The Sea and Medieval English Literature

Sebastian I. Sobecki

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dla Alicji

Bèl dous companh, tan sui en ric sojorn
Qu'eu non vòlgra mais fos alba ni jorn.

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But above all, I will remain indebted to my wife Alicja for her love, forbearance and sharp insight, which exposed many a feeble argument.

Abbreviations

CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout, 1966–)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout, 1947–)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1866–)
ELN	*English Language Notes*
EETS	Early English Text Society (various locations, 1864–)
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (various locations, 1897–)
IMEV	*Index of Middle English Verse*, eds C. Brown and R. H. Robbins (New York, 1943)
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
KJV	The Bible – King James Version (Authorised Version) (Cambridge, 1995)
LCB	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1911–)
MED	*The Middle English Dictionary*, eds Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, 19 vols (Ann Arbor, MI, 1956–2001)
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64)
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (second edn, Oxford, 1989)
Rot. Parl.	*Rotuli Parlamentorum*, *1278–1503*, gen. ed. J. Strachey, 6 vols (London, 1767–83)
TEAMS	*The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1990–)

All citations from the Bible refer to the Vulgate and all translations are taken from the Douay Rheims version. I have relied on the following editions: *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber, rev. by Roger Gryson (fourth edn, Stuttgart, 1994; originally published 1969) and *The Holy Bible – Douay Rheims Version*, rev. by Richard Challoner (1749–52) (Rockford, IL, 1971).

This news made Xerxes furious. He ordered his men to give the Hellespont three hundred lashes and to sink a pair of shackles into the sea. I once heard that he also dispatched men to brand the Hellespont as well. Be that as it may, he did tell the men he had thrashing the sea to revile it in terms you would never hear from a Greek. 'Bitter water,' they said, 'this is your punishment for wronging your master when he did no wrong to you.'

Herodotus (fifth century BC), *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford, 1998) Book 7, 35

But what are the birds of the sky to us, what to us are the stars of the heavens? For we are the wretched fish of the sea, we are the sands of the seashore, we are pounded by the waves of earthly life like the sands, we are swept away in the tides of worldly incertitude.

The Letter of Goswin of Mainz to His Student Walcher (*c.* 1065), Chapter 15, translated in C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 358

And as they came, the shypborde faste I hente,
And thoughte to lepe; and even with that I woke,
Caughte penne and ynke, and wroth this lytell boke.

John Skelton (*c.* 1460–1529), *The Bowge of Courte*, lines 530–2

Introduction

Wherto schulde thou passe the see?
Hyt is bettur at home to bee.
Guy of Warwick (fifteenth century), lines 881–2

Englishness, Myth and Connectivity

Barely four weeks in office, on 4 June 1940, Winston Churchill went before the House of Commons to perform one of his most defining rhetorical feats. On the previous day the evacuation at Dunkirk had effectively been completed but the new Prime Minister did not deem this a cause for celebration: with France teetering on the brink of collapse and the prospect of Hitler's invasion of Britain seeming only a matter of time, Churchill chose to dispel any illusions Britons might be harbouring at this stage. As his speech unfolded, he reminded his audience that wars are not won by evacuations and, more importantly, that Britain's struggle for survival was imminent. Yet the closing words of his address remove themselves from the ineluctable reality of a war going badly and, instead, weave a vision of a mythical victory built on defiance, providence and the mobilisation of the inner sanctum of British identity, insularity:

> We shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender; and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and liberation of the Old.[1]

Only nine days later the German army captured Paris, accelerating France's defeat. Churchill was once more forced to address the threat of an invasion, and in his speech of 17 June he again taps into Britain's insularity: 'We shall defend our Island home, and with the British Empire we shall fight on unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of mankind.'[2] As his published recollections of World War II indicate, Churchill

1 Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, 6 vols (London, 1985; first published 1949), vol. 2, p. 104.
2 Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 2, p. 191.

frequently referred throughout this period to some pressing need or quality of 'our Island': 'the defence of our Island', 'our Island strength', 'our Island history', 'our Island fortunes', 'our Island people', and even the jingoistic 'our Island race'.[3] And when trying to convey what he perceived to be a people's preparedness to take on a terrifying enemy, he conjured up an almost metaphysical 'white glow, overpowering, sublime, which ran through our Island from end to end'.[4]

I have cited these passages from Churchill's own memoirs, *The Second World War*, counting on the support of his idiosyncratic orthography since Churchill, unlike many modern scholars, chooses to capitalise 'Island' (as well as 'Empire'). What Churchill invokes on all these occasions is a latent, residual understanding of British identity as insular, as cut off from its geo-political context by the sea, as an island in the ocean. This aspect of Britishness is defensive in motivation, concentrating emotions on the image of a people perched on a frail raft surrounded on all sides by a hostile sea.[5] Consequently, Churchill does not omit the shore as the Island's natural and now also moral frontier when he talks of taking the fight against the invaders to the 'beaches' and to the 'landing-grounds'. 'Our Island' is not a symbol for the shrinking British Empire here but a synecdoche for Britishness: Britain may be more than the Island but the Island is culturally in and of Britain.

There are no such appeals to Britain's geo-political insularity in William Pitt the Younger's speeches during the Napoleonic invasion scares of 1798 and 1803. This can be partly explained by formal circumstances: parliamentary protocol at the time did not provide for a highly affective modality and speeches in the Commons had not yet acquired the public significance they would assume in the age of radiowaves and mass media. More importantly, perhaps, Napoleon's forces may not have seemed sufficiently overwhelming and menacing a threat to Britain at the time. For an appeal to 'our Island' it needed a much more fundamental threat, a threat that would imperil the very culture of the Island itself: newspaper columns and radio broadcasts had helped turn the danger of Hitler's invasion into something much more real, tangible and existential.

A twelfth- or thirteenth-century writer may have recognised Churchill's 'our Island' as an allegorical ship with 'londisse' people bound together by 'kynde', adrift in a hostile ocean and equipped with only the most necessary of victuals. Someone writing in sixteenth-century England, however, might not only be more likely to identify 'our Island' with Britain but also be more inclined to identify him- or herself as one of its English dwellers, who find

3 For the references, see Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 1, pp. 199 and 430; vol. 3, p. 539; and vol. 2, pp. 142, 204 and 248. In his *History of the English Speaking Peoples* Churchill uses this phrase to denote the inhabitants of Britain before the Norman Conquest (see Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 2003), p. 54.

4 Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 2, p. 88.

5 It is therefore hardly surprising that, with Britain's rising fortunes in the war, 'our Island' appears progressively less frequently during the course of the six volumes of Churchill's war memoirs.

themselves encircled by the sea. It is not that an inhabitant of sixteenth-century England might be more familiar with the claim of the Crown to rule the entire island – after all, more than one Welsh or Scottish war had been fought in the hope of realising Geoffrey of Monmouth's *totius insulae monarchia*. What proved much more effective in importing an awareness of insularity into Englishness was the realisation, arrived at sometime after the loss of the country's possessions on the Continent during the close of the Hundred Years War, that that which geographically and culturally *defines* Britain and a large part of England is above all the sea.

Perhaps the first to express this geo-political definition of Englishness as being 'of our Island' are two very different fifteenth-century texts: the political poem *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* (1436/7) and John Capgrave's *Liber de illustribus Henricis* (1453). Both works can be credited with introducing into a political and specifically English context the *intransmeabili undique circulo* [uncrossable ring of sea] of Gildas (*c.* 504–70) when they speak of England as being surrounded by the sea which forms a natural wall around its coasts.[6] This wall, the *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* argues unremittingly, ought to be defended at all cost: 'Kepe than the see abought in speciall, / Whiche of England is the rounde wall' (lines 1,092–3).[7] The anonymous writer of this poem may have found himself putting forward an unfashionable yet visionary policy during the crisis triggered by Burgundy's forsaking of its alliance with England, but the transformation of Gildas's uncrossable ring around Britain into an English military structure proved relevant enough for John Capgrave to seize on seventeen years later. Capgrave's bric-a-brac chronicle of kings and emperors named 'Henry', written in the last year of the Hundred Years War, chides Henry VI for neglecting the *murus Angliae* and lambasts England's failure to keep its seas. Capgrave's use of Latin allows him to summon those historiographers who followed Gildas: 'It was said by the ancients that the sea is like England's wall; and, since the enemies are pressing at the gates, what do you think they will do with unexpected neighbours?'[8] The circumstance of a Latin text translating the idea of the sea as the wall of England from an earlier English text only serves to underline the origin of 'our Island' as a vernacular concept, a point reflected in the observation that of the three languages in use in England, only English was exclusive to the island.

A century later, Shakespeare could incorporate the idea into John of Gaunt's description of Britain as a privileged island fortress that has repelled the Armada of 1588:

6 The passages in question are discussed in detail on pp. 73–3 (Gildas talks of Britain, not England).

7 George Warner, ed., *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye – A Poem on the Use of Sea Power, 1436* (Oxford, 1926).

8 My translation. For the Latin text and a discussion of this passage, see pp. 158–9.

> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea
> Which serves it in the office of a wall
> Or as a moat defensive to a house.[9]

Before the character of John of Gaunt could speak of Britain (alias England) as 'this precious stone set in the silver sea', texts such as the *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* and Capgrave's *Liber de illustribus Henricis* had to contribute to shedding the idea of land defined through law, that is, not on the basis of its natural geographical boundaries but in line with the forms of jurisdiction exercised by its kings and inhabitants.[10] In other words, these fifteenth-century texts use the sea to define their idea of England.

I would therefore like to argue that the literary history of the sea in English literature becomes a part of the vernacular discourse of Englishness. What is more, such a literary history can throw open fresh perspectives on the emergence of insularity in the context of 'being English'. My narrative will intersect at various nodes with the history of Englishness from the Norman Conquest to the close of pre-modernity, and it is one of my intentions to offer a network of close readings and contextualisations of these and other intersections to show how English writers employ the sea to generate literary meaning and negotiate two broad cultural fields, those of myth and connectivity. Between the Norman Conquest and the end of the Hundred Years War, English writers' use of the sea betrays their anxieties about their own forming identity. In their texts the sea oscillates between being rejected, feared, braved and allegorised until it is finally accepted and utilised as a determining constituent of Englishness. This process is neither linear nor incremental; it is jagged, at times erratic, replete with counter-readings, misreadings and abandoned possibilities, yet it is a discourse that cannot be divorced from the formation of England's budding self.

'The sea', writes Jonathan Raban, 'is one of the most "universal" symbols in literature; it is certainly the most protean. It changes in response to shifts of sensibility as dramatically as it does to shifts of wind and the phases of the moon.'[11] In many ways, Raban's characterisation of the sea is not open to question. For the fisherman it is life-giving and yet a dangerous foe to be

9 William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr, The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1990), Act 2, Scene 1, lines 43–8. Norman Longmate cites this passage in his aptly named popular history *Defending the Island from Caesar to the Armada* (London, 1989; repr. 2001). Longmate opens and closes his book with the respective phrases 'in the beginning was the sea' and 'in the end, as in the beginning, what mattered was the sea' (pp. 3 and 499).

10 In *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford, 2004), Christopher Cannon reads Laȝamon's *Brut* as outlining this older, legal definition of land ('The Law of the Land: Laȝamon's *Brut*', pp. 50–81).

11 Jonathan Raban, ed., *Oxford Book of the Sea* (Oxford, 1992), p. 3.

reckoned with. For Tristan, the sea is a powerful token of his physical and social separation from Yseult but he also remembers it as the place in which their fatal love was sealed. It becomes Custance's prison, a pilgrimage territory for Brendan and the cruel, great leveller for the historiographers of naval battles.

What is the sea? To answer a question of this magnitude in a single sentence, a pre-modern reader only had to reach for Isidore of Seville's (*c.* 560–636) *Etymologies*, a book written to provide plain definitions and histories – for the two were one and the same – of everything worth knowing. As a scrupulous student of creation, Isidore offers a bafflingly uncomplicated answer to our question: 'A sea is a general gathering of waters.'[12] Isidore's definition is governed by the expectations of his readers who wanted to understand the world in which they were living. And, to make matters simple, he includes the ocean but excludes rivers and other inland waterways that are not gathered in the sea. So far, so good. Later on, however, Isidore complicates matters by introducing the abyss, and by the time he assures his readers that the ocean derives its name partly from the purple colour of the sky which it reflects, he is enlisting myth to embellish his definition of the sea.[13]

Another, seemingly more evasive answer is that the sea is not land. This reply serves to illustrate the sea's often perplexing existence in cultural memory. Its nature defies comprehension just as its substance slips through one's fingers. The sea's nature is – paradoxically – best captured in some of the most celebrated passages in occidental writing where the sea appears to be solid: a furious Xerxes has the sea whipped in punishment for its complicity with the Greeks; Christ walks over the sea to rescue his disciples; Hamlet realises the futility of taking up arms against a sea of troubles.

Until the unequivocal formulation of the notion of territorial waters in legal and political thought, literary and wider artistic images of the sea owed much to the sea's essential dissimilarity in *kind* to land: whereas land is immobile and stable, the sea is in constant movement. Land is permanent; it can be walked and built on (and rode upon). The sea, on the other hand, can merely be traversed by man or, for purposes of fishing, visited. No lasting habitation in it is possible. For Pliny the Elder (23/24–79), the constant struggle between land and sea expresses *Naturae dimicatio*, the fundamental conflict in nature.[14] It is the sea's elemental unsuitability as a direct habitat for human beings that led Plutarch (*c.* 46–120) to describe the Egyptians' perception of the sea as 'an element that is in no way related to us'.[15] He goes on to describe their view of the sea as 'alien to man's nature,

12 'Mare est aquarum generalis collectio', *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive originum*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), Book 13, Chapter 14. For the translation, see *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge, 2006), p. 277. Unless otherwise noted, all translations will be taken from this edition.

13 *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi*, Book 13, Chapter 14.

14 Mary Beagon, *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder* (Oxford, 1992), p. 159.

15 Plutarch, *Quaestiones conviviales*, Book 8, question 8, quoted from *Moralia in Fifteen Volumes*,

deeply hostile and even despised'.[16] Being 'alien to man's nature', the sea is considered ungovernable in the classical and early Judaeo-Christian tradition, and, consequently, remained ungoverned (but, in the case of the Roman Mediterranean, not unpoliced) by man. It is present as a principal ingredient in a culture's macrospatial imagination, which, in turn, forms that inventive reservoir from which myths spring.

It is all too easy to entangle oneself in definitions of 'myth', tempting though it may be in this context. My use of this concept essentially combines the Greek meaning of *muthos* as 'speech', 'tale', 'narrative' with Lévi-Strauss's regard for a myth's structural properties as central to its purpose. A myth, therefore, is a fully translatable aetiological narrative. In this causal sense, myth embodies the narrative capacity for resolving contradictory notions or, in a Christian universe, explaining the actions of Providence. It is the sea's difference to land, regulated by tidal variation and constant inconstancy, that makes it so suitable as a myth of the inexplicable.

The overwhelming awe experienced when contemplating the sea's vastness and its protean nature finds articulation in Gregory of Nazianzus's (325–89) admiring words, perhaps as a rebuff to the philosophers and 'Greek' thinkers with whom early Christians had such a fraught relationship:

> And with respect to the Sea even if I did not marvel at its greatness, yet I should have marvelled at its gentleness, in that although loose it stands within its boundaries; and if not at its gentleness, yet surely at its greatness; but since I marvel at both, I will praise the Power that is in both. What collected it? What bounded it? How is it raised and lulled to rest, as though respecting its neighbour earth? How, moreover, does it receive all the rivers, and yet remain the same, through the very superabundance of its immensity, if that term be permissible? How is the boundary of it, though it be an element of such magnitude, only sand? Have your natural philosophers with their knowledge of useless details anything to tell us, those men I mean who are really endeavouring to measure the sea with a wineglass, and such mighty works by their own conceptions?[17]

Centuries later, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) would invoke the sea's vastness in a letter to Cardinal Guido di Castello to communicate what he perceived to be the alarming geographic spread of Abelard's teachings: 'His books cross the oceans, they leap over the Alps … they spread through the provinces and the kingdoms, they are preached as famous works'.[18] Awe, fear

vol. 9, ed. and trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr, W. C. Helmbold and F. H. Sandbach, LCB 425 (London and Cambridge, MA, 1961).

16 Plutarch, *Quaestiones conviviales*, Book 8, question 8.

17 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, Oration 28, section 27 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols (Edinburgh, 1868; reprint 1980), series 2, vol. 7). The most recent edition of Gregory's *orationes* is *Gregor von Nazianz: Orationes et theologicae, Theologische Reden*, ed. and trans. into German by Hermann Josef Sieben (Freiburg, 1996), p. 152.

18 Quoted from C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 240.

and admiration for the sea are merely permutations of human responses to the sea's greatness and grandeur, simultaneously conveying its categorical alterity and the resulting incapability of human societies to control it, as well as the futility of all such efforts, enshrined in Xerxes' quixotic whipping of the sea.

For a long time the sea was therefore synonymous with myth. It features in foundation myths such as the Babylonian *Gilgamesh*, the Hebrew Genesis, or in the form of the primordial clash between Chronos and Ophion (later Okeanos) in the Greek myth of the beginning. The Babylonian dragon Tiamat forms the primeval body of water out of which earth is raised in the *Gilgamesh*, and, in its basic matter – water – the sea antedates God's creation of the six days in the Bible. In the same vein, Ophion, at the dawn of Greek history, is hurled into the sea with which he later becomes one. Other myths of creation, such as Ilmatar's ocean-birth of Wainamoinen in the *Kalevala* also begin with a deity being born by the sea. One may be tempted to read the apparent symbolism of these creation myths against the (admittedly anachronistic) modern scientific insight that prehistoric life had indeed begun in the sea, but it is altogether more likely that such myths of creation allowed the sea-born deity to clothe itself in some of the sea's mythopoeic attributes: its unpredictability, immeasurability, animistic force and elemental otherness. Such myths of transformation also embraced deaths by sea: as Boccaccio (*c.* 1313–75) reminds his readers in the *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, some writers say that Demophonte (Chaucer's and Gower's Demopho[u]n) threw herself into the sea and, through the gods' pity, was transformed into an almond tree.[19]

That the privilege of ocean-birth is not only restricted to gods is shown by the traditions that both Meroveus (eponymous founder of the Frankish royal dynasty) and Tristan, for instance, are said to have been born by sea-monsters.[20] Some have even claimed birth by sea retrospectively as a symbol of courtliness and dedication to *Frauendienst*, or courtly service in the name of love. As a true *Venusritter*, a knight of the Lady Venus, the poet Ulrich von Liechtenstein (*c.* 1200–75) emerges in the fourteenth-century *Manesse Codex* from the sea in imitation of his goddess's mythical birth near Cyprus (Figure 1). Ulrich is depicted in full tournament regalia, donning an effigy of Venus as decoration on his helmet, complete with the arrow of love and flames of passion. This miniature may very well serve as a memento of Ulrich's very literal act of romance self-fashioning, when the poet emerged from the sea near Venice, in front of courtiers, dressed as Venus (the choice of location may have served to live out a pun). As J. A. W. Bennett has shown,

19 See C. G. Child, 'Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum*', *MLN* 11:8 (1896), 238–45 (240).

20 Meroveus's mythical ocean-birth is implied by Fredegar (*The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar*, ed. and trans. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (London, 1960), Chapter 3) and Tristan says that 'ma mere fu une baleine, / En mer hantat cume sereine' (*La Folie Tristan d'Oxford*, ed. E. Hoepffner (Paris, 1963; third edn), lines 273–4).

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Figure 1. Ulrich von Liechtenstein emerges from the sea (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Co. Pal. germ. 848 (Codex Manesse), fol. 237r).

this association of Venus with the sea in a chivalric setting was not lost on Chaucer who presents a very maritime statue of Venus in the *Knight's Tale*:

> The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
> Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
> And fro the navele doun al covered was
> With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.[21]

With the sea nearby, however, danger is never far away: underneath Ulrich is the sea, peopled by monstrous creatures embroiled in strife to remind the reader of the nature of the sea.[22]

But the sea as a source of myth is not exhausted by foundation myths; it serves to stir the exploits of both protoplastic and heroic protagonists, justifying their claims to land.[23] At various points in time literary texts and other modes of expression have explored a range of physical manifestations of the sea's otherness, be it by means of the fantastically eccentric adventures of Brendan, or Matthew Paris's ominous descriptions of Britain as a hazardous and climatically exposed region, or in the form of Jonah's presumed place of refuge from God's inquisitive eye in the alliterative *Patience*.

The dialectical opposition of tangible substance and elusive myth is only an extension of the elemental antithesis between the two terms 'land' and 'sea', which, as 'earth' and 'water', is probably enshrined in most cultures. Being considered 'elements' – basic components of most animistic belief-systems – earth and water are considered opposites, and, as such, we like to think of them as incompatible with each other. Although it could be argued that the difference between human existence on dry land and at sea is a question of varying degrees of disparity and not so much quality of being, it would appear that maritime societies understand the world differently from farming communities. This cultural difference, for instance, is reflected in the frequency of maritime motifs in the lore of littoral peoples.[24] Chapter 2 will show how the Irish maritime tradition of the *peregrinatio pro amore Dei* dumbfounded landlubbing King Alfred, and we will struggle to identify a piece of biblical writing – writing generated by an agricultural society – that will allocate just as prominent a role to the sea as either the *Odyssey* or the various redactions of Brendan's voyage do.

In much the same way, this underlying dichotomy of land and sea can

21 *The Knight's Tale* in Larry D. Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston, 1987), I, lines 1,955–8. See also J. A. W. Bennett, *Chaucer's Book of Fame: An Exposition of 'The House of Fame'* (Oxford, 1968), p. 15.

22 Martine Meuwese, 'Uit *de zee*', *Madoc* 13:4 (1999), 256–7.

23 It is important to distinguish the protoplastic or archetypal significance of Brutus or Meroveus, on whose mythical exploits entire civilisations, cultures or dynasties claim to have been erected, from mythical superheroes of Hercules' calibre.

24 Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples, 8,000 BC–AD 1500* (Oxford, 2001), passim, proves how similar the cultures of the different peoples dwelling along the shores of the Atlantic were. This observation is also made, albeit in passing, by Sonnfried Streicher, *Fabelwesen des Meeres* (Rostock, 1982), p. 7.