

The Anglo-Saxon sea and the semantics of space

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Abstract

This paper addresses an aspect of lexical organization that identifies the sea as a key concept in the Anglo-Saxon construct of space, force, and motion and that describes a cultural semantic perspective about the sea, or large bodies of water. The spatial analysis indicates the cultural perceptions of the sea and provides information about the movement of water, the activity of people and objects through the sea, and cognitive connections of the sea to emotional states. The study proposes that Old English *sǣ* ‘sea’ exemplifies a key word supporting a semantically related lexical array across several word classes.

Key words: cultural semantics, lexical organization, space, Old English, landscape, sea, emotion

1 Introduction

The Old English lexicon possesses an extensive number of spatial nouns¹ (*sǣ* ‘sea’, *mere* ‘ocean’, *flōd* ‘mass of water’), motion verbs (*faran* ‘go’, *flēotan* ‘float’, *drencan* ‘drown’), adjectives (*ceald* ‘cold’, *meresmylde* ‘sea-calm’, *dēop* ‘deep’), and locative and directional prepositions and verbal prefixes (*ofer* ‘over’, *on* ‘upon’, *ūp* ‘up’) that participate in lexical sets to denote container-like properties of large bodies of water, the sea especially, in various ways. I will refer to this set of semantically related lexemes as

¹ Words to denote the sea occur in all three genders and across dialects the same word, *sǣ* ‘sea’ for example, may occur as both masculine and feminine. A semantic approach to grammatical gender indicates that gender may reflect specific space-related concepts about water, but given that a noun’s gender assignment varies across dialects, conclusions about the role of gender are difficult to draw (Kitson 1990).

the *sǣ*-complex. Cognitively, the sea represents an image schema (Méndez-Naya 2014) around which Anglo-Saxons organized, for example, personal experiences about the dangers of travel by sea or significant religious concepts associated with bodies of water that feature in biblical stories. Anglo-Saxon writings mention the sea in historical explanations of the arrival of Germanic peoples in Britannia, in poetry about the wandering that is the result of the agonizing loss of one's lord, and in prose accounts that show the ultimate power of water. Since many genres preserve ideas about the sea, Anglo-Saxon literature suggests the sea is a salient cultural concept (Wierzbicka 1997; Sobecki 2011). Buck (1949: 36) comments on the concept of the sea:

‘Sea’ is understood here as covering the most general terms applied to large bodies of water and used in such a phrase as ‘by land and sea’. But between ‘sea’ and ‘lake’ there is no rigid demarcation (either by size, or as salt vs. fresh water), and the same word or related group may serve for either or both, or shift its prevailing application with changed physical conditions.

Landscape, generally used here to include all geographic features, constitutes distinct cultural ideas and practices (Hirsch 1995; Clarke 2011). The Anglo-Saxon landscape shows the physical world of the sea as a cultural construct that motivates the particular organization of the lexicon about the sea. In other words, descriptions of the sea-space mark out points of interest such as the force of water or the movement of people, ships, and creatures as they engage in journeys and battles; the *sǣ*-complex provides a lexical framework for linguistic information about the sea. The relationship between space and semantics accounts for patterns among the lexemes that indicate events, behaviors, emotions, and beliefs preserved in various Anglo-Saxon texts. The sea comprises a cultural and a physical space that at the linguistic level organizes words in the Old English lexicon into related sets of configurations; the language forms many compounds with *sǣ* and its various synonyms to denote people and objects associated with the sea. Sea lexemes in the aforementioned word classes illustrate dynamic relations to one another in the sea-land-sky parameter, for instance, to exemplify the grammar of motion events.

Specifically, lexemes in the *sǣ*-complex present vertical and horizontal distinctions. Words that indicate the sea form the vertical foundation of a 3-way opposition that includes nouns denoting the land and sky above the sea. An example of this spatial opposition includes *holm* ‘ocean’, *holmclif* ‘sea-cliff’, and *merecandel* ‘sea-candle/sun’.

Horizontally, a 2-way opposition describes movement (of people, creatures, or the water itself) from point A to point B as demonstrated by the nouns *ȳþfaru* ‘wave-going’, *brimrād* ‘sea-road’, and *sāhete* ‘sea-surgings’, respectively. The vertical and horizontal planes also inform contexts and figurative expressions that connect the sea with the mind. Anglo-Saxon poets often present the *mod* ‘mind’ as (vertically) experiencing emotional highs and lows in the context of a real or imagined journey (horizontally) over wide sea expanses. Godden (2002: 305) argues that *mod* semantically functions to indicate emotion and that in Anglo-Saxon literature, we often see the “compulsion to send it over the sea; uncontrolled, the mind hallucinates and fantasizes.” Harbus (2012: 36) notes Anglo-Saxon writers frequently employed the mind as container metaphor in secular and religious literature to indicate mental activity as “travel to, from and within this repository” and particularly references the analogy given in *The Wanderer* (Wan 50–54 in *The wanderer* n.d.) where, in the context of reminiscences, the memories of companions often float away.

The language data for this study come primarily from poetic texts, although some examples from non-poetic sources are mentioned. Several Old English poems reveal the sea to readers almost as a voyage of discovery. Specific cultural motifs—battle, death, loyalty, adventure, glory, heroism—come into relationship through an examination of space relations in the *sā*-complex. Therefore, apparently disparate Anglo-Saxon ideas concerning religion, geography, politics, flora, fauna, ethics, and kinship correlate lexically through the sea as a defined cultural space. For example, Kilker (2017) points out that *āc* ‘oak’ (MRune 77 in *Rune poem* n.d.) metonymically indicates a boat and two kennings for ‘sea’ occur consecutively in the same section, *ganotes bæþ* ‘gannet’s bath’ (79) and *garsecg* ‘tempest-ocean’² (79); the poet relates the physical entities of oak and sea to the abstract value of *æþele treow* ‘noble faith’ (80). Old English *æschiere* ‘ash-army’ indicates a naval force (Mald 69 in *The battle of Maldon* n.d.); Pons-Sanz (2008) suggests the use of *æsc* to refer to a Viking ship may indicate an Anglo-Saxon association of the tree’s wood quality with the vessel’s size and efficiency in attacks.

Poetic language provides the visual, symbolic, and emotive elements in descriptions of the seascape, especially through kennings and other

² The *Dictionary of Old English A to H online* (DOE) (2016) notes a disputed etymology for *garsecg*, but offers the general meaning of ‘ocean’. The first element *gar* means ‘spear’ in the sense of ‘tempest’ and *secg* may derive from *secg*¹ ‘warrior’, *secg*² ‘ocean’, *secg*³ ‘sedge’ (a grass-like plant that grows in wet places), or *secg*⁴ ‘sword’.

compounds, alliteration, and derivation. In *Andreas* (n.d.), Jesus is disguised as a sea captain and Andreas, cast with attributes of a Germanic warrior, questions the Lord about how he can accomplish his journey *ofer dēop gelād* ‘over deep course’, a reference to a sea journey (190). In the brief space of lines 195–221 the poet provides several lexemes to denote ‘sea’: *holma*, *sæstreamas*, *swanrade*, *wæterbrogan*, *meres ende*. In a discussion of the importance of linguistic forms in poetry, Thier (2011: 71) examines terms for ‘boat’ in *Andreas* and notes that the forms *scip*, *ceol*, *bat*, *flota*, *lid*, *naca*, and *cræfta* occur within the space of 300 lines. Robert (2008) proposes that a specific context, in this case the sea, makes local synonymy possible and, furthermore, that the lexical development of equivalences is a core feature of language. In comments on “the great symbolic significance of the sea in Anglo-Saxon England” and “its centrality to ideas of travel and communication,” North & Bintley (2016: 89–90) offer a detailed thematic and stylistic analysis of *Andreas* and note the numerous words for the sea. An explanation for how the sea became so prominent in the lexicon must begin with evidence for the status of *sǣ* as a key word. The Anglo-Saxon scop created visual imagery rooted in the natural world through patterns of lexis; Kilker (2017: 311) notes that texts are “human, cultural creations shaped by the physical materiality of the ecological world within a sphere of meaning exchange.” The study of poetic forms in particular provides the basis for the establishment of a cognitive framework for the *sǣ*-complex.

While the communicative, phatic, and aesthetic functions of the spoken and written language of a culture that thrived between the 5th and 11th centuries and the meaning of the ‘sea’ to people who lived on its edge and crossed its interior can be difficult to determine today, evidence for *sǣ* as a key word is based on textual sources, etymological analysis, and archeological data. Very simply, a key word is a culturally salient word; a key word is meaningful to the language culture. Wierzbicka (1997) proposes the presence of key words indicates perspectives in cultural semantics, that the vocabulary of a language offers a cultural elaboration of specific ideas that are of importance. Old English *sǣ* is one such key word and furthermore it is at the center of a lexical field, or complex, of vocabulary.

2 Identification of *sǣ* as a key word

According to Wierzbicka (1997), we can identify a key word in several ways. First, key words are common and frequently occur in the language; they appear in collocations, clichés, and grammatical constructions. The lexemes in the *sǣ*-complex constitute a core vocabulary of cultural ideas, emotions, and attitudes. Old English *sǣ* and its synonyms occur in a wide array of texts across several genres. The *sǣ*-complex has a noticeable presence in Anglo-Saxon historical, heroic, and meditative writings, e.g. the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Beowulf*, and *The Wanderer*, respectively. As noted, the sea frames religious contexts as well (Novacich 2011). In the Old English *Exodus*, for example, the poet describes the escaping Israelites in terms of a *sǣmanna sīð* ‘seamen’s journey’ (Ex 33 in Marsden 2004: 141); one can only imagine how fascinating a story this may have been to an Anglo-Saxon audience whose lexicon contained so many references to the sea. The *wæter* ‘water’ is *wǣpna ful* ‘full of weapons’ (Ex 5 in Marsden 2004: 140), a description which refers to the Egyptian warriors and at the same time alludes to the pre-Christian Germanic custom of depositing weapons and other valuables into sacrificial lakes (Simek 2004).³ The raised waters are *meretorras* ‘sea-towers’ and the sea as a force possesses *mōd* ‘mind’ or ‘will’ or ‘spirit’. The personified sea can act of its own volition (Ex 490–491; 494–497 in Marsden 2004: 142):

- (1) *Gārsecg* *wēdde*
 sea became mad
- ūp* *ātēah*, *on slēap*.
 up (it) rose upon-slid (them)
- Flōdweard* *geslōh*
 flood-guardian struck
- unhlēowan* *wāg* *alde* *mēce*
 unprotective wave (with) ancient sword
- þæt* *ðy* *dēaðdrepe* *drihte* *swǣfon*,
 that (by) the death-blow troops died

³ See Lucas (1994) for an analysis of Christian themes present in the poem; for example, he argues the poet describes the Israelites as ‘sea-men’ to imply the presence of a ship, allegorically the Ship of the Church.

synfullra *swēot.*
 guilty ones' army

‘The sea became mad. It drew itself up and slid down on them...the flood-guardian struck the unprotective wave with an ancient sword so that by that death blow the troops died, the army of the guilty.’

Marsden (2004: 138) points out “the poet draws freely on his OE wordhoard to produce a bewildering number of more or less synonymous words for the sea, ocean, water, and currents”. Perhaps this is so if “the real ‘source’ of *Exodus* is the Christian tradition in which the poem must have been written” (Lucas 1994: 53), the tradition as it existed in Anglo-Saxon England, since there is no single Latin literary source. In *Genesis B*, the poet describes Satan’s struggle against his fetters by way of a sea metaphor (*rīdeð racentan sāl* ‘rides the chain’s loop’) that suggests a ship riding at anchor (GenB 35 in Marsden 2004: 133); Marsden (2004: 130) notes the poet presents Satan’s story as “a human drama driven by psychological realism.” The poets provided and created Anglo-Saxon interpretations of Christian stories. Old English *scip* ‘ship’ and a number of its synonyms frequently occur in religious contexts since some Christian stories involve an aspect of the sea; Thier (2014) discusses *arc* and *lid* in *Genesis A*, *sæflota* and *wægflota* in *Andreas*, and *bāt* and *hærnflota* in *Guthlac*. However, of note is the number of Old English ship terms associated with poetic language such as *lid* and the compounds with *flota* (Clark Hall 1960; *Dictionary of Old English: A to H online* (DOE) 2016).

Old English poetry identifies aspects of the Anglo-Saxon gaze through its lexicon (Harbus 2012). In many spheres of activity regarding travels and journeys, invasions and battles, and miracles and monsters, writing about the sea was so commonplace that the sea became an integral part not only of culture, but of identity, that is, of Englishness (Sobecki 2011; Gorski 2012; Schustereder 2014). In later centuries, Britannia, a helmeted woman holding a trident, would come to personify the relationship of the sea with a national identity rooted in the political power to travel the oceans in the development of empire. The numerous metaphors and phrases of the *sæ*-complex comprise an unstructured aesthetic (Mukařovský 1964), which represents a trend toward uniqueness in the cultural elaboration of vocabulary.

In the unstructured aesthetic, attention is directed from the message to the linguistic sign used to encode the message; the unstructured aesthetic may be phonological (e.g. alliteration) or morphological (e.g. compound

words). The sea in certain texts is arguably a foregrounded concept via particular compound words typically associated with poetic forms. Examples of poetic references to the sea of this sort include *yð*, *mere*, *holm*, *brim*, and various compounds derived from them: *yðgewinn* ‘wave-strife’, *meredēað* ‘sea-death’, *holmðracu* ‘sea-fury’, and *brimceald* ‘ocean-cold’ (Clark Hall 1960). The presence of lexemes associated primarily with poetic or literary language indicates a question of functional relativity as well; the discourse practices reveal thought through cultural context and interpretation (Lucy 1997). Unstructured, innovative forms are evident in the development of literary metaphors, especially in exocentric compounds for ‘ship’ such as *brimhengest* ‘sea-horse’ (DOE 2016). The *Beowulf* poet denotes a sail as *mere-hrægla* ‘sea-clothes’ (Beo 1905 in Heaney 2000: 130). Hence, one mechanism of metaphorical extension in the development of exocentric compounds in the *sǣ*-complex relies on syntactic sequencing with a sea lexeme as the first component.

Although the sea is not a concept unique to Germanic peoples, the presence of a specifically Germanic lexeme is most interesting. Lass (1994: 181–182) notes that there are certain Germanic words that apparently have no correlation in other Indo-European languages; specifically, he cites Old English *sǣ* ‘sea’. In an earlier work, Buck (1949: 37) had proposed that the connection of *sǣ* from Germanic **saiwi* to other Indo-European forms is “wholly doubtful.” Lass (1994) additionally cites Old English *bāt* ‘boat’, *hand* ‘hand’, and *eorþe* ‘dry land’; Buck (1949: 37) had proposed that *bāt* is related to other Germanic forms,⁴ *hand* is of a disputed general Germanic etymology, and *eorþe* has uncertain root connections to other branches of Indo-European.⁵ The textual evidence shows these four words participate in the lexical organization of the *sǣ*-complex; that is, we can find these words together in Anglo-Saxon texts. From *The Wanderer*, we have a description of the cold, harsh climate associated with the sea (Wan 1–5 in Marsden 2004: 329):

⁴ More recently, Thier (2014: 28) suggests that *bāt* is either of non-Indo-European origin or perhaps derives from IE **bheid-* ‘to split, bite’.

⁵ In this case, it may only be the phonological form of the lexeme, the extended *o*-stem, which is characteristically Germanic since Greek and Welsh may have cognate forms *érazē* and *erw*, respectively.

- (2) *Oft* *him* *ānhaga* *āre* *gebīdeð*,
often (by) himself solitary-one grace experiences

metudes *miltse*, *þēah þe* *hē* *mōdcearig*
ordainer's mercy though he mind-anxious

geond *lagulāde* *longe* *sceolde*
throughout sea-paths far must

hrēran *mid* *hondum* *hrīmcealde* *sāē*,
stir with hands ice-cold sea

wadan *wræclāstas*.
(to) travel exile-paths

‘Often by himself the solitary person experiences grace, the ordainer’s mercy, although, anxious of mind, he far throughout seaways must row with his hands the ice-cold sea to travel paths of exile.’

In *Beowulf*, we see two of these Germanic roots in a compound word, *sāē-bāt* ‘sea-boat’, a term according to Clark Hall (1960) associated mainly with poetic language (Beo 632–633 in Heaney 2000: 42):

- (3) *Ic þæt* *hogode*, *þā* *ic on* *holm gestāh*,
I that intended when I to sea went

sāē-bāt *gesæt* *mid* *mīnra* *secga* *gedriht* [...]
sea-boat sat with my warriors’ company

‘I intended that (direct object), when I went to sea, sat in the ship in the company of my warriors[...].’

And in *The Phoenix*, the sea moves to engulf the *eorðan ymbhwyrft* ‘extent of the land’ (Phoen 41–45 in Whitelock 1967: 151):

- (4) *Swā iū wætres þrym*
 thus formerly water's force
- ealne middangeard, mereflōd þeahte*
 all middle-enclosure sea-flood covered
- eorðan ymbhwyrft, þā se æþela wong*
 earth's extent when the noble plain
- æghwæs onsund, wið yðfare*
 altogether solid against wave-course
- gehealden stōd hrēora wāga [...]*
 protected stood fierce waves

‘Thus the force of water, the sea flood, covered the entire world of old, the extent of the land, when the completely solid noble plain stood protected against the wave-course of fierce waves [...].’

The archaeological record, moreover, supports the identification of *sæ* as a key word. What is most interesting about the sea as a motivating cultural concept is the ship burials, for example at Sutton Hoo and Snape. Howe (2002) contextualizes the Anglo-Saxon funerary ship as the re-imagining of a landscape inherited from the conquering and invading Germanic tribes; furthermore, buried boats may indicate a belief in death as a sea journey to the other world (Simek 2004). Remarkably, extant Anglo-Saxon historical texts do not comment on those landscape features that predate the Romano-British period. There are no mentions of henges or other earlier earthworks. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon place-names provide ample evidence that the sea influenced the landscape nomenclature.

In his discussion of inland hydronymic terms, Jacobsson (1997) finds roughly 1000 place-names and landmarks in the form of compound words that feature a component indicating water; etymological examples include Seamer (*sæ* + *mere*), Merton (*mere* + *tūn* ‘farm’), Coldwell (*cald* + *wella*), and Groundwell (*grund* + *wella*). Gorski (2012) argues that England’s geopolitical standing as an island kingdom made the sea important because skillful kingship depended often on successful trade and maritime power. The presence of an Anglo-Saxon heptarchy and the chronological phases of wealthy graves in southern England may indicate demand for control of the coastline with northerly kingdoms invading and annexing southern areas (Arnold 1997; Carver 2005). In addition, the political management of land and people created the financial surplus to support a vibrant over-seas

economy in Kent through trade in gold, amber, shell, garnet, pottery, glass, mercury, and ivory. If the Sutton Hoo ship burial represents the grave and grave goods of a powerful lord or king, possibly Rædwald of East Anglia (early 7th century), then the sea symbolizes political power and the ship the wielder of that power.

3 Space patterns and force dynamics

In a particularly interesting Old English excerpt from Ælfric's *Sermones catholici*, the author's account of events in the life of Christ emphasizes vertical space, sea–land–sky (*sǣ–eorðe–sunne*), rather than the chronological order of Christ walking on water, Christ suffering on the cross before death, and the earth shaking at the resurrection after death (ÆCHom I, 15 157–164 in Marsden 2004: 191):

- (5) *Heofonas oncnēowon Crīstes ācennednysse, for ðan ðā hē ācenned*
 Heavens recognized Christ's birth because when he born

wæs þā wearð gesewen nīwe steorra.
 was then was seen new star

Sǣ oncnēow Crīst,
 Sea recognized Christ
þā ðā hē ēode mid drīgum fōtum uppon hire yðum.
 then when he walked with dry feet upon its waves

Eorðe oncnēow, þā ðā hēo eal bifode on Crīstes āriste.
 Earth recognized then when it utterly shook at Christ's resurrection

Sēo sunne oncnēow,
 the sun recognized
þā ðā hēo wearð apýstrod on Crīstes þrōwunge fram
 then when it became dark on Christ's suffering from

middæge oð nōn.
 midday until nones

Stānas oncnēowon,
 Stones recognized
þā ðā hī tōburston on heora scyppendes forðsīðe.
 then when they shattered on their creator's departure

Hel oncnēow Crīst, þā ðā hēo forlēt hyre hæftlingas
 Hell recognized Christ then when it released its captives

ūt þurh ðæs hǣlendes hergunge.
 forth through the savior's harrowing.

‘The heavens recognized Christ’s birth because a new star was seen when he was born. The sea recognized Christ then when he walked with dry feet on its waves. The earth recognized him then when it utterly shook during Christ’s resurrection. The sun recognized him then when it became dark during Christ’s suffering from noon until three. The stones recognized him then when they shattered on their creator’s death. Hell recognized Christ then when it released its captives at the savior’s harrowing.’

The above passage indicates an Anglo-Saxon cultural interpretation of a story that seems rooted in the semantics of space rather than the chronology of the events. The vertical relation of land enclosed between sea and sky is also found in *Maxims II*, a text that describes the nature of the world and people in gnomic verses. Old English *ymb* ‘around’ obviously encodes horizontal meaning of water surrounding land, yet there is a vertical sense to *ymb* when the top and bottom limits to land are *lyfthelm* ‘sky’ and *laguflōd* ‘sea’, respectively, as mentioned in the text; verticality is also emphasized by context, namely water flowing down from the mountains (Max II 45–47 in Marsden 2004: 300):

(6) *Brim sceal sealte weallan,*
 ocean shall (with) salt seethe

lyfthelm and laguflōd ymb ealra landa gehwylc
 sky-cover and sea-tide around all lands each

flōwan, firgenstrēamas.
 flow mountain-streams

‘The ocean shall seethe with salt, clouds and sea tide around each and every land flowing, mountain streams.’

There is an extensive lexical field of literal and figurative expressions conveyed by adjectives, nouns, verbs, verbal prefixes, prepositions, and adverbs that denote a large mass of water or the powerful movement of water. Noun examples include *brimwylm* ‘ocean-surge’, *flōdweard* ‘wave-wall’, *holmweall* ‘sea-wall’, *meregrund* ‘sea-bottom’, and *meretorr* ‘sea-tower’, all of which exemplify a vertical aspect, and *brimstrēam* ‘water-

current', *flōdyð* 'flood-wave', *merefaroð* 'sea-surging', *sārima* 'sea-rim', and *yðlād* 'wave-way', all of which show a horizontal movement. There are compound nouns to connote the power of water, e.g. *flōdegisa* 'flood-horror', *holmmægen* 'wave-might', *holmðracu* 'sea-fury', *lagufæðm* 'water-embrace', *sābrōga* 'sea-terror', *wæterbrōga* 'water-dread', *wæterordāl* 'water-ordeal', and *yðgewinn* 'wave-strife'. In addition, there exist the corollary lexical sets that denote humans and animals that move through, across, in, and above the water, along with sundry other categories of creatures that dwell in the water; examples include *brimwīsa* 'sea-king', *brimfugol* 'sea-bird', *flotmann* 'sea-man', *merebāt* 'ocean-boat', *meremennen* 'sea-maiden', *sādraca* 'sea-dragon', and *sāliða* 'sea-sailor'. Finally, compounds form metaphors for *scip* 'ship' (*lagumearg* 'sea-horse', *merehūs* 'sea-house', *sāhengest* 'sea-horse', and *yðmearh* 'wave-horse') in addition to examples of metonymy (*brimwudu* 'sea-wood') and synecdoche (*yðbord* 'wave-side'). Adjectives typically indicate force and movement, but also describe temperature, fatigue, distance and color, for example *yðig* 'wavy/billowy' and *ceald* 'cold'.

Space patterns in the *sā*-complex show evidence of an absolute frame of reference, one that is based on the physical location as the reference point rather than on a person's perspective. The absolute frame of reference is exemplified by specific compound words. Old English formed compound words according to established patterns: noun-noun, numeral-noun, adjective-noun, pronoun-noun, adjective-adjective and, especially in poetry, noun-adjective (Chapman & Christensen 2007). The most common type of compound in Germanic is the determinative, in which the first element is the determinant and the second is the head, or determinatum (Lass 1994), for example *meretorht* 'sea-bright' (bright or radiant from the sea) and *sābeorg* 'sea-cliff' (cliff by the sea) The determinant modifies or specifies the head, or second element of the compound. Mukařovský (1964) suggests that foregrounding causes deviation from the usual usage. The determinant, or first element in a compound word, creates foregrounding by causing the determinatum, or second element, to signify an aspect of the sea: *wæterbrōga* 'sea-danger', *brimmann* 'sea-man', *merestræt* 'sea-street' indicating flood, sailor, and seaway, or *sāsteorra* 'sea-star' and *sāwudu* 'sea-wood' indicating guiding star and ship, respectively. The absolute framework is an environment-centered framework, or a domain-centered framework (Lucy 1997), and the determinant lexeme of Old English compounds functions as the indicator of

the spatial environment. The emphasis on the sea as a space is achieved morphologically through the determinant.

The compound noun represented by Old English *middangeard* ‘middle-earth’ occurs in all three major branches of Proto-Germanic (Lass 1994): North (e.g. Old Icelandic *mið-garþr*), West (the group to which English belongs), and East (e.g. Gothic *midjun-gards*). The concept of middle-earth relates to the *sǣ*-complex in terms of a horizontal continuum of the surface of the sea onto land or surrounding land, as in *ēalond* ‘waterland’, and in terms of a vertical continuum with land being the area between the sea and the sky. In *The Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan*,⁶ the sea turns into or becomes the land, *sēo sǣ in on ðæt lond* ‘the sea in toward that land’ (AO 14 in Whitelock 1967: 17), and the writer specifies that all that might be ploughed or serve as pasture land *līð wið ðā sǣ* ‘lies beside the sea’ (61). Noetzel’s (2014: 113–114) analysis of the poem *The Order of the World* sees land and sea in a dichotomous relationship as the poet describes the *lond wið wæge* ‘land with waves’ and the *flōd wið folde* ‘flood over land’ in an overlapping mutual, commutative horizontality (OrW 84–85 in *The order of the world* n.d.). When Beowulf and his companions return to their homeland, their ship (*sǣ-genga* ‘sea-goer’) travels *forð* ‘forth’ over waves and sea currents until finally the *cēol* ‘ship’ *up geprang* ‘hastened up’ and stood *on lande* ‘on land’ (Beo 1908–1913 in Heaney 2000: 130).⁷ Arguably, *up* in this passage indicates a continued forward (horizontal) movement of the ship to the shore. Particles and prepositions like *ūp* and *on* emphasize verticality, yet can also function to describe horizontal movement. While these passages serve to exemplify the horizontal spatial relationship between land and sea or the vertical relationship among sea, land, and sky, note that land and sky (as previously mentioned) are described with words from the sea lexicon: *sǣ*, *wæge*, and *flod*, for example. In *Maxims I*, a storm often brings waves, *storm oft holm gebringep* (Max I 50 in *Maxims I* n.d.), and the land in between sea and sky stands firm to calm the commotion between them (Deskis 2005: 337).⁸

⁶ The story was added to the Old English translation of Orosius’ *Historia adversum Paganos* (5th century) during the time of King Alfred (9th century) (Whitelock 1967).

⁷ Old English sources cited herein vary in spelling, for example *up/ūp* and *onhwerfan/ondhwerfan*.

⁸ The immediately preceding sentence in the same line (*Styran sceal mon strongum mode* ‘A man must guide a strong mind’) presents another example of the juxtaposition between the mind *mod* and the sea *holm*. Godden (2002: 300) describes this semantic aspect of *mod* as “an inner passion or willfulness, an intensification of the self that can

Furthermore, in the *sǣ*-complex the edge (and this word connotes downwardness) of the land that borders the sea is described in terms of the sea (e.g. *brimclif* ‘sea-cliff’, *merehwearf* ‘sea shore’ and *brimstæð* ‘sea-shore’), but the edge of the sea is not described in terms of the land. In this place-naming system, the sea is the determinant of the toponym. From the absolute perspective of the border between the sea and the land, moving away from the sea, or onto land, represents ‘up-ness’. Old English *ūp* indicates ‘up’, ‘upstream’, ‘upwards’, ‘ashore’. It would not matter on which side of the stream a person were standing because up-ness means vertically up from the water or horizontally away from the water (it is not a matter of left or right from a person’s point of view).

The topomnestic principle of naming-pointing involves several word classes and so the absolute frame of reference demonstrates related lexicogrammatical sets. “Down-ness” is a move vertically into the sea or horizontally toward the sea. Additional evidence for the vertical layers derives from the concept of *grund* ‘bottom’ in the sense of ‘depths’.⁹ DOE (2016) defines *grund* primarily in association with the “bottom, lowest part of anything” and as signifying “of the sea”. *Grundwong* ‘bottom-plain’ is a poetic term for the bottom of the sea. A place can be *grundlēas* ‘bottomless’ and the ghestliest creatures inhabit these unexplored realms; Grendel’s mother is the *grundwyrgen* ‘deep-accursed one’ or ‘accursed one of the deep’, another poetic compound. *Grund* represents the “downward limit of anything” (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2010) as in *grunddēope* ‘sea-depths’. Here is the scene from *Beowulf* in which the hero finds the lair of Grendel’s mother (Beo 1494–1500 in Marsden 2004: 281):

- (7) *Brimwylm* *onfēng*
 water-surging received
- hilderince.* *Ðā* *wæs* *hwīl* *dæges*
 battle-warrior then was period (of a) day
- ǣr* *hē* *þone* *grundwong* *ongytan* *mehte.*
 before he the bottom-place perceive could

be dangerous.” The poet emphasizes perhaps that one’s control of temper and behavior is socially beneficial.

⁹ Buck (1949) comments that *grund* (from Germanic **grunduz*, an unattested form) and its Germanic cognates denote a solid surface, not an area for cultivation. The etymological entry for ‘ground’ given in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2010) concurs.

Sōna *þæt onfunde,* *sē*¹⁰ *ðe flōda* *begong*
immediately that discovered he who waters' region

heorogīfre *behēold* *hund* *missēra,*
slaughter-greedy guarded one-hundred half-years

grim ond grædig, *þæt þær* *gumena* *sum*
fierceand greedy that there of the men a certain one

ælwihta *eard* *ufan* *cunnode.*
alien-creatures' abode from above explored

‘The turbulent water received the battle warrior. It took a good part of the day before he was able to discover the bottom of the waters. Immediately, she who had fiercely, ravenously guarded the region of waters for 50 years found out that a certain man from above explored the abode of alien creatures.’

Grendel’s mother as the *grundwyrge*, *merewīf*¹¹ ‘the deep-cursed-one, sea-woman’ is a personification of bottomness (Beo 1518–1519 in Heaney 2000: 104). As the ocean *grund* is a place of monsters, the Beowulf poet refers to Grendel as a *fēond on helle* ‘fiend from hell’ (Beo 101 in Heaney 2000: 8). Similarly, *grund* describes aspects of hell in *The Fall of the Angels* (GenB 302–303 in Whitelock 1967: 130):

(8) *For þon hē sceolde grund gesēcean*
for that he must bottom seek

heardes hellewītes, *þæs þe hē wann* *wið heofnes* *Waldend.*
(of the) hard hell-torment since he fought against heaven’s King

‘For that he must go to the bottom of the harsh torment of hell since he fought against heaven’s King.’

Satan must rule over the *sweartan helle grundes* ‘black abyss of hell’ (GenB 345–346 in Whitelock 1967: 131). In addition to denoting the bottom of the sea or other body of water, *grund* can refer to the bottom of hell, the depths of hell, and the abyss of hell (DOE 2016).

If *grund* represents the foundation, the absolute bottom, of the sea, then its application to land is analogical; the land as ground must also be the bottom of something, the space below the clouds, and the space of the

¹⁰ The masculine pronoun *sē* refers to Grendel’s mother.

¹¹ These are accusative forms.

clouds is *lyft* ‘sky’. The primary spatial orientation of the *sǣ*-complex is vertical up-ness. In *Exodus*, God raises the *wrætlicu wægfaru, oð wolcna hrōf* ‘wonderous wave-path, up (to the) clouds’ roof’ (Ex 298 in *Exodus* n.d.) and later the sea as a terrifying, sentient force seeks to return to its *ēce staðulas* ‘eternal foundations’, the seabed, after it drowns Pharaoh’s army (Ex 474 in *Exodus* n.d). The sea presents a bottom-up vertical perspective. In addition, out-ness indicates a movement up and away from a central point (Méndez-Naya 2014) such as the sea; therefore, *ūt* ‘out’ exemplifies vertical and horizontal movement as well.

Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 15) propose that having control or force is ‘up’, while being subject to control or force is ‘down’. ‘Up’ also indicates goodness, high status, virtue, and rationality, while ‘down’ connotes badness, low status, depravity, and emotionality. In the Old English *Exodus*, power is ‘up’ as the sea lifts itself and then forces down the Egyptians in Example (1). Furthermore, good is ‘up’ as it represents the realm of Beowulf and the human world and bad is ‘down’, where the underwater lair of Grendel’s mother is located. High status is ‘up’ and low status is ‘down’. In *Genesis B*, God *wearp* ‘threw down’ Satan, the *ofermōda cyning* ‘proud king’, to control *þæs grundes* ‘the abyss’ (GenB 338–349 in Whitelock 1967: 131). Virtue, represented by *heofonrīce* ‘heaven-kingdom, is ‘up’ and depravity is *grundlēase* ‘fathomless’ or ‘down’ and characteristic of hell (DOE 2016). In *The Seafarer*, the narrator describes his ‘down’ emotional state in terms of *hēan strēamas, sealtȳpa gelāc* ‘deep currents, salt waves’ tumult’ (Sea 34 in Marsden 2004: 225).

4 Verbs and motion encoding

In a discussion of motion event encoding in Indo-European, Verkerk (2014) notes five path domains: enter, exit, ascend, descend, and pass/cross. Old English verbs encompass these paths as well. In *The Whale*, the poet describes how the whale *nīþer gewiteþ* ‘downward goes’ dragging a ship of men as his plunder; the whale *bifæstedð scipu mid scealcum* ‘fastens the ship with its men’ in *deaðsele* ‘to the death-hall’, or the bottom of the sea (Whale 28–31 in *The whale* n.d.). This description presents descending motion through the adverb *nīþer* and the verb *gewiteþ*. In *Riddle 26*, the personified speaker claims that an enemy came along claiming his life; the enemy then wet him and *dȳfde on wætre* ‘plunged (him) in water’ (Rid 26 3 in Marsden 2004: 314); *dȳfan* ‘to plunge’ combines two paths, enter + descend. Terrible strangers (the Vikings) in

The Battle of Maldon plead that they must have *ūpgangan* ‘passage’ across a ford (Mald 87 in Marsden 2004: 258); the accusative noun *ūpgangan*, which combines two paths cross + exit in the horizontal plane, is derived from the verb *ūpgān* ‘to go up’. These examples show that path domains in Old English are complex because the verb morphology can illustrate combinations of the five basic path domains. Some of the Old English path verbs indicate enter+cross (*wadan* ‘go/advance’ or ‘wade’); others indicate pass+descend (*āweorpan* ‘forth-cast down’).

Derivational aspects of Old English verb morphology are significant to the lexical organization of the *sā*-complex in terms of encoding motion events. PATH refers to the trajectory of movement (e.g. *tō* ‘toward’ or *cuman* ‘come/go’), while MANNER describes the type of movement (*ȳðig* ‘billowy’ or *swimman* ‘swim’). If path is encoded in the verb, the language is a verb-framed language; if path is encoded in other word classes, the language is a satellite-framed language (Talmy 1985). Old English, like Proto-Indo-European, exhibits both verb-framed and satellite-framed features (Verkerk 2014). In Old English, the path of the motion can be encoded in verbs or in verbal prefixes and Old English manner verbs, for example, may take a path prefix. In addition, many of those verbal prefixes function lexically as path prepositions and, to an extent, path adverbs. Path (whether verb-framed or satellite-framed) and manner also participate in force dynamics.

Manner as encoded by *drēfe* ‘disturb’ in *Riddle 7* indicates force exerted on the water (Rid 7 1–2 in Marsden 2004: 313):

(9) *Hrægl mīn swīgað þonne ic hrūsan trede*
 garment mine is silent when I ground tread

oppe þā wīc būge oppe wado drēfe.
 or the dwelling occupy or waters disturb

‘My clothes are silent when I tread the ground or occupy my dwelling place or stir up waters.’

Beowulf’s fame rests on his willingness to brave the force, or motion, of the sea; the verbs *wunne* ‘fought’ and *flite* ‘quarreled’ indicate manner, or how Beowulf moved in the water, while the adjective *dēop* ‘deep’ a few lines later denotes the vertical path downward (Beo 506–510 in Heaney 2000: 34):

(10) *Eart þū sē Bēowulf, se þe wið Breca wunne,*
 are you the Beowulf, he who against Breca fought

on sīdne sē ymb sund flite,
 in wide sea around ocean quarreled

ðær git for wlence wada cunnedon
 where you-two for glory sea knew

ond for dol-gilpe on dēop wæter
 and for foolish-boasting in deep water

aldrum nēþdon?
 lives risked

‘Are you that Beowulf who fought against Breca, quarreled in the open sea around the ocean, where you both knew the sea for glory and risked your lives for foolish boasting in deep water?’

Other examples of forces in the *sē*-complex can be taken from *Beowulf*. The (preterite) verbs *tōdrāf* ‘apart-drove’ and *ondhwearf* ‘beyond-passed’ present the path prefix affixed to a path verb as *drīfan* indicates ‘to drive or expel away from’ and *hwerfan* ‘to pass’, although *hwerfan* may also signify manner in some contexts as ‘to turn or swirl’ (Beo 544–549 in Heaney 2000: 36):

(11) *Ðā wit ætsomne on sē wæron*
 when we-two together in sea were

fif nihta fyrst, oþþæt unc flōd tōdrāf,
 five nights period, until us-two sea apart-drove

wado weallende, wedera cealdost,
 waves raging storm coldest

nīpende niht, ond norþan-wind
 darkening night and north-wind

heaðo-grim ondhwearf. Hrēo wæron yþa,
 war-grim against-passed Savage were waves

wæs mere-fixa mōd onhrēred.
 was sea-creatures’ spirit up-stirred

‘For a period of five nights we were both on the sea until the sea drove us apart – raging waves, the coldest storm, the darkening night—and the war-grim north wind passed over. The waves were savage; the temper of the sea creatures was stirred up.’

Path and manner present interesting complexities; Old English and other Germanic languages often exemplify satellite-framed constructions for path. Nevertheless, Old English also exhibits verb-framed examples of path motion such as *gān* ‘go away’ and *lācan* ‘move up and down’ (Clark Hall 1960; DOE 2016).

The verbal prefixes usually convey semantic content closely related to that of their lexical form as preposition or adverb. Spatial prepositions typically retain their locative and directional meaning as a prefix. Both root verbs and the derived verbs (verbs with a prefix) indicate forces of various sorts. One type of force is the self-sustaining force of moving water. Examples include intransitive and causative verbs such as *drēfan* ‘stir up’, *gēotan* ‘gush’, *weallan* ‘rise’, and *slēan* ‘strike’. Another type of force is the force that the water exerts on objects to hinder, move, engulf, or direct the objects. Some transitive verbs include *ðeccan* ‘cover’ in Example (4) and *sceððan*¹² ‘crush’. Verbs indicate the movement of water horizontally and vertically, but the semantic properties of the verbs also indicate the destructive force of moving water, including movement that spills out of the container, the sea, onto the land (that is, flood water), water that submerges or drowns, and water that pushes out to sea. Some verb examples without and with prefixes include *tēon* ‘to pull or row’ and *ūpātēon* ‘to well up’ as well as *flōwan* ‘to flow’ and *tōflōwan* ‘to flow down or away’ (Clark Hall 1960; DOE 2016). In addition, other verbs indicate the force of water in terms of the sound of its turbulence. Examples of this type of force include *circian* ‘to roar’ and *hlimman* ‘to rage, resound’ (DOE 2016).

Finally, verbs may present anticausative, unaccusative, and inchoative functions as in Example (6) where the ocean *sceal sealte weallan* ‘shall seethe with salt’ or in (1) where the sea *wēdde* ‘became mad’ and *ūp atēah* ‘rose up’. In both examples, the verb is anticausative because there is no external force causing the sea to move, the verb is unaccusative because the sea is the theme (not the agent), and the verb is inchoative because it relates a change in state. Furthermore, verbs may be labile, that is prone to change

¹² In the underwater roofed hall of Grendel’s mother, Beowulf sees that *him nēnig wæter wihte ne scepede* ‘him no water at all crushed’ (Beo 1514 in Heaney 2000: 104).

functions without any change in form, for instance *wadan* ‘to wade, travel, or advance’.¹³ A transitive form followed by the accusative plural direct object *wræclāstas* ‘misery-paths’ occurs in *The Wanderer* as given in Example (2). A preterite plural intransitive form, *wōdon*, with the nominative plural subject *þā wælwulfas* ‘the slaughter-wolves’ occurs in *The Battle of Maldon* (Mald 96 in Whitelock 1967: 119):

- (12) *Wōdon þā wælwulfas (for wætere ne murnon) [...]*
 advanced the slaughter-wolves (for water not mourned) [...]
 ‘The slaughter wolves approached (they did not care for the water) [...]

Additionally, the intransitive use of *wadan* in the sense of ‘to advance’ shows a path verb function above, while the transitive use indicates manner (travel throughout), but not clearly path, in *The Wanderer* in Example (2).

5 Emotion and experience in the *sǣ*-complex

If the sea represents a meaningful concept in Anglo-Saxon culture, then Old English *sǣ* and its synonyms (*brim*, *flōd*, *holm*, *lagu*, *mere*, *ȝþ*) represent key words supporting the concept. Other key words play a role as well. Schustereder (2014) has identified Old English *cēol* ‘ship’ as a key word in the study of the role of the sea in terms of religion, identity, and culture in the Middle Ages; he too notes that most genres of Old English narrative texts describe aspects of the sea or seafaring. Méndez-Naya (2014) presents a syntactic and semantic analysis of ‘out’-intensifiers in Old English adverbs and adjectives that originate in the spatial domain, specifically as such forms indicate container, path, scale, and balance. These concepts are integral because *ofer* ‘over’, *ūp* ‘up’, *ūt* ‘out’, and *wiþ* ‘against’ describe the movement of water out of its contained space.

The *sǣ*-complex encompasses lexemes that refer generally to large bodies of water, whether historical, legendary, or mythical. Interpretation may differ as to the type of water indicated (a sea, an ocean, a lake, or a pool). Nevertheless, the sea is arguably a significant concept given the variety of Anglo-Saxon documents that feature lexemes in the *sǣ*-complex

¹³ Van Gelderen (2011) concludes that a basic verb valency for Old English and Germanic, while difficult to establish because so many verbs are labile, tends toward the intransitive. Royster (1922) observes that Old English verbs may vary as to causativity and intransitivity without a formal morphological contrast. Hence, we can understand the difficulties of transliteration from Old English to Modern English.

and the regularity of compounds and derivations with nouns and verbs. In Anglo-Saxon texts, the sea must be traversed, survived, endured, explored, and battled. The sea represents a formidable force of nature and it is deadly. The Anglo-Saxons do not seem to have taken it for granted. Furthermore, a semantic component indicating emotions emerges in the *sǣ*-complex. The narrator of *The Seafarer* offers an account of the sea that relates personal fatigue, courage, and endurance (Sea 1–6 in Marsden 2004: 223):

(13) *Mæg ic be mē sylfum sōðgied wrecan,*
can I about myself true-story relate

sīþas secgan, hū ic geswincdagum
journeys to tell how I (in) affliction-days

earfoðhwīle oft þrōwade,
hardship-times often suffered

bitre brēostceare gebiden hæbbe,
bitter heart-care endured have

gecunnad in cēole cearselda fela,
experienced in ship sorrow-halls' many

atol yþa gewealc.
terrible waves' surging

‘I can relate a true story about myself, tell of journeys, how I often suffered hard times in difficult days, have endured bitter woe, experienced in a ship many places of sorrow, the terrible surging of the waves.’

The narrator goes on to address *hungor* ‘hunger’, *earmcearig īscealdne sǣ* ‘wretched ice-cold sea’, *hægl* ‘hail’, *īscaldne wæg* ‘ice-cold wave’, *hēan strēamas* ‘deep currents’, and *sealtýþa gelāc* ‘salt waves’ tumult’ (Sea 11, 14, 17, 19, 34, and 35, respectively, in Marsden 2004: 223–225). When he thinks of the sea and his journey, there is no thought for *hearpan* ‘harp’, *ne tō wīfe wyn ne tō worulde hyht* ‘nor joy in a woman nor hope in the world’, nor for anything else except the terrible *yþa gewealc* ‘wave surging,’ a description given twice in the poem; his *mōdsefa mid mereflōde* ‘mind-spirit’ [roams] with the ‘ocean-tide’ far and wide (Sea 44, 45, 46, and 59, respectively, in Marsden 2004: 225–226). This text shows a connection between thinking and experiencing.

In her discussion of “experience” as a cultural theme, Wierzbicka (2010: 31) argues, “the word ‘experience’ plays a vital role in English speakers’ ways of thinking and provides a prism through which they interpret the world”. She references Wittgenstein’s distinctions between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, both of which translate into English as ‘experience’, the one word thus collapsing an important distinction in Wittgenstein’s work. The German roots of these two words are *leben* and *fahren*, respectively, which have cognate forms in Old English *libban* and *faran*. The verb *libban* translates as ‘to live, experience, be, exist’ (Clark Hall 1960: 217); *faran* indicates ‘to set forth, go, travel, wander’ (Clark Hall 1960: 112). Wierzbicka challenges us to think about experience from the German point of view in order to mark two specific senses.¹⁴ The Anglo-Saxon author of *The Seafarer*¹⁵ might very well concur with the distinction. In order to experience the sea, one must go forth into it, travel across it, suffer its climate; doing so brings experience through familiarity or understanding. In the poem, the physical properties of the sea as experienced by the seafarer constitute *Erfahrung* (the cold, the water’s movement, the surging waves); the seafarer’s assessment of the emotional and psychological reaction to the sea constitutes *Erlebnis* (affliction, hardship, bitterness). The poet suggests the cognitive link to the sea by describing the mind in relation to the sea and so the word *mōd* ‘mind’ is a significant indicator of the sea as a spatial construct that informs a cognitive perspective (Sea 11–12 in Marsden 2004: 223):

(14) *Hungor* *innan* *slāt*
 hunger within tore

merewērges *mōd*.
 sea-weary-(one’s) mind

‘Hunger within tore the mind of the sea weary one.’

A similar mind-sea connection occurs in *The Wanderer* when the solitary one experiences grace through his wanderings at sea. The personified sea displays human experience or emotion in *Exodus* when the *mere mōdgode* ‘sea raged’ against the Egyptians (Ex 13 in Marsden 2004: 140).¹⁶

¹⁴ Indeed the intent of her book, “which focuses on English as a cultural universe,” is “to make the familiar look foreign” (Wierzbicka 2010: 3).

¹⁵ This compound derives from *faran* ‘to go’.

¹⁶ *Mōdgian* ‘to rage’ is a derivation from *mōd* ‘mind/courage’.

An analysis of the lexical array that denotes the sea and its corollary vocabulary in Old English must rely on a theory of cultural semantics to explain the symbolism evoking solitude, fear, and other emotions connected with survival, bravery, adventure, freedom, and ultimately a sense of nationality. Such an analysis must also address “actuation”, or the development of new meanings, as a complex process that relates human experience to the use of language (Evans 2005: 45). The sea continued to be important in the Middle English period. Margery Kempe’s sea journeys reveal spiritual trials and tribulations (Staley 2001). Allegories of the ship represent Holy Church (Thompson 2008). The adventures of Prince Horn and his companions begin with a perilous sea journey; Old English words appear in their Middle English forms: *shipes* ‘ships’ (*Horn* 41 in Fein 2014), *seeside* ‘sea-shore’ (35), *to streme* ‘to sea’ (105), *sinke to the grounde* ‘sink to the bottom’ (108), *flode* ‘wave’ (143), *to londe* ‘ashore’ (198), and *bote* ‘boat’ (210). Modern English provides many expressions denoting emotional states that point back towards the Old English *sǣ*-complex. If we cannot find a solution, we feel up the creek without a paddle. The way we handle job tasks may make us sink or swim at work. We feel alone, adrift at sea. We drown in a sea of sorrows. At other times, we feel buoyant. We ride on a wave of success. Life affords us an endless sea of opportunities. We feel joys as deep as the ocean. Goddard (2003a: 12) suggests that “culture-specific ethnotheories have implications for the phraseology of a language” and that body-related references typically extend to descriptions of emotions. The *sǣ*-complex embodies a culture-specific set of constructions that reveals the Anglo-Saxon spatial gaze, a perspective that continued into the Anglo-Norman period and that has certainly left its trace in Modern English phrases, clichés, and metaphors about emotional states of being.

6 Summary

An examination of the relation of spatial to semantic components supports the idea that a cognitive framework for semantic analysis should present a realistic model of meaning (Sweetser 1990; Robert 2008; Vanhove 2008). The Old English vernacular tradition shows us the mind as emotion or the mind as a container of emotions in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* for instance, poems about sea travel (Godden 2002; Harbus 2012). The properties of the mind parallel properties of the sea. Like the sea, the mind has depth or hidden recesses. In Anglo-Saxon and Norse skaldic literature,

writers invoked the important metaphor of the “ship of the mind” (Harbus 2012: 38). Like a ship at sea, the mind can roam. In such equivalences of the sea with the mind or with emotional experience, the space dynamics relate semantics to both culture and cognition (Wierzbicka 1997; Goddard 2003b, 2004). Harbus (2012: 26) suggests that Old English metaphors are inherently literary and that “literary language defamiliarises experience and draws attention to itself”; she further proposes cognitive approaches can account for two important factors, “the structure of knowledge at a cultural level, and the impact of cultural transmission and diachronic development of metaphor use”. Historical evidence can assist in understanding how metaphors and other forms of figurative language develop and how a keyword becomes significant.

Ships and warriors form the basis of an Anglo-Saxon worldview concerning the origins of their nation. Those entities crossed the sea and came *hider* ‘here’ (Bede 1 7 in Whitelock 1967: 42). Old English texts reveal a cultural geography that frequently invokes waves, storms, conquerors, and creatures having to do with calamities, battles, and invasions that originate in or arrive from the sea. Anglo-Saxons saw themselves as occupying the *middangeard*, the middle layer between sea and sky in the vertical axis of the *sæ*-complex. In the horizontal axis, Anglo-Saxons were surrounded by the water. Nothing came to them that did not come over the water. The application of cognitive linguistics to diachronic studies can be challenging. However, as context is crucial to cognitive semantics, the attempt is worth the effort even given the limited data. Though we must rely on surviving texts, those texts do provide specific, environment-focused contexts.

This particular cultural geography represents an experience of fleeting, ever-changing conditions associated with the container-like properties of large bodies of water. The study of Old English texts is especially relevant and important to cognitive linguistic analysis because of the link between experience and the environment. The identification of the sea with emotions, for example, is the result of a human-environment interaction that informs what Siewers (2014) terms an ‘ecosemiosphere,’ an analysis of the relationship between humans and nature that takes into account the physical properties of nature as they are viewed through a given cultural lens. Harbus (2010) describes valuable research in Old English poetry that has established the Anglo-Saxon container metaphor for the mind through the connection of the inner reality of a poem’s narrator to the outer reality of the physical environment. Furthermore, connections between physical

perception and mental perception correlate with patterns of polysemy (Vanhove 2008). In the *sæ*-complex, that outer environment, both real and imagined, has arguably influenced the linguistic construction of meaning and the development of a lexicon that reflects an experience of living near the water.

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