulnerable to the fears and doubts that are natural to a consciousness rooted in animal nature.

The name, ~~Nægling~~, evokes two associations, one "pagan," the other Christian. In the first instance, the name recalls the mythical vessel, Naglfar (so-called because it was made out of the nails of dead men) which carried the forces of evil to Ragnarok.<sup>292</sup> In the second, the translation of nægling to "nail" or, perhaps, "son of nail;" seems to provide an association with the Crucifixion, when Christ, the Son of God and Man, was nailed onto a Cross. While the former seems most clearly associated with evil, and the latter with good, in actuality both images are ambiguous, in the sense that they may be images of hope or despair, depending upon the perspective of the beholder: the battle of Ragnarok prepares the way for a beautiful new world and the rebirth of Balder, while the act of crucifixion itself is a measure of the evil in the hearts of men.



Ambiguity confounds consciousness, and the awareness that the Soul can be possessed by evil (mān), as well as inspired by good (god), generates in the Ego a doubt that undermines the most heroic efforts of man in his attempt to affirm the over-riding power of good. As even Christ was subject to doubt in his final hours on the Cross, so Beowulf's doubts, both ideological and personal, must rise up to overwhelm him, and to render him temporarily impotent.

The battle with the Wurm is the most difficult battle of Beowulf's life because of these doubts, because he can no longer be sure, as he needs to be, that he is in a position of right, and that God is working through him.

In his slaughter of Dæghrefn, Beowulf has shown that he has not always fought on the side of right, either from an ethical or a moral standpoint. But there is a sense in which this positioning was unavoidable, given the factors of human nature. Sin, and the guilt that is its emotional concomitant, are perceived by the Christian poet to be integral to that human nature. When Nægling, the symbol of Beowulf's human, and therefore imperfect, soul, fails him, it fails him, as the poet says, because his hand, the symbol of his humanity, was to strong.

It might also be suggested that, for a man of heroic nature it is generally more difficult to stand up for self

than for others, if only because he can never be sure that his subjective interpretation of a situation might not be false, and that he is not fighting for selfish purposes. This final self-questioning, or self-doubt, would not occur to those whose dominant instinct is for self-preservation, just as such people would be unlikely, as were the cowardly retainers, to assist another at any risk to themselves. Yet, the element of self-preservation is integral to the human condition, and necessary for physical survival. The dilemma associated with this conflict seems to arise from the value one comes to place upon self-interest as opposed to the interest of another. This conflict is at the heart of Christian theology, which affirms, in the action of Christ, the transcendent value of love, expressed as the greater concern for others than for self.

The Christian schema, which ostensibly removed the burden of "original sin" and erased the basis of man's guilt by the atonement of Christ, by that same exemplary act effectively installed it as a necessary component of individual redemption. If we are to maintain that Beowulf is the product of a truly Christian consciousness we must acknowledge that Beowulf's heroism was, in essence, modeled along the lines of Christian heroism, and that he was created with reference to the ideal of Christian heroism



exemplified by Christ. In that sense, his final battle with the dragon, the archetypal form of evil, enacts a pattern of religious transformation, the essential elements of which are an acceptance of primary guilt on behalf of himself and his people, a sacrifice of his physical being to an ideal of cosmic heroism, and through the attainment of the treasure a final fusion with God, or the Self, which, as the image of God in man, is the archetype of his own immortality.

In this sense, Beowulf must be a Christ figure. But in that same sense, Christ is Himself an archetypal Hero, because the pattern He followed was the same pattern of rebirth set down by mythological heroes from many cultural traditions.<sup>293</sup> The aim of this pattern is the transformation of the individual consciousness onto a plane of life not bounded by its individuality, and the realisation of the "hidden immortal within the mortal man,"<sup>294</sup> exemplified, as Jung affirms, by Christ Himself.<sup>295</sup>

The notion of immortality, like the notion of God, may be said to arise from "primary data"<sup>296</sup> an a priori idea, or form, which exists in the Unconscious mind. Whether this idea is the result of psychological "wish-fulfillment," or an introjection of phenomenological

evidence gleaned from observation of the life patterns in the seasonal cycles (the grain of wheat that "dies" in the winter, and is "reborn" in the spring), or whether these psychological and physical patterns themselves reveal the working of a metaphysical design that exists intrinsically in every entity, as Saint Paul suggests (1 Cor. 15:35-42), the desire for, one might almost say, the urge towards immortality is an unconscious factor which has burst into man's consciousness by the kinesis of the religious instinct. In the primitive consciousness of the pre-Christian Teutonic world this essentially religious desire was interpreted pragmatically as a desire for fame, "immortality on the lips of men." But, in the highly advanced Christian consciousness, the symbology of this primal desire may approach more nearly to the Unconscious intent in its envisioning of immortality on ~~æs~~ Waldendes wære, "in the keeping of God" (3109). The Beowulf poet incorporates both ideas as reflections of man's theological being when Beowulf fights against the Wyrme, the projected symbol of his annihilation and death, to win both fame and the wyrmhord, which, as the objective counterpart of the sawle hord (2422), has intimations of both death and immortality.



In their symbolic forms of the sword and the unseen treasure (cf. 3073-75), the Soul and the "hidden immortal" are related in the same sense as are subject and object - that is, the final meeting with God is the goal of the archetype of Soul, just as the attainment of the treasure is the object of action on the part of the sword. Yet in another sense, suggested by the poetic construct, sawle hord, (which, in accordance with the ancient perception of the soul as a physical entity, may have been located in the breosthord, "the strongbox of his breast," or, arguably, as the Anglo-Saxons were vague as to the physiological location of thought and feeling, "the storehouse of his mind") God, or the Self, is the most perfect form of the Soul, which, in its energetic phase, is separated from, and yearning towards, its own perfection in God as the absolute subject of all experience. Once this has been attained, and the faith which is the emotional and energetic significance of the sword has been fulfilled, faith itself is rendered obsolete, as the swords found in the treasure hoard were themselves omige þurhetone, "rusted and eaten through" (3049). What then remains is the distillation of the soul image in the object of faith itself.

The absolute energetic reality of which the sword is a transitory (thus corroded) image is found in the eternal image of the treasure. As an object of intrinsic and lasting

value, the treasure incorporates that aspect of the Anima which constitutes the projection of the soul's striving for an ideal, and thus it acquires "that sensual libido which has hitherto adhered to the concrete object."<sup>297</sup> This infusion of psychic energy imparts a numinous quality to the treasure, which may be felt to have intimations of metaphysical significance, or truth.

The designation of value is a function of feeling, an emotionally-toned function of human comprehension; but the recognition of value implies an objective quality of the thing in itself. When both factors co-exist, the object becomes a very powerful symbol, in contemplation of which the mind is finally led towards an idea of a transcendent nature.

The numinous quality of precious stones and metals has long fascinated the human mind. When materials which are perceived to have intrinsic worth are transformed, through the creative power of man, into works of art, this power increases, for such objects then represent a fusion of matter and spirit which both expresses, and points towards, a higher possibility for the matter and spirit that constitute the human form. As all art is, in this sense a religious function, so is the work of art itself ultimately a religious symbol, and its value arises from its transcendental intimations.



That the treasure should stand as a symbol of the highest good for Beowulf is not, therefore, inappropriate, nor does it indicate avariciousness in his nature. Such a trait, inherent in the nature of the dragon, represents the perversion of the treasure's symbolic meaning. The dragon's intimate connection, or obsession, with the treasure, in its most superficial form, reveals the fundamental error of materiality as a system of value based upon the purely physical, or sensual. It was out of a similar compulsion that Milton's Satan set about appointing his hellish court with the gold and jewels that symbolised, and eventually came to replace, the love and light of God's kingdom. We are told that, although the Wyrn held total control of the treasure, ne byð him wihte ðy sel, "he was not one whit the better for it" (2277); just so is physical man, without the illumination of his spiritual nature, reduced to meaningless and joyless attachments to objects which, in themselves, have a lesser value than that of their metaphysical design. Moreover, although they are then perversions of value, these objects themselves acquire power by virtue of the subject's projections, and the subject himself, like the dragon, becomes an object in the service of a lesser entity. It is this which constitutes enslavement for the Wyrn. He did not choose the treasure, it chose him, by fulfilling the

criteria of value arising from his innate materiality.

Although the treasure was also the object of desire for Beowulf, it was so for a diametrically opposed reason, because Beowulf, as Hero, is acting in direct opposition to the forces operating through the Wyrn. (This is a fundamental aspect of his heroic nature, the function of which is to act on behalf of the greater good of the whole psycho-physical organism. As such, the Hero's alliance must be with conscious values, when those conscious values have, through experience and intuition, been perceived to accurately reflect the overall goal of the Unconscious.) In this particular situation, the Unconscious, by the projection of the Old Wise Man archetype, with whom Beowulf ultimately becomes identified, sanctions the validity of the treasure as a symbol of value, and because of the nature of this archetype, as the "archetype of meaning"<sup>298</sup> itself, this value is shown to be of a spiritual, rather than a material, nature.

In its physical and its symbolic properties the treasure itself contains both spiritual and material elements, which parallel the dual nature of man, thus making it a natural focus of man's higher and lower desires. These elements are contained symbolically in the treasure's dual features of gold and iron. The description of the treasure, the iumonna gold, "gold of



the ancestors" (3052) includes mention of helm monig/eald ond omig, "many helmets old and rusty" (2763-64) and dyre swyrd/omige purhetone, "precious swords, rusted and eaten through" (3048-49) in addition to the gold flagons, dishes, armlets, jewels and banners, so we may assume that, since rust is a property of iron, this base metal was welded to the gold which, because it does not rust, has "intimations of immortality." Iron, the metal symbolic of, and essential to, the age of Beowulf, epitomises the values of his society and also symbolises the decay to which the physical body is subject, linking it by implication with man's imperfections, manifest in the need for weapons, and, indeed, tools (for, until his expulsion from Eden, man had no need to toil). The respect and awe accorded a semi-legendary figure such as Weland, the smith, in such a culture is in marked contrast to the slightly ridiculous aspect of this same sort of figure in the distant and idealised Age of Gold (Hephaestus, for example). In the Iron Age, the smith had a status almost approaching that of a shaman, not only because he was foremost among the tradesmen, but also because of the seemingly magical properties of iron, especially its mysterious magnetic power.<sup>299</sup> Nevertheless, this power was often viewed as diabolical, especially in Christian folklore, in which craftsmen who worked with iron were identified with

the devil, because of the flames. The Christian poet of Beowulf may have been aware that the art of making weapons and tools was first taught, according to Judeo-Christian tradition and Holy Scripture, by Tubal-cain, a descendant of the fratricidal Cain, who, acting upon the basest promptings of his aggressive instinct, may be said to be the father of strife in the human race. Iron, then, seems to represent the refinement, and the implementation, of man's lower nature, the Beast, which, born in the body, will die with the body. It is partly for this reason that the ireнна ecge can never be of use to Beowulf.

Gold, on the other hand, expresses the distillation of man's highest aspirations. The most precious of metals, it is the materialisation of the summum bonum. As the sun's image in the earth, gold may be said to be a reflection of divinity, for the sun has long been an image of God. One of the three gifts of the Magi to the Christ child, gold also symbolises royalty - not inherited rank, but inherent nobility of spirit, the true meaning of kingship. Beowulf himself displayed this quality, rising from obscure origins as the son of an outlaw to become, by natural design (or selection) the leader of a powerful nation. As well, Beowulf's natural royalty is revealed in his actions, especially when those actions are compared to



those of Hrothgar, who had only inherited, not earned, his high office.

By virtue of its connection with the Nativity, and extended by its use in the making of rings, particularly the marriage ring, gold symbolises both love and loyalty. To Beowulf and his people the giving and receiving of gold rings represented more than the childish, acquisitive pleasures of primitives; it signified an exchange of vows of fidelity between a true king and his true subjects, in the spirit of comitatus. Yet, while this was the actual meaning of the giving of treasure, it can be seen that over the course of the poem gold changes dramatically from beneficent to maleficent in aspect, indicating that this symbolic meaning could, all too easily, degenerate, and the gold become all-important in itself, as the hoarding of treasure and the practice of plundering a defeated tribe's treasure store suggests. For, while the giving of treasure indicates love, the taking of treasure implies the exercise of power, which is a perversion of love, in the sense that the will to power results from an inverted, or repressed Eros.<sup>301</sup> While Beowulf, in his desire to give the treasure to his people, is removed to a degree from this charge, it is nevertheless true that he intended first of all to take it from the Wyrm, who bears the projection of "the destructive power

of passion conjoined with the will to rule." <sup>302</sup> The attachment of this anti-force to earthly treasure, as the Wurm is attached to the treasure in Beowulf, represents the final perversion of love from a life-creating power to a totally destructive force that seeks to reduce all spirit to dead matter. Beowulf is himself subject to this perversion of love by virtue of his intrinsic association with the Wurm, but it is a possibility of his being that he fights against with every bit of power he possesses. This power includes the power that his consciousness has acquired through previous encounters with his Unconscious; the power of the Ego as well as the powers of the Hero and the Old Wise Man. Without doubt Beowulf is a supraordinate being even at this, the nadir of his life, senex et iuvenis simul, an "old man and a youth at once," <sup>303</sup> combining the spirit of youth with the wisdom of age. In this sense, Wiglaf, too, may stand as a symbol of Beowulf's own youthful and innocent strength, and the two together make possible the transcendent moment in which Beowulf is empowered to draw his knife and sacrifice that element of his animal nature which prevents him from attaining the treasure of immortality:



Ðā gēn sylf cyning  
gewēold his gewitte, wæll-seaxe gebræd  
biter ond beaduscearp, þæt hē on byrnan wæg;  
forwrāt Wedra helm wyrm on middan.  
Fēond gefyldan - ferh ellen wræc -,  
ond hī hyne þā bēgen ābroten hæfdon,  
sibæfelingas; swylc sceolde secg wasan,  
þegn æt fearfe! Þæt þām þēodne was  
siðas[t] sigehwīle sylfes dædum,  
worlde geweorces. (2702b-11a)

Then the king himself regained control over his senses; he drew the slaughter-knife, keen and deadly sharp, that he wore in his corslet; the protector of the Geats cut through the Wurm in the middle. They had felled the foe - courage had driven out its life. - and they had destroyed it together, the two noble kinsmen; so must man be, a thane in time of need! For the prince, that was the last of his own victorious deeds, the end of his work in the world.

In a creative sense the whole contents of the final battlefield, from the protagonists to the treasure, to the observing consciousness, are one and the same entity, and, as each acts out its psychic role to the end each is assimilated into, and completes, the totality. First the Dragon, killed by the joint efforts of Wiglaf and Beowulf, then the Hero, succumbing to the infusion of poison and the outpouring of his life-blood, seem to melt into one another, and into the Ego which remains long enough to finally envision its ideal in the treasure. Released at last from the suspension of will that is the inevitable result of its powerful attraction to an object which is

equally repulsive (as the treasure, with its curse of the Wyrn, must surely be) the Ego is free to contemplate the object of its desire, to identify with it, and to be at one with it as the pure form of its true values. It is in this sense that the treasure acquires the power of a living religious symbol for Beowulf, a symbol that he himself, by virtue of his own powerful psyche, creates and then transcends in a process of resolution which is ultimately religious in impulse and awareness.

A living, dynamic symbol is "born of man's highest spiritual aspirations and must at the same time spring from the deepest roots of his being,"<sup>304</sup> and this implies a full conjunction of both conscious and unconscious factors in its creation. In Beowulf, these opposites meet in the treasure, and they represent the positive and negative poles of Beowulf's own individual being, which is, nevertheless, firmly rooted in his collective identity.

As the Christian mystics find in the Cross the most perfect symbol which, in its structural and ideological sense contains that tension and suspension of opposites which expresses the inexpressible idea of Christ's transcendence in unsurpassable form,<sup>305</sup> Beowulf finds in the treasure the living symbol of his own complex, and visionary, relationship to his society. His compulsion



to acquire it (as Christ was compelled to be crucified) thus takes on a universal significance, for if he can consciously "acquire" this suspension of opposites, by bringing to consciousness its unconscious contents, he would be gaining for all of mankind [or, as he himself saw it, minum leodum, "for my people" (2797)] a greater understanding, an expanded consciousness, which would move man closer to the ultimate goal of total Consciousness. That goal - whether it is perceived abstractly in terms of the aggressive instinct as immortality, in sexual terms as creative unity, or in religious terms as apotheosis - may only be won individually (hence its psychological name, individuation) but it must be found through collective values, because those values themselves have been established through a series of biological and sociological transformations. For this reason, the symbolism of the treasure had already been established in part by Beowulf's society, just as the symbolism of the Cross had already been established by the social milieu of Christ. Both Beowulf and Christ, moreover, dynamically affected the way in which these familiar symbols were afterwards perceived.

Christ's paradoxical statement that "the last shall be first and the first, last" may, in part, suggest a description, in prophetic terms, of the process of redemption made possible

by the creation and transcendence of symbols of man's unknowing. For a living symbol, in every epoch, "is the best possible expression of what is still unknown,"<sup>306</sup> and this means that it must be at once a product of the highest and lowest minds of that age, in order for it to have collective appeal. For this reason, the "most complex and differentiated mind,"<sup>307</sup> which is alone capable of creating a symbol by giving a shape to its own highest and lowest nature, must, in another sense, have already transcended the need, and the desire, for the symbolic object itself, as, in actuality, Beowulf has done. Yet, the intrinsic power of that symbol as the perfect form of the tension and suspension of opposites which gives rise to this transcendence is established beyond his power to resist. In recognising its value, first for himself, and then for his society, the Hero, as the ideal of the Ego, is compelled to acquire it through a simultaneity of conscious and unconscious effort.

This state of compulsion (or, perhaps, simply, impulsion, in the sense that impulse is the effect of instinct, and it is chiefly through the activation of the religious instinct that this state arises) which constitutes Beowulf's attraction towards the treasure is accompanied by an equal and opposite degree of revulsion and fear generated by the threat to ego-consciousness and life presented by the



Dragon. Both feelings are present as an immediate psychological condition. For the conscious mind of Beowulf, this is an entirely insupportable and potentially immobilising state of being, which can only be overcome by action initiated by the Hero archetype.

The conscious state brought about by the co-existent parity of opposites, affirmed by the Ego's full participation in both, is effectually a suspension of the will,<sup>308</sup> which may be defined as "the amount of psychic energy at the disposal of consciousness."<sup>309</sup> This suspension occurs because the will cannot operate when every motive has an equally strong counter-motive; inertia and regression are the natural results. Since life cannot proceed in inertia, the only possibility is regression, and this, in theory, is what happens in the psyche. The energy of the libido streams back, as Jung says, "to its source,"<sup>310</sup> a change in direction made necessary by the "neutralisation and inactivity of consciousness."<sup>311</sup> This brings about an activity of the Unconscious, "where all the differentiated functions have their common, archaic, root."<sup>312</sup>

Yet, although the intensity of this conflict of opposites has paralysed the Ego in its conscious world, the unconscious counterpart of the Ego, the Self, exists as a continually creative center which generates a new form of psychic activity. The very intensity of conscious-

ness, which is now, as the bite of the dragon confirms, allied to unconsciousness, brings the elemental struggle between the opposites onto a new level, called by Jung the "middle ground."<sup>313</sup> This level is delineated in Beowulf by Earnesness.

The Ego's arrival upon the "middle ground" of psychic experience, like Beowulf's at Earnesness, makes possible its vision of, and identification with the Self as the prototype of its own being. But just as Beowulf cannot see the treasure without first heroically killing the dragon, the Ego's vision is fulfilled only when the elemental conflict between thesis and antithesis has been played out to the finish by the archetypal protagonists of the Hero and the Dragon. The Ego, itself in suspension of will, can be released only with the resolution of the conflict. Until then, it must stand, as it were, helplessly by, while its heroic agent, allied to its most cherished values, fight against their perversion and negation by a "false divinity," a force which consciousness has adjudged evil.

Chief among these values is the ideal of comitatus, the love and loyalty between comrades-in-arms, which has been the chief guide of Beowulf's life. This same ideal, even as he fights, is being corroded by the incursion of the Wyrms when, violating every principle for which Beowulf



is fighting, his twelve companions break ranks and run. As they are hiding in the woods, however, one of them, his nephew, Wiglaf, undergoes a transformative crisis of his own, and, rebuking his comrades for cowardice, returns to fight at Beowulf's side.

The intervention of Wiglaf introduces an emotional element generally missing from the poem as a whole. Although loyalty and respect implicitly forms a large part of the spirit of comitatus to which the warriors subscribe, and although Hrothgar speaks openly of his affection for Beowulf, in no other part of the poem does this feeling translate into action at quite the same level of experience. Even in the case of Beowulf himself, whose fidelity to Higelac, and gratitude to Hrethel, is both referred to, and demonstrated, the degree of commitment is proportionately less because of his near-invulnerability. Wiglaf has no such natural protection that we know of; his risk, and therefore his commitment, is greater.

Whether this extra measure of commitment derived from consanguinity, as the scop suggests (2600-01) or from a sense of right defined by the ideals of comitatus, as Wiglaf himself says (2653) or from a dawning sense of fraternitas, as incorporated in the ideals of Christian brotherhood, as the Christian poet would understand them, the relationship

between Beowulf and Wiglaf seems to epitomise an element that is integral to the religious experience, for it demonstrates the "sense of new energy in union with others, of the breaking down of the barriers of individualism."<sup>314</sup> Through Wiglaf's action, the essentially selfish and introverted pre-occupation of the personal unconscious is mitigated by the validity accorded the Other, the apotheosis of which is found in the Thou-relationship with God, reflected in the importance accorded others in the religious experience.

In his book, The Social Substance of Religion, Gerald Heard places great importance upon the group experience of religion, or brotherhood, and on the necessity for a symbol, or a common object, on which the emotional energies of the group may be focused.<sup>315</sup> For Wiglaf, it is suggested that this "object" was, first of all, Beowulf himself (as, for Peter and the other disciples, it was Christ) but that, by logical extension, it became the object that Beowulf desired, the treasure. By virtue of its antiquity, the treasure fulfills the requirement of a religious symbol that it should link the present with the past, "sustaining the individual's sense of communion...with the ancestors of the tribe, and with all they achieved or willed for their descendants."<sup>316</sup> The ancient treasure and the other ancient objects given prominence in the poem seem to imply the



symbolic process of transfer of value from generation to generation, but Maud Bodkin has observed that "the individual will experience satisfaction and assurance, only when, passing perhaps through conflict and disillusion, he has achieved a sincere\* relation to the values he can assimilate from amongst those which social institutions and traditions offer." <sup>317</sup>

If we construe the treasure to be the image of the divine (as man is made in the image of God, and his Self reflects that image) and further recognise that Beowulf's commitment to his people is a true commitment to his fellow man, we may agree that the values to which Beowulf is faithful unto death are fundamental to Christianity. However, these were not exactly the same values to which he subscribed throughout the course of his dramatic history. He has undergone change and growth.

In the past, Beowulf had owned and employed other "ancient treasures" to which he ascribed symbolic value: the sword Hrunting, the "magic sword," the Brising neck-ring, and his final weapon, ~~Nægling~~. All are described as "ancient," and certainly they all represent a particular value to Beowulf's society, but one which is superseded by Christianity. The failure of Hrunting and ~~Nægling~~, and the dissolving of the lethal blade of the magic sword, seems to point to the final inadequacy of these symbols of

\*emphasis mine

sexuality and aggression as of either symbolic or actual value to Beowulf in his quest for immortality and lof, "fame." The final symbol must be, and is, a religious one.

Although Beowulf's spirit of commitment to his fellow man was evident from the first in his mundgripe, the sign of his triumphant humanity, this commitment derived from, and served, not the idea of immortality in God which is the source and goal of the religious instinct, but the heroic ideal, set down by man himself, of fame and glory, "immortality on the lips of men," an ideal of the Ego.

In the service of this Ego-ideal, the true spirit of human brotherhood was effectively displaced, because, in order to achieve personal glory, Beowulf rejected the assistance of any of his comrades, insisting that it must be ic...ana, "I, alone" (cf. 424-26) who accomplish the victory. In contrast, during his final battle with the fyr-wyrm, he needed, and was granted, the assistance of his fellow man, a need which enhanced, rather than diminished, his human greatness.

With Wiglaf's intervention, Beowulf received confirmation of his ideals, and, at the same time, a sense of grace and hope - redemption - which could not have come without a prior sense of abandonment and despair,



and which is the particular gift of the Christian religion. It therefore represents to Beowulf an expansion of consciousness, in the midst of his supra-conscious battle, which prepares him for his ultimate vision of the Self.

In exchanging his mundgripe for the soul-symbol of the sword, and the sword for the divine image of the treasure, Beowulf is exchanging the temporal for the transcendental, or man for God; and he is also passing symbolically through the three manifestations of the Anthropos in his quest for transformation: body, soul, and finally, pure spirit.<sup>318</sup> In this sense the story of Beowulf represents "the passage of the individual spirit through the agony of conflict with a false divinity to the glory of union with its true values," which is the final goal of the religious instinct.<sup>319</sup>

Wiglaf's importance to Beowulf's increased awareness is indicated not only by the obvious fact that, had he not come to his aid, the bite of the dragon would have had a devastating effect, obviating Beowulf's chance for transcendence, but also, and more importantly, perhaps, because it is Wiglaf who actually chooses out of the treasure hoard those objects that he believes will best represent its meaning and content to Beowulf. Accordingly, he brings back, not iron swords and armour, but golden

dishes and goblets, the anima-objects that stimulated Beowulf's desire for the treasure and effectively led him to it. He also brings Beowulf the golden banner of victory, beacna beorhtost (2777), by the light of which he was himself enabled to see the Hord. This banner proclaims Beowulf's temporal victory, which occasions his prayer of thanksgiving, and also his transcendental victory, the victory of consciousness over the annihilating powers of unconsciousness. Its light is the light of conscious perception, the "light from the East," beorht beacen Godes (569-70), and its promise is total Consciousness, the absolute consciousness of the Self.

The golden objects that Wiglaf brings to fulfill Beowulf's vision represent an abstract idea of value, and, as gold is symbolic of love, it might be suggested that the essence of that value was love, an aspect of divinity from the Christian perspective. This perception of Christian love includes, as an integral and informing component, the idea of brotherhood, or fraternitas.

The importance of fraternitas to both the theme and structure of Beowulf perhaps derives from the precepts of Christian society of the poet, and from the importance of society itself as a fundamental concern of the religious instinct. As an individual derives from, and must relate to, his society, Jung insists that in approaching and



attaining individuation, essentially a solitary journey, the individuant must leave to society something of worth, to replace what he takes from it in undertaking, and completing, the internal process. Perhaps that "something" need only be the example of his own integrity; perhaps it must be hope; perhaps it must be a particular transcendent revelation. When the completion of the psychic life process ends, as it ultimately must, in the silence of death, of what value is that death to the society for whom the life of that individual was so important?

In asking that question of Beowulf, I am reminded of E. O. James' suggestion that the sacrifice of Christ represented a surrendered life which was to be shared by his followers; that it is not the taking, but the giving, of life that is important.<sup>320</sup> It is to be hoped that the ideal for which that life is given be accorded a value in keeping with the value of the surrendered life itself. Can we be asked to believe, with some interpreters, that the "rusted gold" for which Beowulf ostensibly fought represented nothing more than the materialistic values of a pagan world? If so, then Beowulf's followers were wiser than he, for they buried the treasure with their lord, knowing that it was the idea of the treasure, rather than its tangible reality, which was to prove a continuing importance to them, just as it was the memory of Beowulf, his spirit, which was to prove immortal.

Geworhton ȝā	Wedra lēode
hl(æw) on (h)līȝe,	sē wæs hēah ond brād,
(wæ)gliȝendum	wīde g(e)sȝne,
ond betimbredon	on tȝn dagum
beadurōfes bēcn,	bronda lāfe
wealle beworhton,	swā hyt weorȝlicost
foresnotre men	findan mihton.
Hī on beorg dydon	bēg ond siglu,
eall swylce hyrsta,	swylce on horde ær
nīȝhēdige men	genumen hæfdon;
forelēton eorla gestrēon	eorȝan healdan,
gold on grēote,	bær hit nū gēn lifaȝ
eldum swā unnyt,	swā hi(t æro)r wæs. (3156-68)

The people of the Geats raised a mound upon the cliff, which was high and broad and visible from afar by voyagers on sea: and in ten days they built the beacon of the warrior bold in battle.

The remnant of the burning they begirt with a wall in such sort as skilled men could plan most worthy of him. In the barrow they placed collars and brooches - all such adornments as brave-minded men had before taken from the hoard. They left the wealth of nobles to the earth to keep, - left the gold in the ground, where it still exists, as unprofitable to men as it had been before. (Clark Hall)

It seems that his people instinctively recognized that the treasure had a transcendental meaning that is clear only to Beowulf, as the attainment of psychic unity can, ultimately, be experienced only by the individuant himself. What he can, and does, leave them, is the example of his life. The beadurofes becn stands as a visible sign of the actualized life and death of a great, and greatly loved, man; more than that, he lives in their hearts, and in their stories and songs:



Þā ymbe hlāw riodan	hildedēore,
þeþelinga bearn,	ealra twelfe,
woldon (care) cwīðan,	(ond) kyning mænān,
wordgyd wrecan,	ond ymb w(er) sprecan;
eahtodan eorlscipe	ond his ellenweorc
duguðum dēmdon, -	swā hit gedē(fe) bið,
þæt mon his winedryhten	wordum herge,
ferhðum frēoge,	þonne hē forð scile
of lichaman	(laded) weorðan.
Swā begnornodon	Gēata lēode
hlāfordes (hry)re,	heorðgenēatas;
cwædon þæt hē wære	wyruldcyning(a)
manna mildust	ond mon(ðw)se rust,
lēodum līðost	ond lofgeornost. (3169-82)

Then men brave in battle rode round the barrow,  
The sons of princes, twelve in all.  
They lamented their sorrow, mourned their king  
Chanted an elegy, and spoke of the man himself;  
They acclaimed his nobility, and greatly praised  
His brave and manly deeds. So is it fitting  
That man should praise his friend and lord  
In words, and love him in his heart  
When he must be led forth from his bodily home.  
Thus did the people of the Geats, his hearth companions,  
Mourn the death of their lord.  
They said that he was, of the kings of this world  
The mildest and gentlest of men  
Very kind to his people, and most eager for praise.

This is immortality of a certain kind; it is at least a kind of immortality that they can understand, and in part, confer. Whether there is immortality of the soul, or the spiritual body, they still do not know. But they do know that a great man has died in loyalty to a symbol of transcendental value. And, implicit in the concept of the lichama, the "body home" from which Beowulf may be "led forth," as well as in the Christian spirit so gracefully interlaced with the aerial matter of this final passage,

there is an element of hope.

It is Beowulf's testament that allows them to hope, to face coming adversity with the courage imparted by the example of his sacrifice, to affirm his apparently paradoxical values of brotherhood and individual integrity, and perhaps to experience, both personally and collectively, their own redemption and transcendence.



CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF THE HERO

Behold, I shew you a mystery;  
We shall not all sleep, but we shall  
all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling  
of an eye, at the last trump; for  
the trumpet shall sound, and the  
dead shall be raised incorruptible,  
and we shall be changed.

(I Cor. 15:51-52)

Beginning with a funeral by water, and ending with one by fire, the movement of Beowulf seems to be circumscribed by death. The Alpha and Omega of the poem, death stands in apposition to the actualised life of Beowulf as a constant and determining factor of his existence. In the world of Beowulf, death is the gryregiest, "the terrible stranger" (2560), who is, nevertheless, as intimate and personal as life itself.

Death is a problem of man's consciousness. Indeed, it may be that it is the problem of consciousness, in the sense that the awareness of death is peculiar to man, who,



observing the phenomenon in nature and in other men, must finally project its inevitability for himself. It has been postulated that man's whole life is centered upon the "fact" of death, and that all his neuroses and psychoses derive from the attempt of his consciousness to escape from this final fact, to deny its reality.<sup>321</sup> In this sense, it is suggested that death, as a concept, exercises a powerful, and fatal, attraction for consciousness, one which has been crystallized by the poet in his description of the wyrmhord:

Sinc ēaðe mæg,  
gold on grund(e) gumcynnes gehwone  
oferhīgian, hȳde sē ðe wylle! (2764b-66)

Treasure, gold in the earth, can easily get  
the better of any man, hide though he will!

The problem of death is amplified by the awful fact that man can know absolutely nothing about death in itself. Although the poet postulates that the dead journey on Freatan wære (27), on ðas Waldendes (3109), or, perhaps, on fēonda gewæld (808), he must, at the very outset admit that:

Men ne cunnon  
secan tō sōðe, selerædende  
hæleð under heofenum, hwā þam hlæste onfēng. (50-52)

Men do not know, to say as a truth, not the  
counsellors in hall, nor the heroes beneath  
the heavens, who received that cargo.

This absolute mystery is a challenge to man's  
consciousness, as well as a goad to his fear. In  
attempting to solve it, it may be that he is led to  
create philosophical and theological systems out of  
which death emerges as a goal towards which man, as a  
physical and psychic entity, is irresistibly moving.  
The Christian poet of Beowulf, therefore, must see death  
as a positive spiritual advancement, not something to be  
feared, but something to be, quite literally, embraced:

	Wēl bið þam þe mōt	
æfter dēaðdæge	Drihten sēcean	
ond tō Fæder fæpmum	freoðo wilnian!	(186-88)

Well is it for those who, after their death day,  
may seek the Lord, and seek peace in the embrace of  
the Father.

On the other hand, he is fully aware that a man who  
loves life, and lives it fully, is naturally reluctant to  
undertake that sorhful sið. As Jung has observed, "...  
life's cessation, that is, death, can only be acceptable as  
a goal when existence is so wretched that we are glad for



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it to end." Such was the case with Hrethel, whose life  
grew so empty with the death of one son at the hands of  
another that

Hē ȝā mid ƿære sorhge, ƿē him tō sār\_belamp,  
gumdrēam ofgeaf, Godes lēoht geceas; (2468-69)

Then because of this sorrow which had befallen him  
too sorely, he gave up the joys of men; he chose  
the light of God.

This pitiable state was perhaps given its finest ex-  
pression in King Lear:

World, world, O world!  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age. (King Lear, IV,i,10-12)

Edgar's insistence that death is, finally, an act of  
volition, is suggested in Beowulf by the launching of Scyld's  
funeral ship, as if he were going on a journey. The sense  
of a mystical complicity between the individual and his own  
death may be said to derive from physiological fact: the  
body does die, and it is inevitable that the psyche, which  
is based in the body, will share the fate of the body. It  
may be that man's religious instinct transcribes this fact  
into metaphysical terms, attempting to find, or create,

meaning in the apparent paradox of attraction and revulsion. However, although Edgar, tormented beyond endurance by the sight of his father's mutilation, expressed not only the desire of consciousness to have control over death, but the conscious and unconscious idea that death is the result of the manifest evil in the world, his agony, and that of Hrethel, is possibly not generally the case for most men, and was certainly not so for Beowulf, whose life was marked by vigour and triumph to the last, and whose contemplation of his own impending doom filled him with beostrum geþoncum "gloomy thoughts" (2332).

The ambivalence of the poem's attitude towards death does not represent merely the conflict of ego-consciousness with ideology; it expresses as well a conflict within the libido itself, which, at a certain point in the life cycle, seems to be striving forward and backward at the same time.<sup>323</sup> Although the energy of the libido by definition must manifest a constant movement towards life, evolution, and creation (the direct opposite of the negation represented by the fact of death), this same energy, at a certain point, seems to will its own involution. The poet illustrates the dynamic of this psychic bipolarity in his contrast between youth and old age.

In his youth, Beowulf was able to face the fact of death primarily because he saw it as an external power, an



objective form that appears as the deorc deapscua, "the dark shadow of death" (160) who "takes away" (cf. 441, 447, 1491) warriors in the midst of their sensual joy. Such a view is primitive, in the same sense that a child's mentality is primitive, for, although it envisions death with a certain instinctual integrity, one which recognizes both its darkness and its random inevitability, it also sees death as separate from the personal ego. Friends, relatives, lovers, are "taken away" from the individual, who, although he can project from their manifest fate the possibility of his own death, does not, in any real sense, yet confront it as a probability, much less as inevitability.

The death of others, enemies or loved ones, is, in a certain sense, the category into which all known experience of death falls, because death is something that can only be observed in, or reported of, others. As Jung has observed, "It is not the story-teller but death who speaks the final 'consummatum est'."<sup>324</sup> Ultimately, for us, the death of Beowulf, like that of Scyld, is a reported death, and the funerals of both Scyld and Beowulf emphasise this absolute experiential separation, because funerals, while they may take into account the express wishes of the dead, are actually rituals for the living, to exorcise their fear and grief.

From the observation of death in others, the individual moves, as did Beowulf, to the recognition of the possibility of his own inevitable death.<sup>325</sup> For Beowulf, this moment was precipitated by the attack of Grendel's mother, in whose deadly embrace he first experienced despair. He was rescued from that paralyzing fear by the vision of the magic sword, the soul-image by means of which his heroic nature was empowered to reassert itself. But the impact of that moment remained with him, to be advanced by Hrothgar's final exhortation. Death will come, he warns him, and not in some nebulous future, but soon:

Nū is þīnes mægnes blæd  
āne hwīle; eft sōna bið,  
þæt þec ādl oððe ecg eafopes getwæfeð,  
oððe fýres feng, oððe flōdes wylm,  
oððe gripe mēces, oððe gāres fliht,  
oððe atol yldo; oððe ēagena bearhtm  
forsiteð ond forsworceð; semninga bið,  
þæt þec, dryhtguma, dēað oferswýðeð. (1761b-68)

Now shall the fullness of thy strength last for awhile. But soon it shall be that malady or sword shall cut thee off from power, or the embrace of fire or welling of a flood, or onset with the knife, or arrow's flight, or hideous old age. Or brightness of eyes shall diminish and grow dim, and at length it shall be that death shall overpower thee, noble chieftain! (Clark Hall)

To Hrothgar, facing his own death in atol yldo, the relativity of time is thrown into sharp relief, and his



ominous sona is less a cautionary prediction than an expression of the shortness of time, when seen from the opposite end of the continuum. His own time has run its course, and its wear and tear upon the body is painfully evident to him. A controlling theme of the poem, the contrast between youth and age incorporates the temporal and physical elements of phenomenological death, those elements by which it is defined, made gumum undyrne, "manifest to men" (127).

Although the idea of death, once fully assimilated, inspires fear in the most heroic spirit, as indeed it did in Beowulf, the insupportable nature of that fear makes it essential to find some means of transcendence simply in order to live.<sup>326</sup> At first, this is accomplished by repression of the fear itself,<sup>327</sup> in which case it returns in the form of the "monsters" that haunt the dreams of children and the folk tales of adults. In the world of Beowulf, the idea of death has been externalised by making it the focal point of an ideology. Thus, before he actually confronts the possibility of his own death at the hands of the Merewife, Beowulf can refer to that death utterly without fear, even with arrogance:

Ūre æghwyle sceal  
worolde līfes;  
dōmes ær dēape  
unlifgendum

ende gebīdan  
wyrce sē þe mōte  
þæt bið drihtguman  
æfter sēlest.

(1386-89)

Each of us must endure the end of this world's  
life; let him who may win glory before death;  
that will be best for the warrior, after he is dead.

But his acknowledgement of death here is purely intellectual, deriving from the heroic code to which he subscribed. This code, based upon the notion of glorious death in battle, idealised the fact of death until it lost its personal significance. Although this allowed him to function well enough in situations over which he had control, such as in his battle with Grendel, it must fail on an elemental level in those situations in which he finds himself out of his natural element, as in the Merewife's lair, confronting a hostile force more powerful than himself. It was at that point that something more was needed, some awareness of a power greater, not only than himself, but than the manifest power of death. Beowulf found this in the marvellous sword that miraculously appeared at the nadir of his own powers. That this moment of awareness should have come out of a situation which was, as earlier suggested, inherently sexual, and that the symbol by which the soul came to consciousness in Beowulf should be phallic, is appropriate to the linking of sexuality and death in the human psyche: <sup>328</sup> sexuality is of the body, and the body is death; but sexuality is ultimately an affirmation of life and continuity, of transcendence and renewal.



Stimulated by the instincts of sexuality and aggression, in youth the human organism strives for growth and expansion; but in the second half of life, as the warnings of Hrothgar clearly show, this energy is directed increasingly towards an altered goal: a conflict with elements perceived to be within oneself, rather than a conflict with "external" forces.

Telling the story of Heromod, Hrothgar isolates pride, or oferhygda, "arrogance," (1740) as the final enemy within, and his warning to Beowulf shows that he knows the young warrior to be susceptible to this same characteristic:

Bebeorh þē ðone bealonīð,      Bēowulf lēofa,  
secg betsta,      ond þē þæt sēlre gecēos,  
ēce rēdas;      oferhȳda ne gȳm,  
māre cempa!      (1758-1761a)

Against such evil rancour guard thyself, dear  
Beowulf, best of men; choose that better part,  
they lasting profit. Incline not to arrogance,  
famous warrior!      (Clark Hall)

Beowulf could not learn from Hrothgar's warning, because the element of pride was an integral part of his heroic make-up, as well as a necessary element of ego-consciousness, permitting the self-assertion by which ontological identity is forged and maintained. Hrothgar may have been correct in

identifying pride as the real danger to Beowulf's ece, "eternal" being, but this is a realisation that Beowulf must come to on his own; he cannot and must not accept as true everything that even the most respected authority figure values. His instinctive responsibility is not to didactic law, but to natural law, as he understands and affirms it, and he can neither understand nor affirm without engaging the Ego directly in the process of growth and expansion, a process to which the element of pride is essential.

Although Hrothgar's injunctions are somewhat didactic, and thus illustrate the limitations of his own adjustment to the fact of death (confirmed by his unwillingness to risk his life when the deorc deapscua fell over his own home) they do reveal the workings of the religious instinct as the instinct that prepares the human organism for death by proposing to it a transcendent goal, ece rædas, which may perhaps be materially represented in Beowulf by the treasure the Hero is impelled to seek. In this sense, the wyrmhord may itself stand for the objective "reality" of death. Death is not, at this stage, an active, or ego-controlled impulse, but, as the completion and fulfillment of the natural life cycle it has become the object of unconscious desire, even as it remains an object of fear. As the fulfillment of the "death-wish," the treasure may be, as John



Donne has said, "death jewel." Undoubtedly, it exercises a fatal attraction, towards which Beowulf is inevitably moving. For Beowulf, like every man, must inevitably die.

The death of a hero, like the death of any man, is a necessary projection of the fact of his life, but the death of a hero must be more than an ordinary death. It must be an exemplary death. One reason for this, perhaps, is that the ordinary man, in contemplating the fact of death, is frightened to the point of immobility. The archetypal Hero, as the embodiment of the active principle, transcends this physical terror as Beowulf in braving the apocalyptic threat of the Wurm transcends his own age and physical limitations. Yet, there exists a still more fear-inspiring element of death to which Beowulf is not immune: the fear of consciousness that it will be annihilated.

As far as the precepts of consciousness are concerned, the annihilation of mental awareness is the final evil, to be resisted to the end. Beowulf, the heroic agent of the Ego, must passionately will the survival of the ego-self, and must fight to preserve it. His pride is in the service of this goal, and this pride is no-where as evident as in his final battle. It is displayed in his decision to fight,

and in his parting words to his men:

Gebīde gē on beorge	byrnum werede,
secgas on searwum,	hwæðer sēl mæge
æfter wælræse	wunde gedýgan
uncer twēga. Nis þæt ēower sið,	
ne gemet mannes,	nefn(e) mīn ānes,
þæt hē wið āglæcean	eoforo dæle,
eorlscype efne.	Ic mid elne sceall
gold gegangan,	oððe gūð nimeð,
feorhbealu frēcne	frēan ēowerne! (2529-37)

Watch on the barrow, ye warriors in your armour  
defended by coats of mail, which of us two can  
endure wounds best, after the desperate onslaught.  
That is not your affair, nor a possibility for any  
man, save for me alone, to put forth his power against  
the monster and do heroic deeds. By my valour I will  
win gold; or war, the dread destroyer of life, shall  
carry off your lord! (Clark Hall)

This speech shows that Beowulf possesses a strong Ego,  
one that will not easily give up its power and identity in  
the interests of a goal it cannot fully comprehend. Yet,  
as an archetype of the Collective Unconscious, the Hero  
must also be in the service of the goal of the Unconscious,  
and that goal has begun to reveal itself to him as the very  
death so feared by the Ego:

wæfre ond wælfūs,	Him wæs geōmor sefa,
sē ðone gomelan	wyrd ungemete nēah,
sēcean sāwle hord,	grētan sceolde,
līf wið līce;	sundur gedælan
feorh æpelinges	no þon lange wæs
	flæsce bewunden. (2420b-25)



His spirit was sad, restless, and ready for death; The fate was exceedingly near which was to greet the old king, to seek out the treasure of his soul, to separate the life from the body; not long after that was the life of the prince enwrapped in flesh.

Although Beowulf is, therefore, prepared for death, and accepts it on the unconscious level, his conscious mind cannot admit it as an acceptable goal, and strives with all its power to deny its reality. It is at this point that the Ego's pride, like all unchecked impulses of personality and instinct, may be seen to be acting against the interests of the whole organism. When this happens, the individual is in a regressive state, and is effectively blocking his own progress, although his Ego does not see it this way, for reasons which have to do with its own survival. To the Ego, the Wurm is the threat to that survival; however, to the Unconscious, the Ego in its pride is the final enemy.

Hubris in the Ego, Jung tells us, is, in a final analysis, "refusal to listen to the voice of the inner friend,"<sup>329</sup> or the Soul. The Soul points the way towards the Self and away from the Ego, which must give up its centrality in order for ultimate Self-realisation to take place. This is the most difficult task of ego-consciousness, but, at the same time, the most necessary, and it can only be accomplished by heroic self-sacrifice. Because the Ego can only sacrifice what it possesses, and because those possessions can be reduced

to conscious perception and the assertive pride that has built and maintained it, it is this, projected as the Wyrms, that must be sacrificed.

It may therefore be contended that the transcendence of egocentricity is necessary to Beowulf's exemplary death, when the sacrificial death of the Hero is seen, in Jungian terms, as the death of the Ego in the realisation of the Self. This psychic process has been discussed in part in Chapter IV as a religious process of symbol formation that involved the resolution of the Ego with its ideal symbol of the Self, the treasure. In this schema, both Hero and Dragon represent opposing aspects of the Self which must be reconciled by the Ego before a final resolution can take place. This means a necessary and elemental conflict, according to Jung, who suggests that in order for a collaboration of opposing states (which the treasure clearly represents) to be possible at all, these states "must first face one another in the fullest conscious opposition."<sup>330</sup>

This is what happens with Beowulf and the Wyrms. Because of his ego-pride, Beowulf is in no doubt as to where he must stand in relation to the Wyrms, and this pride gives him the strength necessary to engage his heroic energy in the inevitable conflict:





A similar disunion is the subject of Pauline mysticism, and for Paul, as, perhaps, for the poet of Beowulf, the thesis and its antithesis may be reduced to spirituality and sensuality, summed up, for Paul, in the figures of Christ and Satan, and for the unnamed poet by the figures of Beowulf and the dragon. But, in the sense that each thesis exists only in relation to, and by the suppression of, its antithesis, Christ and Satan must be parts of a whole, just as Beowulf and the dragon must, beyond consciousness, be elementally connected by their necessary opposition.

The establishment of a real relationship between Beowulf and the dragon (which the poet has done in both a causal and a symbolic sense) parallels this same conjunction of thesis and antithesis, consciousness and the Unconscious. And just as the bite of the dragon, in consolidating this connection, brings about Beowulf's death, so do the demands of the Unconscious act upon consciousness "like a paralysing poison on a man's energy and resourcefulness, so that it may well be compared to the bite of a poisonous snake."<sup>332</sup> Yet, this apparent negation prepares the way for a final resolution in the process of transmutation that begins with the Ego's act of self-sacrifice.

In the act of self-sacrifice, "the consciousness gives up its power and possessions in the interest of the unconscious,"<sup>333</sup> and this act "makes possible a union of



opposites resulting in a release of energy."<sup>334</sup> In sacrificing the claims of the Ego to the greater claims of the Unconscious, Beowulf is also "relinquishing all the ties and limitations which the psyche has taken over from childhood into adult life,"<sup>335</sup> including his duty to remain as king of his people, in affirmation of the greater importance of the Unconscious goal. For it is not in blind obedience to a rigid idea of heroism that Beowulf sacrifices his life, but in response to something living and dynamic, contained in the treasure as a symbol of the Self, "the totality of his being, which is rooted in his animal nature and reaches out beyond the merely human towards the divine."<sup>336</sup>

That the Self is indeed "rooted in his animal nature" is suggested by the function of the dragon, which acts in this drama as the aggressive agent of the Unconscious. The treasure's intimate connection with both Beowulf and the Wurm implies that these two opposing forces are necessary elements of that total paradox which must be reconciled in the process of individuation. This is why both Beowulf and the Wurm must die: both forms must cease to exist independent of one another before the treasure may be revealed, and the archetype of psychic unity realised.

However, while this abstract notion of death does seem to reflect the implications of the phenomenon, as far as

consciousness itself is concerned, it offers scant comfort to a man, such as Beowulf, whose joy in life was as much sensual as mental. When he speaks of the unavenged father's loss of interest in the joys of heroic life, his language is sensuous and emotional, and conveys a sense of what that loss would mean to him:

Gesyhð sorhcearig	on his suna bûre	
wīnsele westne,	windge reste	
rēōte berofene, -	rīdend swefað,	
hæleð in hoðman;	nis þær hearpan swēg,	
gomen in gearðum,	swylce ðær iū wæron.	(2455-59)

With sorrow and care he sees in his son's dwelling, the festive hall abandoned, the windswept resting place bereft of joy: the riders sleep, the champions in the grave; there is no sound of harp, no merry-makings in the courts, as once there was. (Clark Hall)

Beowulf has regrets, and these regrets are physical as much as psychic. Indeed, his final regret is patently physical:

Nū ic suna mīnum	syllan wolde	
gūðgewædu,	þær mē gifede swā	
ænig yrfeweard	æfter wurde	
līce gelenge.		(2729-32a)

Now I would have wanted to give my battle-dress to my son, if it had been granted that an heir, issue of my body, should come after me.



The failure to produce a son, while it was a matter of regret to Beowulf, nevertheless raises him above the general pattern of nature. It seems that he is not fated to fully complete his natural life cycle, because he produces no child to continue his being into the future. Rather, like one of those salmon who, on its way back to the womb of nature, the spawning ground, to propagate and then die, is instead caught by some compleat angler, he is to be a sacrifice, on behalf of a collective ideal, to the realisation of the supreme collective goal. More than that, his must be a willing sacrifice, made in full cognizance of the importance of the gift, and out of a transcendent faith in the reality and value of the goal. This goal is, ultimately, a religious one, but it is one towards which all three of the primary instincts strive, and in relation to which the Ego alone (ic...āna) stands opposed.

The journey that an individual makes towards his death is identical to the journey in quest of individuation. A solitary one, it implies a process of separation, in which all three instincts play their part. The aggressive instinct, by impelling man to assert himself, effectively separates him from the limitations of his natural environment. The sexual instinct, by compelling him to bond with an equal but opposite

being, effectively separates him from dependence upon his parents and the majority of society. The religious instinct, by focusing upon death, ideally separates him from the need for life. The word separation itself, used to great effect in Beowulf, when Grendel, the monstrous shadow of death, mynte þæt he gedæde...lif wið lice "intended that he would separate...the life from the body" (731a, 733a) of the warriors, has negative connotations, and yet ultimately its implication is of freedom and transcendence. It is the idea of transcendence that attracts the energy of the libido, for it is only by transcendence and transformation that life can continue.

As the personification of the libido, who leaves the "impersonal and neuter" realm of metaphysics and "takes human form," <sup>337</sup> the Hero, of which Christ Himself is the supreme historical and archetypal example, must act to fulfill the libido's driving urge for life and creation. His act of self-sacrifice must, therefore, derive from the Unconscious' knowledge of the creative principle, and this knowledge must, in spite of the Ego's intense desire to deny it, be carried right up to, and include, the act of death. His act of death is the goal towards which, all along, the Hero has been moving. Since his genesis in the "general cistern of form" <sup>338</sup> that is the Unconscious, the Hero has been fated to die a wundordeað, "a wondrous death" (3037).



Beowulf's first awareness of what fate will demand of him comes when he receives the stolen cup and the knowledge that, because of it, the Wyrn has begun to ravage his people and his home, the ground of his own being. The cup here serves as an anima-object, not only by virtue of its nature as a feminine principle, but also in that, as an actual representative of the treasure hoard, it participates in the nature of the symbol it represents; thus, it acts as a guide which both inspires Beowulf with the desire to see the treasure, and effectively leads him to it. The cup also seems to be an early precursor of the Holy Grail, the object of a mythic quest in Arthurian literature, when, as Eliot interprets it in The Waste Land, it stood as a symbol of the regenerative powers of Christ, who, accepting a cup in the Garden of Gethsemane, accepted also his role as sacrificial lamb.

In brutal contrast to this pastoral image of Jesus, is Beowulf the "war-wolf" <sup>339</sup> who, seeing in the golden cup the tangible proof of the existence of a treasure of immeasurably greater value, realises that he must win that treasure for his people.

But Beowulf and Jesus share a common trait of personality, their paradoxical selflessness and sense of Self. As Jesus died to save mankind from the result of original sin, so

Beowulf dies to save his people from the ravages of the Wurm; and as Jesus earned for mankind the promise of eternal life, so Beowulf earns the treasure, not for himself, but minum leodum, "for my people" (2797).

This greater concern for others than for self may be seen as a personality trait which derives from the sublimation of the sexual instinct, and this, in turn, might help explain the childlessness of both Beowulf and Jesus, since the force of sublimation could conceivably result in a depletion of the energy available to the purely sexual function. Conversely, the energy of the sexual instinct would, diverted, mean an immense source of power available to the religious instinct, energy which would then flow through new channels, but which would shape these channels in its own way. (No doubt this awareness is a factor in the idea of celibacy in the priesthood.)

The alternative source of energy available to the religious instinct is, of course, that of the aggressive drive, but in this case the resultant character trait might have been selfishness, because the chief function of aggression is to protect and advance the individual organism, rather than seek the greater good of the race or species, as is the function of sexuality. In that case, the personal ego would become all-important, the survival of the known parts of the organism being logically preferable to that of the



unknown element. While Beowulf and Christ both had extremely strong aggressive drives (Beowulf's active, that of Christ passive <sup>340</sup>) their aggressive energies were subsumed in the instinctive urge of sexuality to find fulfillment in and through others. Thus intensified, the sexual instinct was mastered by ego-consciousness and sublimated in the service of the religious instinct. It is this achievement that makes possible, and necessary, the final sacrifice.

As the heroic struggles of the psyche may be said to be sexual in nature, there is a sense in which Beowulf's sacrifice is an act of love, and his final goal a transcendental consummation with the supreme love-object. The symbolic affirmation of this comes when the treasure is buried with Beowulf, but intimations of it exist in his conflict with the dragon, which, in its symbolism, incorporates both male and female elements. A necessary culmination of such conflict would be the resolution of the masculine and feminine elements of psyche, an experiential androgyny.

This androgynous resolution is countered by the bisexual symbolism of the serpent, for, while the former represents the cohesion, the latter represents the potential separation of the two elements. The serpent's bisexual aspect is implicit in its hermaphroditic combination of the phallic form with the female principle. The symbology of this observable fact (as many worms are hermaphroditic) is found in the Biblical

story of Eve, and is extended in Greek myth in the Omphalos, the conical block of stone near the temple at Delphi, which is a pre-Hellenic representation of the earth goddess who ousted Apollo after he had slain the Python (sometimes called Pythoness) who guarded her shrine.<sup>341</sup>

Dwelling in the eorðscræf, "earth-cave," or, in Alvin Lee's translation, "earth-grave,"<sup>342</sup> of the Unconscious, the Beowulf dragon lives in the womb (or tomb) of Mother Earth, sharing with this primal female form her powers of creation and destruction, her material nature. Yet, as a creature of air and fire, its spiritual aspect, confirmed by the symbology of the dragon in literature and myth, must not be overlooked. The Wyrms' connection with the soul, the spiritual "body" of man, is indicated by the mythological tradition in which the souls of heroes often take the form of serpents after death,<sup>343</sup> as well as by the alchemical tradition in which the "fiery serpent" is a recurring symbol of the soul which has been separated from God, and which is, thereby, afflicted with desire and sin.<sup>344</sup> It is in this incarnation that Beowulf meets the serpent, as the projection of his own final necessary guilt, the sin that stands between him and the attainment of the treasure of immortality.

As the embodiment of sexuality and hate, the serpent epitomises "the destructive power of passion conjoined with the will to rule."<sup>345</sup> Nevertheless, although, as the tempter



of Eve, the serpent form is linked to lust, it is also, through its identification with Christ,<sup>346</sup> linked to love, or the desire for complete union, whether of male and female, or of man with God, or, in Jungian terms, of Ego with Self. The role of the dragon, which is in all cases fated to die in the accomplishment of this ultimate goal, seems to indicate a process which involves in part a coming to terms with the bisexual nature of psyche, and a transcendence of that nature in the form of the androgyne. In such a symbolic schema, sexuality is both the agent and the victim of integration.

In this transformative sense, although the Wyrms sets its force directly in opposition to the desire of God and man by seeking to destroy or pervert the creations of both, its very existence may be necessary to the achievement of perfect unity, for it may be that the experience of good is not possible without evil and man's separation from that god. Thus, while in its overt role in Beowulf the Wyrms personifies the projection of Beowulf's ego-pride and his psyche's will towards death, and is committed to the destruction of existing psychic forms (whether they be identified by the Ego as "good" or "evil"), as the necessary, or "fated" instrument of sacrifice as well as the sacrificial beast, the Wyrms also incorporates the "numen of the transformative act as well as the transformative substance itself."<sup>347</sup> In this transcendent aspect

the Wyrm may be seen as both a source and a means of man's transformation, or transmutation, from natural to spiritual body.

For it may be that, beneath all the differentiation of function by means of which life proceeds, the dragon really represents the primary material of Mater Natura,<sup>348</sup> the fecund ground of all material being, and, in fact, the physical base of man's own spirit. In Christian thought, wherein the Self may be symbolically represented by the figure of God the Father, the conjunction of masculine spirit and feminine matter (or body) seems a natural implication of the Incarnation. In the dualistic view, taken by Saint John, the body and spirit are elementally opposed, and it is the spirit alone which lives forever. However, in his transcendent vision of the spiritual body Saint Paul seems to hint at a necessary union of the two, which implies a kind of rebirth perhaps subsequent to a return to the womb of the "terrible mother," who, in some myths, is actually the dragon.<sup>349</sup> And in lines 2420-25, the poet of Beowulf seems to separate feorh and flæsc, "life" and "flesh", in such a way as to imply, in flæsc, that aspect of the body which must, indeed, be left behind like a snake shedding its skin, in the transformation from physical to spiritual forms of life.

As the mother is the receptacle of being, and the father



the pure energy of creation, so must both be present, in divine union, in order for perfect being to exist. But so, too, must the cycle of rebirth, for the energy of creation demands change and growth, or evolution, while the ground of receptivity demands the return to inertia, to involution; and both these demands are satisfied by the rebirth pattern. Just as the explosion of a dying star releases the primary particles of life itself, matter is transformed into spiritual bodies, which must be transposed into material bodies once again in the cycle of eternal life. The poet of Beowulf detected the same pattern in the opposing principles of fire and ice, which expresses the same synergistic idea. The polarisation of the male and female principles represented by the fire and water, and the poet's constant attempts to reconcile them, from the fyr on flode (1366a) of the dreadful mere in the Merewife episode to the burnan wælm (2546b) of the dragon's breath, to the structural motif provided by the funerals of Scyld and Beowulf, all indicate that the poet feels intensely that these apparently irreconcilable opposites must be resolved, that is, they must co-exist in perfect balance and in their totality, in order for perfect being to exist. (The same is also true of the other opposing physical principles of earth and air, represented at this final moment by the cave of the dragon and the place-name

of the battlefield, Earnanes, "Eaglesness," for both pairs may have as their metaphysical counterparts the notion of feminine matter and masculine spirit.) When these antinomies meet, in the process of enantiodromia<sup>350</sup> (by definition a moving of one opposite towards its counterpart) symbolised by the conflict of Beowulf and the Wyrn, the meeting must inevitably be accomplished by violence, for the aim of each must be either to annihilate, or succumb, to one another. In the act of love, the sacrifice of exclusive identity will be made; in the act of war, the fight is to the death.

Beowulf and the Wyrn meet in an act of war necessitated by the Ego's involvement in the process of being and becoming. Because consciousness can only perceive in terms of opposites, ego-consciousness is constantly forced to make choices, and in order to validate these choices the Ego must assign them a value, or a lack of value, which reflects its own reality. Annihilation has been perceived as an evil; the Hero must fight against it. But self-sacrifice, or the sacrifice of the self known to consciousness, in the service of an ideal is likewise considered by the heroic consciousness to be a good. And it is another of the paradoxes by which the human mind seems to identify profound truth that, although Beowulf and Christ were selfless in their concern for their people, the supreme reward of their selflessness should be their



individual salvation, a paradox which was stated by Christ Himself when He said, "whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24). For the beginning of transcendence comes when the personal Ego can sacrifice itself in the interests of a total vision, and this sacrifice may lead to a transformation from one form of life and being to another. The moment of transcendence is complete when Beowulf kills the dragon, symbolically sacrificing his ego-pride to the highest ideals of both consciousness and the Unconscious. The moment of transformation presumably occurs when, after seeing the treasure, he dies. Presumably, because, for Beowulf as for us, the final transformation is not a "given," it is merely a projection of his faith and hope. For this reason, the final sacrificial act requires a "leap of faith" made necessary because his Ego cannot know for sure that its sacrifice will be validated, just as the contents of the hord, in its original sense of "what is hidden," will not be revealed to Beowulf until he has given his life to win it. The potential for tragedy is thus implicit.

In I Cor. 15:14, Saint Paul shows that he is aware of the tremendous risk that man takes in staking his whole being on an idea of cosmic transcendence, but he goes on to affirm his faith and belief in the reality of that idea. Paul's sense of both danger and certainty seems to be shared by A. C. Bradley in his observation that in all great tragedy

we become aware of an ultimate (spiritual) power to which the hero "was never so near...as in the moment when it required his life."<sup>351</sup> Maud Bodkin conceives this power in psychological terms as "the awakened sense of our common nature in its active emotional phase,"<sup>352</sup> which I interpret to mean the conscious recognition of man's collectivity, affirmed in the validity accorded the idea of his cosmic Self. The form of tragedy therefore does not necessarily require a sense of total devastation, but may carry with it "the suggestion of some continuance or renewal of the strong life that plunges downward into darkness."<sup>353</sup> It is this sense of renewal which is all-important to the theme of Beowulf, and to the concept of sacrifice as a rite of passage to regeneration.

The theme of renewal, whether it is pursued implicitly or explicitly throughout the poem, in the images of fire and ice, through the seasonal metaphors, the cycles of vengeance and war, or simply the emotional patterns of joy and sorrow that result from them, is continued even at the end of the poem, for while it has been suggested that one of the tragic notes in Beowulf is struck by the intimation that there will be no one of his heroic stature to succeed him, I do not find this to be necessarily the case. Wiglaf, though young and, till then, untried, shows both heroic courage and strength in his defence of his lord, and the



final picture of the twelve good men who describe the symbolic circle around Beowulf's barrow suggests the twelve apostles, whose teachings ensured the continuance and renewal of Christ's spirit in the world.

Although in a Christian sense it may be that the feeling of tragedy results from an imperfect faith, and that because all forces work ultimately for the good, any sense of tragedy is ultimately an illusion, Bradley's idea of "tragic glory"<sup>354</sup> seems to recognise the possibility of tragedy from the Christian perspective. This idea of tragedy is limited to man's being-in-the-world, and while it includes the notion of sacrifice in the attainment of a higher value (whether personal, social, or transcendental) it points also to the tragic condition of man as the limited embodiment of the limitless divine. In such a view, the tragic hero is Everyman, as every man affirms this participation in the nature of his god.

The tragic irony of such perception must lie in the inevitable recognition that although man may lay claim to, and actually believe in, the divine element within his being, he is actually powerless and limited in his own world, and it is this world which, despite its imperfections, he loves, and in which he wants to fulfill his destiny. In this connection, the tension in Beowulf between the conditioned and fleeting and the transcendent and eternal takes on a

particular relevance as a fundamental aspect of man's tragic condition, for, whatever the transcendental appeal of the eternal and divine, it clearly does not represent the joy of life as it is known by man in his corporeal form. It is this joy, expressed so well as a sense of loss by the Last Survivor, that exercises its power over Beowulf and his poet. The reluctance of Beowulf to relinquish his physical life on ~~his~~ Waldendes wære, "in the keeping of the lord" (3109) is simply his recognition that, whatever death may be, it is not life, a fact the poet recognises in his frequent use of the OE negative definition of "dead," unlifigende.

For a man such as Beowulf, perhaps the best metaphor for death is the poet's suggestion that death is the sleep which follows the banquet of life:

pær his līchoma      legerbedde fæst  
swefep æfter symle.      (1007-08a)

There his body, fast in its bed of rest,  
sleeps after the banquet.

This contrast of the sensual and conscious with the deadening of the senses and the suspension of consciousness implied by the state of sleep is echoed later in the poem, and given a greater dimension, by the poet's description of the death of the Last Survivor:





The alchemical quest to turn base metal into gold seems to capture the final significance of this treasure of gold and rusted iron, a metal as base as the lowest instincts of man can conceive in action and creation. The esoteric search for the right chemical reaction to produce such a transformation was, in reality, a search for immortality through the attainment of that pure spirit which transforms all things into perfect form, and the quest itself was informed as much by transcendental meditation as by experiment.<sup>355</sup> The generation of energy, both psychic and physical, theoretically necessary for such a transformation seems to me to occur during the battle with Beowulf and the dragon, and the ultimate result of this "divine experiment" was a fusion, in the treasure, of the disparate and opposing principles represented by the archetypal protagonists.

It is through contemplation of the treasure, which by Wiglaf's affirmative act has been, for Beowulf, returned to purity and value, that death may begin to be accepted, not as a cosmic tragedy, a dark negation of life and love, but as the fulfillment of a process, a transformative reaction in which evil is an essential catalyst.

The existence of evil, sin, and death represented by the dragon is perceived as necessary to the realization of the Self, just as the pain of separation and frag-



mentation is necessary to a final conscious apprehension of absolute unity of being, for, as Yeats has said,

"nothing can be sole or whole  
that has not been rent,"<sup>356</sup>

or, to put it theologically, man cannot yearn for union with God if he has never known separation from Him. And, although it was the "sin" of ego pride that separated Beowulf from God, it was that same pride which led him into the final struggle with the archetypal form of this, his own necessary sin, to attain the symbol, and the reality, of divine union.

Beowulf's response to his ultimate vision of the treasure is not unqualified, because his Ego, though it has made the necessary sacrifice and submission, continues to wish for its own continuance, as is its nature. His last words seem to me to capture the essence of the conscious feeling that might arise from such a submission. It may, perhaps, be compared to the Yeatsian experience of "tragic joy":

'Ic <del>þ</del> āra frætwa	Frēan ealles <del>þ</del> anc,
Wuldurcyninge	wordum secge,
eċum Dryhtne,	þē ic hēr on starie,
þæs <del>þ</del> e ic mōste	mīnum lēodum
ælc swyltdæge	swylc gestrȳnan.
Nū ic on mā <del>þ</del> ma hord	mīne bebohte
frōde feorhlege,	fremma <del>þ</del> gēna
lēoda þearfe;	ne mæg ic hēr leng wesān. (2794-2801)

I utter in words my thanks to the Ruler of all, the King of Glory, the everlasting Lord, for the treasures which I here gaze upon, in that I have been allowed to win such things for my people before my day of death! Now that I have given my old life in barter for the hoard of treasure, do ye henceforth supply the people's needs, - I may stay here no longer. (Clark Hall)

His repeated use of the pronouns ic and min, and his later use of his own name (2807) indicates the degree to which ego- ("I-") consciousness, aware of its inevitable fate, strives to retain control. His final request for a monument, so that he will be remembered in his individuality, expresses the passionate desire of consciousness to continue to be, in the sense that to be is to be perceived,<sup>357</sup> even as it willingly relinquishes its own power to perceive, and, therefore, in an equal and opposite sense, to be,<sup>358</sup> in itself, a "real" entity.

In the end, however, he indicates his calm acceptance of death's inevitability for himself and for all men; and his belief in some form of continuance:

mīne māgas                    ealle wyrd forswēop  
tō methodscafte,  
eorlas on elne;            ic him æfter sceal.    (2814b-16)

Fate has swept off all my kinsmen, valiant heroes, to their death; I must go after them.



The death of any entity is an implied condition of its life, and, as far as consciousness is concerned, if death did not exist, consciousness, with its penchant for opposites, would have had to invent it - as, perhaps, it did, at least in so far as our perceptions of death are entirely the product of conscious attempts to understand what lies beyond our powers of comprehension. This is as much true of a rational or scientific explanation of the phenomenon as it may be of a mystical, or religious one. However, and it is a marvellously inspiring "however," there is a point at which the two approaches seem to merge, and that point is contained within the idea, and the actuality, of "transformation."

Saint Paul, to whom both Jung and the Beowulf poet owe a large measure of their own inspiration, was insistent upon the reality of the transformative powers of God. He, of course, had experienced it personally, on the road to Damascus. Jung, who, sooner or later, got around to explaining just about everything, saw the conversion of Saul as originating within himself, an upsurge of the archetype of transformation deriving from the center of being, the Self. That is ingenious, as far as it goes. But Saul, or Paul, a man of highly developed consciousness, to whom Porcius Festus, the procurator of Judaea, is reported to have said: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad,"

(Acts 26:24), was aware of the pitfalls of consciousness, particularly the factor of pride, which tends to ascribe all power and glory to the man, rather than to God. He would not have agreed with Jung's humanism, his idea that all was contained in the "inside of the unknown man." For Paul, there was a greater power, reflected in man, but not contained in him. This power was not simply subjective, but also objective, not merely awareness, but the objective of man's awareness and, therefore, necessarily, both the subject and the object of man's love.

Nevertheless, in Jung's contention that all subjective perceptions both derive from, and create, objective reality, there may be found his own religious sense of a mystical relationship between man and his immortal Self that transcends both realms of being. It is to be hoped, if not expected, as the watchers on the brink of the dreadful mere wiston ond ne wendon, "hoped but did not expect" (1604) that their hero would return from the realm of the dead, that this relationship will follow the patterns of transformation and renewal implicit in the cycles, antinomies, and transmutations that have been experienced in the physical world since the dawn of awareness, and that the power that created that world of light, life, and love will continue those principles in the metaphysical realm. This is the fervent prayer of Beowulf, the firm belief of Paul, the



fixed hypothesis of Jung, and the fragile hope of our poet,  
whose transcendent affirmation of that hope has given us the  
first and greatest epic of our Northern consciousness.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John M. Foley, "Beowulf and the Psychohistory of Anglo-Saxon Culture," American Imago, 34 (1977), 135. In researching the precedents for a study of this type, Foley's article, and a letter by John J. Pollock, re: "Beowulf in Jungian Perspective," OEN, 13(1981) 24-25, were the only references I could find to suggest that a Jungian analysis of Beowulf might prove of some value. Undoubtedly, other work has been done in this field, certainly with other literary works, but my investigations have uncovered no sustained analysis of Beowulf from this perspective.

<sup>2</sup> Carl G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Bollingen Series No. XX (1960; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), pp. 23-24.

<sup>6</sup> Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Klaeber, ed., Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. (1922; rpt. New York: D. C. Heath, 1950), p. lvii.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. lviii.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (1968; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Klaeber, p. lvii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. lix.



12 Jung, The Integration of the Personality, p. 96. The Self is described here as "not only the centre, but also the circumference that encloses consciousness and the unconscious."

13 Fordham, p. 22.

14 Rycroft, p. 23.

15 Fordham, p. 76 ff.

16 Rycroft, p. 107.

17 Ibid.

18 Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 56.

19 Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 96.

20 Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Man and His Symbols, Carl G. Jung, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 110-12.

21 Fordham, p. 70.

22 Carl G. Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series No. XX (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 246.

23 Fordham, p. 17, gives a basic explanatory definition.

24 Carl G. Jung, "Aion," in Psyche and Symbol: A Section from the Writings of C. G. Jung, Violet S. de Laszlo, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 29. "As for the Self, it is completely outside the personal sphere, and appears, if at all, as a religious mythologem."

25 Carl G. Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series No. XX (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 238.

26 Donald C. Johanson and Maitland A. Edey, Lucy: The Beginnings of Humankind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 98.

27 Ibid., p. 37.

28 Ibid., p. 20.

29 Ibid., p. 97ff.

30 Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series No. XX (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 129-30.

31 Ibid., p. 25.

32 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 249.

33 Ibid., p. 282.

34 cf. Klaeber, p. xxxv, n. 2.

35 Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, pp. 330-407. Jung postulates that there are four functions of consciousness: thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition; and that, in every individual, one of these predominates as a general psychological approach to life.

#### CHAPTER I

36 Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Man and His Symbols, p. 110.

37 Ibid., p. 112.

38 Fordham, p. 60.

39 Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man" in Man and His Symbols, p. 110.

40 Bodkin, p. 62.

41 Ibid., p. 241.

42 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, pp. 483-84.

43 Lascelles Abercrombie paraphrased in Bodkin, p. 241.

44 Goethe, quoted in Carl G. Jung, Four Archetypes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 35.

45 John Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology: A Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 40 - 42.

46 Ibid., p. 104. "Alienation from God follows from alienation from the authentic self."



- 47 Rycroft, p. 23.
- 48 Jung, Psyche and Symbol, pp. 1-2.
- 49 Carl G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1919), p. 106.
- 50 Ibid., p. 76.
- 51 Ibid., p. 80.
- 52 Klaeber, pp. 183-84.
- 53 Ibid., p. 147 n.2.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Macquarrie, p. 81.
- 56 Jung, Four Archetypes, pp. 55, 65.
- 57 Sir Paul Harvey, ed., The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), p. 143.
- 58 Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Man and His Symbols, p. 111. Henderson also notes that the "trial of strength" was a typical initiation rite in primitive societies, and may itself be an "archetype of initiation" (p. 130).
- 59 See John 1:5; 6:33; 8:32.
- 60 Edward B. Irving, Jr., A Reading of Beowulf (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 98.
- 61 i.e. "authentic" or "inauthentic". See Macquarrie, pp. 38-39.
- 62 Fordham, p. 60.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid., p. 61.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 In his famous article, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," Prof. J. R.R. Tolkien suggests a rather more

favourable interpretation of Hrothgar as an Old Testament patriarch. I respectfully disagree.

67 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 136.

68 Rycroft, p. 160. The superego is part of the ego, but includes unconscious elements, particularly "injunctions and inhibitions" that "derive from the subject's past" and involve "parental introjects."

69 Fordham, p. 60.

70 John R. Clark Hall, trans., Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment: A Translation into Modern English Prose, Revised ed. by C. L. Wrenn (1911; rpt. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950). In all those cases in which translations are not my own, with one exception to be noted in the text, I have relied upon Clark Hall's excellent translation. Rather than footnote each one, I have identified their authorship as they occur.

71 Fordham, p. 62.

72 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 280.

73 Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. 221 ff.

74 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 76.

75 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 322.

76 Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. 221 ff.

77 Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), par. 82. In the notion of guilt as integral to the divided psyche, Jung closely parallels the Christian theologians; yet this notion is an intrinsic element of the heromyth as presented in myth and literature, in which the hero is invariably fallible to the "sin" of pride, or hubris.

78 In this discussion, "self" will refer to the Ego, and "Self" to the central psychic entity described by Jung.

79 Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 259.

80 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 66.



81 Fordham, p. 54.

82 The Flood has antecedents in many mythologies, including Norse, where it is said to have resulted from the icy water that gushed from the wounds of the mortally wounded Ymir, the Great Ice Giant. Ymir was killed by Odin, Allfather of the Gods, and the water drowned most of the evil giants - all except one, Bergelmir, who was spared. Like Noah, Bergelmir built a boat and took shelter in it with his wife and children.

83 Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, Vol. 5 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series No. XX (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956) p. 382. The link between the hero and the dragon, or snake, is made in Greek myth, too. Cecrops, founder of Athens, was man above, snake below. And, in the story of Cadmus and the founding of Thebes, the nobility were supposed to have sprung up from the sowing of dragon teeth, hence their name, Spartoi, which means "sown men."

84 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 92.

## CHAPTER II

85 David M. Wilson, ed., The Northern World: The History and Heritage of Northern Europe, A.D. 400-1100 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980), p. 44.

86 This apprehension forms the theme of John Paul Sarte's existentialist novel, Iron in the Soul (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963). Saint Paul, too, writes in the existentialist vein to the extent that he is concerned with choice and responsibility, and with the importance of consciousness in human destiny. Christian existentialism derives from Pauline theology. (See Macquarrie, An Existentialist Theology.)

87 Richard Hamer, ed., A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 68.

88 Clark Hall, trans., Beowulf, p. 100.

89 Even the gods were powerless in this world. The Norse gods could be out-fought, out-magicked and out-witted, and they were mortal into the bargain. Most of the gods

of Asgard, including Thor, whom Beowulf somewhat resembles (Thor was killed by a serpent, and battles, unsuccessfully, with an old woman he later learns is the spectre of Old Age) died in the Battle of Ragnarok. (See Kevin Crossley-Holland, The Norse Myths.)

<sup>90</sup> Kevin Crossley-Holland, The Norse Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 3-4. Ymir, in Norse myth, was the great Ice Giant, father of all the giants (evil forces), but, in conjunction with Audumla he also gave rise to the Gods of Asgard, and the world of men.

<sup>91</sup> The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 6th, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), p. 20.

<sup>92</sup> Carl G. Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 2nd. ed., Vol. 8 of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series No. XX (1960; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 171.

<sup>93</sup> Macquarrie, p. 38.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Bodkin, p. 244.

<sup>100</sup> Irving, p. 98.

<sup>101</sup> The anthropological discovery of Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, as reported in Joseph Campbell, Myths to Live By (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 175.

<sup>102</sup> At the same time, God warns Cain "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire..." (Gen. 4:7).

<sup>103</sup> The poem itself has archetypal overtones which shed light upon the nature of the Unconscious. Note especially:

"But every night I go abroad  
Afar into the Land of Nod  
All by myself I have to go  
With none to tell me what to do..."



104 Fordham, p. 49.

105 Rycroft, p. 33.

106 See Klaeber, p. 300, where he gives the alternative reading, angenga, "aggressor."

107 Fordham, p. 50.

108 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 57, defines the persona as "that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others thinks one is."

109 Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 240.

110 Fordham, p. 47.

111 R. L. Stevenson describes this aspect of the Shadow perfectly in "My Shadow:"

"He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow  
sticks to me!"

112 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 87.

113 Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 68.

114 Sir James George Frazer, The New Golden Bough, ed. Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 140-41.

115 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 33.

116 S. L. Dragland, "Monster-Man in Beowulf," Neophil, 61.1 (1977), p. 617: "The Beowulf poet seems to say that... Beowulf himself contains this shadow, as much as he also exemplifies heroism."

117 Fordham, p. 49.

118 Macquarrie, p. 36.

119 John Gardner, Grendel (New York: Ballantine, 1971).

<sup>120</sup>A. D. Horgan, "Religious Attitudes in Beowulf," in Essays and Poems Presented to Lord David Cecil, W. W. Robson, ed. (London: Constable, 1970), p. 13 makes this connection.

<sup>121</sup>Saint Paul deals with this question in Rom. 8:22 and Rom. 1:25.

<sup>122</sup>Frazer, p. 173 ff.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>124</sup>Andreas Haarder, The Appeal of a Poem (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1975), p. 340.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, A Primer of Jungian Psychology (London: Croom Helm and New York: Taplinger, 1973), p. 48 ff. The authors point out that the shadow is, nevertheless, "potentially the most dangerous of all the archetypes" (p. 48).

<sup>127</sup>Alvin Lee, The Guest-hall of Eden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 25-26.

<sup>128</sup>Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 416.

<sup>129</sup>Encyclopedia of World Mythology, Rex Warner, fwd. (London: Peerage Books, 1970), p. 225.

<sup>130</sup>Wilson, ed., p. 33.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid. When this event did not occur on schedule, the time limit was extended to the year 1033 A.D.

<sup>134</sup>The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the "death-wish" as "(Psych) (usu. unconscious) wish for death of oneself or another." The more frequent, if disputed, term is "death instinct," a concept developed by Freud.

<sup>135</sup>See Rycroft, p. 27, for concise summary. Melanie Klein, a disciple of Freud (as, initially, was Jung) was a famous child psychologist.



- 136 "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (I Cor. 15:44)

### CHAPTER III

137 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 23.

138 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 429.

139 Rycroft, p. 83.

140 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 40. Jung calls the szgyies "paired opposites."

141 Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 121.

142 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 25.

143 Encyclopedia of World Mythology, p. 22.

144 Morton Irving Seiden, William Butler Yeats: The Poet as Mythmaker (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1962), p. 35.

145 Brenda S. Webster, Yeats: A Psychoanalytic Study (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 108.

146 Bodkin, p. 217.

147 Ibid., p. 161.

148 Robert Graves, The White Goddess: A Historical Grammer of Poetic Myth (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 388.

149 Ibid.

150 Wilson, ed., p. 43.

151 Thomas Garbáty, "The Uncle-Nephew Motif: New Light into its Origins and Development," Folklore, 88 (1977), p. 233.

<sup>152</sup>Tacitus, On Britain and Germany, H. Mattingly, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1948), pp. 117-18. "The sons of sisters are as highly honoured by their uncles as by their own fathers. Some even go so far as to regard this tie of blood as peculiarly close and sacred..."

<sup>153</sup>Roger L. Green, Myths of the Norsemen (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 85.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>155</sup>Crossley-Holland, pp. 65-70.

<sup>156</sup>Tacitus, p. 116. "Adultery in that populous nation is rare in the extreme, and punishment is summary and left to the husband. He shaves off his wife's hair, strips her in the presence of kinsmen, thrusts her from his house and flogs her through the whole village. They have, in fact, no mercy on a woman who prostitutes her chastity."

<sup>157</sup>Crossley-Holland, p. 203.

<sup>158</sup>Fordham, p. 52.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., p. 54, n. 2.

<sup>160</sup>Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 58.

<sup>161</sup>Fordham, p. 54.

<sup>162</sup>Jung, Integration of the Personality, p. 74.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>164</sup>Fordham, p. 54.

<sup>165</sup>Webster, p. 108.

<sup>166</sup>Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 280.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>168</sup>Bodkin, p. 172.

<sup>169</sup>Crossley-Holland, pp. xviii, xxx.

<sup>170</sup>Wealhtheow's name is suggestive, for it may mean, as Klaeber suggests, "Celtic (or foreign) servant" (Klaeber, p. xxxiii), and, indeed, she does seem to fulfill a submissive role. The other "theows" in the poem, Ecgtheow and



Ongentheow, contain no such suggestion of submission in their names. On the contrary, they connote action and autonomy in their compound senses, i.e. Ecgtheow, "sword-servant," Ongentheow, "solitary servant" (ref. ON angan).

<sup>171</sup>Tacitus, p. 120, notes the extent of this power from the point of view of a potential enemy: "You have only to indulge their intemperance by supplying all that they crave, and you will gain as easy a victory through their vices as through your own arms."

<sup>172</sup>Elaine Hansen, "Women in Old English Poetry Reconsidered," Michigan Academician, 9(1976), p. 116.

<sup>173</sup>Bernice W. Kliman, "Women in Early English Literature," NMS, 21 (1977), 32-49.

<sup>174</sup>The word sinfrea is intriguing. Clark Hall translates it as "husband," while Klaeber is more cautious and inclined to "great lord." I wonder about the possibility of sin deriving from sinnig, "sinful" and frea "friend," also glossed in Klaeber as "consort." The idea of a husband as a "sin friend" is appealing, and recalls the choice of Adam to join Eve in her "fallen" state.

<sup>175</sup>Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 58.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Fordham, p. 57. In much of his writing, as well as in his relationships, Jung revealed himself to be a believer in a "right role" for women, one outside of which she will be neither happy nor fulfilled.

<sup>178</sup>Svetislav Stefanović, "Zur Offa-Thrytho Episode im Beowulf," EST, 69 (1934), 15-31.

<sup>179</sup>This allusion to Shakespeare's Tempest suggests a reference to The Taming of the Shrew, which presented the same scenario enacted by Modthryth.

<sup>180</sup>Norman E. Eliason, "The Thryth-Offa Digression in Beowulf," in Magoun, Jess B. Bessinger Jr. and Robert P. Creed, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1965) pp. 124-38.

<sup>181</sup>Hansen, p. 116.

<sup>182</sup>Bodkin, p. 163.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid, p. 160.

<sup>184</sup>Robert E. Kaske, "Beowulf and the Book of Enoch," Speculum, 46 (1971), 421-31.

<sup>185</sup>Signe M. Carlson, "The Monsters of Beowulf: Creations of Literary Scholars," JAF, 80 (1967), 357-64.

<sup>186</sup>Graves, p. 386. The psyche too has been described as "the mother of all human facts, of civilization, and of its destroyer, war." (Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 50.)

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., p. 406.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>196</sup>OCCL, p. 202.

<sup>197</sup>Graves, p. 29.

<sup>198</sup>The importance of mesure, or moderation in either secular or religious life was perhaps of minor importance to the audience of Beowulf, but the poet's condemnation is implied, nevertheless (cf. 480, 531, 1467), perhaps influenced by Saint Paul, Rom. 13:13.

<sup>199</sup>Or, as suggested, "accursed (female) monster of the deep," (Klaeber, p. 347) a designation which implies the inversion of the Earth Mother as Bodkin's terrifying "mother from the sea depths" (Bodkin, p. 160).

<sup>200</sup>Bettelheim, p. 68.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., p. 67, and see also Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 484.



<sup>202</sup>Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 484.

<sup>203</sup>Graves, p. 98.

<sup>204</sup>Kennedy has noted the Virgillian influence upon the poet's description of Grendel's pool [see Charles W. Kennedy, Beowulf, the Oldest English Epic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. xxiii.], but whether this influence was a direct one or one which derives from an image that exists in the collective unconscious as a universal mental landscape is difficult to assess. Just as myths from entirely divergent cultures resemble each other in startling particularities, so the symbolic landscape of internal experience may be everywhere the same, arising from an introjection of the suggestive elements of the natural landscape.

<sup>205</sup>Ives Hendrick, M.D., Facts and Theories of Psychoanalysis 3rd. ed. (1934; rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), pp. 47-49.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>207</sup>Bodkin, p. 217.

<sup>208</sup>Since we are speaking of men, primarily, when referring to Beowulf as the protagonist in this struggle, and since the poem was presumably written by a man, documenting and interpreting a masculine cultural process, we may, while understanding the bisexuality of the libido, revert to this frame of reference to note that the resolution of the Oedipus complex confers a new independence on the young man, whose primary psychological task, as consciously perceived, is achieving separation from dependence on the mother.

<sup>209</sup>The name, "Hrunting," is suggestive of an organic aggression that seems to derive from the guttural sound "hr..." Many of the OE words beginning with this sound refer to parts of the body (hre~~x~~er, "breast," "heart") to violent action (hreosan, "fall, or "rush") to the thrill of conquest (hremig, "exulting," and hre~~x~~, "triumph") to a joy that seems purely physical (hro~~x~~or, "joy" or "benefit" cognate with hre ) as opposed to the sense of joy implied in words such as gamen and dream, as well as to pain (hream, "scream") physical decay (hra, "corpse") and death (hryre). A possible derivation of the verb hrinan, "to touch" or "reach" or, possibly, "hurt" (see Klaeber, p. 360) the name Hrunting associates this sword intimately with the body, its desires, responses, and vulnerability.



<sup>210</sup>The etymology of the word "sex" is traced by the C.O.D. to ME from the OF sexe or the L sexus, which was perhaps originally derived from secare, "to cut," leading to a natural association with the OE seax, "knife." It is even, perhaps, possible that this association may be made through the development of the OE word seax itself, in the same way the OE Su Seaxan became Sussex. The linguistic link between sexuality and aggression is further suggested by the masculine and feminine pronouns se and seo, which do seem to bear allophonic and orthographic similarity to the OE seax. The implication of cutting, or division, is perhaps in keeping with the mystical and religious apprehension of a primordial "separation" of an original bisexual entity, a process which could not, of course, have taken place without the energy of the aggressive instinct, which seeks to "separate" the organism from the being of other entities.

<sup>211</sup>Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," pp. 145-48.

<sup>212</sup>Bodkin, p. 61. See also Jung, Four Archetypes, pp. 50 - 68 for a full treatment of rebirth as an archetypal pattern.

<sup>213</sup>Lee, p. 206.

<sup>214</sup>Bodkin, p. 252.

<sup>215</sup>Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 140.

<sup>216</sup>Bodkin, p. 66.

<sup>217</sup>Bodkin, p. 49.

<sup>218</sup>Clark Hall, Beowulf, p. 97.

<sup>219</sup>Liddell and Scott, eds., Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), p. 489.

<sup>220</sup>Rycroft, p. 161. "Suppression usually refers to conscious, voluntary inhibition of activity in contrast to repression, which is unconscious, automatic, and instigated by anxiety not by an act of will."

<sup>221</sup>Encyclopedia of World Mythology, p. 225.

<sup>222</sup>Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 416.

<sup>223</sup>Becker, p. 162.



224 Becker, p. 163.

225 Bodkin, p. 225.

226 Kliman, "Women in Early English Literature," p. 40.

227 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 19. "The androgyny of Christ is the utmost concession the Church has made to the problem of opposites."

228 Bodkin, p. 163.

229 Ibid.

230 George J. Engelhardt, "Beowulf 3150," MLN, 68 (1953), 538. John C. Pope, "Beowulf 3150 - 3151: Queen Hygd and the Word 'Geomeowle,'" MLN, 70 (1955), 77 - 87.

231 Klaeber, p. 230.

232 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 27. Alfred Douglas, The Tarot (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 79.

233 Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), p. 4.

234 Ibid.

235 Ibid.

236 Fordham, p. 70.

237 Bodkin, p. 217.

238 Jung, Psychology and Religion (1976), par. 82.

239 Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. II (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 323.

240 Jung, "Aion," in Psyche and Symbol, pp. 22-24, 35-36 ff.

241 Klaeber, p. lxi.

242 Wilson, ed., p. 36. Recent controversy on the dating of Beowulf as presented by Colin Chase, ed., The Dating of Beowulf (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), does not affect this speculation.

<sup>243</sup>Crossley-Holland, p. 175.

<sup>244</sup>The Odin/Woden parallels in Beowulf have been noted by many scholars, who find a suggestive allusion in the fate of Herebeald, l. 2444-71.

<sup>245</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion, (1976), par. 82.

<sup>246</sup>Aquinas' Doctrine of Analogy includes a treatment of the practice of ascribing several names to the one divinity which may be relevant to the many Anglo-Saxon names for God in Beowulf. Alwalda, "Omnipotent one;" Andwalda, "Ruler;" F der, "Father;" Metod, "Governor, Ordainer of Fate;" and Wealdend, "The Lord," are all used in addition to the term God, and all denote a particular aspect or function of the deity as perceived by those who contemplate the nature of the divine. Aquinas suggests that "...by means of a name we express things in the way in which the intellect conceives them." But he goes on to observe that "the higher an intellect is, the more it can know more things through one likeness, while a lesser intellect manages to know many things only through likenesses." The whole of mankind falls into this latter category, and Aquinas sees the necessity of giving God many names: "For, since we cannot know Him naturally except by arriving at Him from His effects, the names by which we signify His perfection must be diverse...Were we able to understand the divine essence itself as it is and give to it the name that belongs to it, we would express it by only one name." [St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Doctrine of Analogy," in Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion, 2nd, ed., John Hicks, ed. (1964; rpt., New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 44-48.]

<sup>247</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion (1938), p. 103.

<sup>248</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>250</sup>Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 37. Jung also suggests, in "Aion" (Psyche and Symbol, p. 60), that "The irreconcilable nature of the opposites in Christian psychology is due to their moral accentuation."

<sup>251</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion (1938), p. 102.

<sup>252</sup>Klaeber, p. lix.



253 Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 437.

254 Fordham, p. 40.

255 Ibid.

256 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 37.

257 Ibid.

258 Judy Allen and Jeanne Griffiths, The Book of the Dragon (London: Orbis Publishing, 1979), p. 9.

259 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John 3:14).

260 Bodkin, p. 277.

261 Jung, Symbols of Transformation Vol. 5 of The Collected Works, p. 382.

262 Ibid., p. 259.

263 G. N. Garmonsway, trans., The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (London: J. M. Dent, 1953), p. 55. From the Laud Chronicle (E) 793:

In this year terrible portents appeared over Northumbria, and miserably frightened the inhabitants: these were exceptional (high winds and) flashes of lightening, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air.

264 Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition (London: Octopus Books, 1974), p. 144.

265 Lee, p. 215.

266 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. 5 of The Collected Works, p. 382, n. 174.

267 Ibid., p. 382.

268 Bodkin, p. 287.

269 Ibid.

270 Crossley-Holland pp. 150-61.

<sup>271</sup>Not that the poet himself would have been in the least troubled by such questions.

<sup>272</sup>Burton Raffel, trans., Beowulf (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 118.

<sup>273</sup>Clark Hall, trans., Beowulf, pp. 172-73.

<sup>274</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion (1938) p. 92.

<sup>275</sup>Klaeber, p. 215.

<sup>276</sup>Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 114, n. 2. In German folklore the raven must suffer thirst because he alone did not mourn the death of Christ, and in the Bible the raven failed to return when Noah sent him forth from the Ark.

<sup>277</sup>William Butler Yeats, The Collected Poems, 2nd. ed. (1933; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1950), p. 265.

<sup>278</sup>Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 467.

<sup>279</sup>Ibid.

<sup>280</sup>Ibid., pp. 463-70.

<sup>281</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 282.

<sup>282</sup>Carl G. Jung, "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass," in Psyche and Symbol, p. 223.

<sup>283</sup>Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 138.

<sup>284</sup>Erich Fromm, quoted in Becker, p. 26.

<sup>285</sup>Becker, p. 26.

<sup>286</sup>"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:8)

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." (Rom. 7:5)



287 Crossley-Holland, p. 33.

288 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:6)

289 Barbara Tuchman, A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century (New York: Knopf, 1978), p. 109.

290 Fordham, p. 60.

291 Marie-Louise von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," in Man and His Symbols, Carl G. Jung, ed., (London: Aldus Books, 1964), p. 196.

292 Crossley-Holland, p. 173.

293 Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 89. "It was not the man Jesus who created the myth of the god-man. It existed many years before his birth."

294 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 55.

295 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. 5 of The Collected Works, p. 302.

296 Carl G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of Soul (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1933), p. 113. "One of these primordial thoughts is the idea of life after death."

297 Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 280.

298 Fordham, p. 60.

299 Encyclopedia of Magic and Superstition (London: Octopus Books, 1974), p. 32.

300 Ibid.

301 Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 22.

302 Bodkin, p. 170.

303 Carl G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 38.

304 Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 478.

305 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. 5 of The Collected Works, p. 303. "His wholeness implies a tremendous tension of opposites paradoxically at one with themselves, as in the cross, their most perfect symbol."

306 Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 477.

307 Ibid., p. 478.

308 Ibid., p. 479.

309 Ibid., p. 486.

310 Ibid., p. 479.

311 Ibid.

312 Ibid.

313 Ibid.

314 Bodkin, p. 278.

315 Ibid., p. 277.

316 Ibid., p. 279.

317 Ibid., p. 280.

318 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 351. The Anthropos is a term adopted from the Greek (man) by Jung to express the essential nature of the Self. In Western civilization this figure has come to be identified with Christ, while in the East he is identified with Krishna or with Buddha. Jewish mysticism calls him Adam Kadmon, while in the Old Testament he appears as the "Son of Man." Jung has referred to him as "the Christ in every man," or Cosmic Man. In all cases, he is a figure of transcendent proportions, who "points to an unknowable secret - to the ultimate meaning of human existence." (M-L. von Franz, in Man and His Symbols, pp. 202-203.)

319 Bodkin, p. 287.

320 Ibid., p. 285.



CHAPTER V

<sup>321</sup>Becker, The Denial of Death. This is the thesis of Becker's book.

<sup>322</sup>Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 111.

<sup>323</sup>Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. 5 of The Collected Works, p. 438. In this conflict, the serpent is a common image of the involutory stage of life-into-death, often in a castrating role. Jung envisions the serpent as "analogous to the end of the world," and points out that in Norse myth the deluge was expected to begin when the Midgard Serpent (Jormungandr) "rises up for universal destruction." (p. 438, n. 87). See also Modern Man in Search of a Soul, pp. 99 - 111, for a practical application of the kinetic theory discussed in Symbols of Transformation. The problems associated with the apparent contradiction in the nature of the libido may be reduced, in the neurotic (or psychotic) personality, to a simple formula: "In youth it denotes fear of life; in age, fear of death." (Symbols of Transformation, p. 439.)

<sup>324</sup>Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 348. These, of course, were the last words of Christ.

<sup>325</sup>In considering the "possibility" of an "inevitability," the reader is referred to the wisdom of the late William Saroyan, whose last words reportedly were, "I always knew that death was inevitable, but I always thought that I would be the exception."

<sup>326</sup>Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 111. "...this is why all great religions hold the promise of a life beyond; it makes it possible for mortal man to live."

<sup>327</sup>Becker, p. 20.

<sup>328</sup>In Greek myth, too, Eros and Thanatos are inseparable.

<sup>329</sup>Jung, Four Archetypes, p. 66.

<sup>330</sup>Jung, Psychological Types, Vol. 6 of The Collected Works, p. 478.

<sup>331</sup>Ibid.

<sup>332</sup>Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. 298.

333 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. II, p. 432.

334 Ibid.

335 Ibid., pp. 303 - 04.

336 Ibid., p. 303.

337 Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 106.

338 Plato, Meno, 351. Jung (and possibly the poet) derived inspiration from the great philosopher's theory of Forms, to which many of Jung's ideas may be related.

339 Clark Hall, trans., Beowulf, p. 139. This is Clark Hall's translation of the word hildfreca (2366a).

340 To all appearances, and despite the obvious parallels between Christ and Beowulf discerned by most scholars, these two figures seem to be rather more mirror images of one another than identical. While Christ was outwardly passive, submitting in absolute trust to the tangible and objective forces of His society, as indicated by His passive acceptance of the Crucifixion, He was inwardly active, heroically engaging in a cosmic struggle between the perceived polarities of evil (as manifest during His time of temptation) and good, with which He aligned Himself. Beowulf, while outwardly active, battling in the fyr-wyrm a tangible projection, or objectification, of a perceived evil, was inwardly in passive submission to the over-riding power of Wyrð, which subsumes both good and evil. Both Beowulf and Christ were reluctant to undertake the final conflict, but neither doubted either its necessity or the inevitability of its outcome.

341 OCCL, p. 137.

342 According to Clark Hall, A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, p. 20, eorðscraf is used to translate sepulchrum in King Alfred's translation of Gregory's Pastoral Care.

343 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 92.

344 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Vol. 12 of The Collected Works, p. 159.

345 Bodkin, p. 170.

346 See above, p. 182.



347 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. II, p. 436.

348 Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 118, indicate that materia and materies are from the same root with mater.

349 Jung, The Symbolic Life, Vol. 18 of The Collected Works, p. 91.

350 Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 38.

351 A. C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 84.

352 Bodkin, p. 21.

353 Ibid., p. 215.

354 Ibid., p. 281.

355 Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 124.

356 Yeats, "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," in Collected Poems, pp. 294-95.

357 This is Berkeley's contention.

358 The antithesis, from Descartes: Cogito ergo sum.

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GLOSSARY

anima: the unconscious feminine side of a man

animus: the unconscious masculine side of a woman

archetype: a content of the collective unconscious which is the psychological counterpart of instinct. Also loosely used to designate a collective image or symbol

collective: psychic contents which are not common to one individual, but to many. When these are unconscious they are termed the collective unconscious

complex: an affectively toned group of associated ideas

ego: the centre of the conscious mind

individuation: the process of becoming an individual

instinct: an unconsciously determined impulse, or action which is collective

libido: psychic energy

persona: the facet of personality which is turned to the world and by which a relationship with the environment is made

personal unconscious: repressed memories, wishes, emotions, and subliminal perceptions of a personal nature

projection: the transmitting of a subjective process into an object

psyche: a necessary postulate defining the subject matter of psychology, and as such including the conscious and the unconscious

self: the centre of the totality of ego and unconscious, and/or the synthesis of ego and unconscious

shadow: the unconscious 'natural' side of a human being



symbol: an expression of something relatively unknown which cannot be conveyed in any other way.

The above terms are defined in the sense in which they are generally used by Jung, as his usage sometimes differs slightly from the ordinary, or from that of other psychologists.

From: Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, 3rd ed. (1953; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966)  
pp. 146 - 47.













