Appeals to the senses in pagan Anglo-Saxon poetry

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APPEALS TO THE SENSES
IN PAGAN ANGLO-SAXON POETRY.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the State University of Iowa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.

by

Anna Marie Sorensen, B. A.
Iowa City, Iowa;
June 1912.
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* Texts examined.
+ Translations quoted from.

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B.B. = Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik. Herausgegeben von Prof. Dr.W.Trautmann.
*Ch. = Charms.
Ch.I = For Bewitched Land, G.W.Bibl.I., p.37
Ch.II. = For a Sudden Stitch p.26
Ch.III. = For Swarming Bees p.8
Ch.IV. Nine Herbs Charm p.46
Ch.VI. = Against a Dwarf p.10
Ch.A.5 = For the Water-elf Disease, Grendon, p.194
(Not given in G.W.Bibl. Classed by Grendon as a secular charm)
+Cook and Tinker—Select Translations from Old English Poetry. Ginn & Co. 1902.
*Deor = Deor's Lament, G.W.Bibl.I.p.278.
Ex. = Exodus, G.W.Bibl.II.


Garnett, James W.—Translation of Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg, Ginn & Co. 1890. (From this translation are taken all passages quoted from Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg unless otherwise indicated.)


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Rid. = The Riddles, G.W.Bibl.III.

*Ruin = The Ruin, G.W.Bibl.I.p.296

*Seaf. = The Seafarer, G.W.Bibl.I.p.290


II. Some other works consulted.

A complete bibliography would not be practicable. Although, for convenience, I follow the text of Wyatt for the numbering of lines in *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Finnsburg*, and the text of the G.W. Bibl. for the poems indicated, yet I have availed myself of the help furnished by other texts and translations. Neither these works nor the different studies in the History of English Literature that have been more or less helpful, are included in the following list.


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INTRODUCTION.

This study has for its aim the investigation of pagan Anglo-Saxon poetry with reference to words which represent appeals to the senses, in order to discover by this means, if possible, some characteristics of those who made the verses, or of the people whose spokesmen they are.

By limiting the study to the pagan poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, a field is secured which embodies a distinct heritage of the Teutonic people, in which Latin influence has scarcely made itself felt. The field is, nevertheless, wide enough to be representative both in scope and quantity. Altogether, the poetry examined includes 4,250 lines, varied in character, comprising as it does, verses of popular origin, lyric, and epic poetry. The verses of popular nature—that is, poetry which lived in the mouth of the people and was handed down from generation to generation—is represented by The Seafarer, The Wanderer, The Ruin, The Wife's Complaint, The Husband's Message, and Deor's Lament (429 lines); and epic poetry by Beowulf, The Battle of Finnsburg, Hildesith, and the two Hildes fragments (3436 lines).

All of this is essentially pagan in spirit, and therefore practically free from Latin influence. But, because much of this early poetry was revised and copied by Christian scribes, it often shows influences of Christianity in such changes and interpolations as the later writers saw fit to make. Wherever these revised or interpolated passages would affect the nature of the material
collected for this work, the passages have been excluded. Among these are the following: Beowulf 90-113, 175-188, 1261-66, 1607-10; Gnomic Verses (Cotton MS.) 34-36. Other exceptions made will not need to be specified. Revision and interpolation are especially evident in the Gnomic Verses and the Charms. I have, therefore, tried to select from them the portions which best represent the spirit of the oldest Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Excluding, as far as possible, the marks of foreign influence, this early poetry reflects the life and thought and feeling of the Teutonic people. But the experiences and imaginings reflected are determined largely by the time and place to which the poetry belongs.

The poetry arose among a people who were just emerging from a mythopoeic age, and to whom there was not yet a sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Consequently their imagination could easily create such weird monsters as Grendel.

Moreover, to these early people, nature was still the embodiment of vast powers. Their feeling for nature was awe for her power, rather than admiration for her beauty.

It was a time of conflict and warfare,—of conflict with the stern forces of nature, and of constant tribal wars. "The remorseless strain and struggle of that time," says Gummere in his excellent Germanic Critique, "left little or no leisure even if they had found the desire, for one to cultivate the sense of beauty or any other of those feelings which we comprehend under the modern name of aesthetics."

1. Page 475.
But the most powerful factor, perhaps, that enters into the experiences and thoughts of the Anglo-Saxon, is the nature which surrounded him. He was surrounded by steep, stony cliffs, by misty moors, and by the roaring sea. Both on the continent and in England, he lived under cloudy skies, by stormy waters. As Jusserand well says,¹ "The sea of the Anglo-Saxons is not the Mediterranean, washing with its blue waves the marble walls of villas; it is the North Sea, with its grey billows, bordered by barren shores and chalky cliffs."

In discussing the influence which the climate of England has upon the sensibilities of the inhabitants, Boutmy says: "In that atmosphere, misty or clouded with rain, outlines grow indistinct, shades merge one in the other, and delicate colors become uniform gray." He observes further: "Never has man's sensibility received less from the outer world, nor appreciated more intensely in its own little way that which it chanced to obtain. In no other country have external impressions been more intensified by the imagination forced back upon itself, and steeped in the very inmost soul of man."

Although this is written of the English people as a whole, it seems particularly applicable to the Anglo-Saxons, not only in England but also in their earlier continental home. It is not surprising if we find that to these people, accustomed to gloom and mist, forms and colors were less significant than

"the clouds,

The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,"

and

"the soul of happy sound." (Wordsworth, Peter Bell

1. "A Literary History of the English People," 59,
These factors,—the general tendencies of thought, the local conditions, and the natural surroundings of the Anglo-Saxons, all influenced the experiences and imaginings that went into their poetry. They cannot, therefore, be disregarded in any inferences that may be drawn from the material collected in this study. For it is just those experiences and imaginings reduced to their elements, that are here enumerated as colors and lights, noises and musical sounds, smells and tastes, degrees of warmth and cold, hardness and sharpness, weight and strain, and pain.

Sensations have been called the elements of knowledge. Through the senses man receives impressions from the external world and from his own body, in response to data furnished by them he adjusts himself to his environment, and in images derived from them he does a large part, at least, of his thinking.

What the sense impressions shall be, depends mainly on environment; but what shall come into the mind depends not only on environment, but also on what one craves from within., conditioned by temperament and previous knowledge. Moreover, what shall go into poetry depends to an important degree upon the kind of poetry it is. Poems that have warfare for their main subject matter, and the billowing sea, rocky cliffs, and misty moors for their background, afford little opportunity for the introduction of summer landscapes, even though such imagery does exist in the mind of the poet. This is true of most of the poetry examined here.

Not only the subject matter of poetry, but its style also, and its artistic merits, are important factors in the use of the material with which this paper is concerned. Alliteration often
makes the significance of a word rather doubtful. Whether a word has been chosen for its color effect, for example, or because it offers convenient alliteration, cannot be determined from its use.

Except the Charms and Homeric Verses, which are valuable chiefly for the information they furnish of social conditions, and Epics which in parts is mainly historical, this poetry represents a highly developed art. The purpose of the poet, therefore, may determine where or what appeals to the senses enter into it.

Some of the questions considered are, What stimuli furnish the sense-impressions, what impressions receive most attention, how close is discrimination, and how does the poet make use of sense imagery?

The general plan is based upon the following classification of the senses: (1) Sight, (2) Hearing, (3) Smell, (4) Taste, (5) Pressure (feeling or touch), (6) Temperature, (7) Kinaesthetic, (8) Equilibrium, (9) Pain. To these may be added the general organic sensations. As far as represented, the senses are considered in the order given here. The material for Sight and Hearing is also added in tabulated form, since much of it is not taken up in the discussions.

The collection of material as a whole, I cannot hope to be complete. But it is, I believe, sufficient in quantity and variety to be representative.
SIGHT.

I. Color.

The list of color-words is a short one: red used once, yellow twice, fællow six times, and brown four times. Even these words do not generally denote color, but all except red commonly suggest simply light or darkness.

This meagerness of color appears more striking when we consider that in Christian Anglo-Saxon poetry red and green occur with comparative frequency. The relative number of times that color-words are used in the two fields is shown in a general way by the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Pagan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25,750 ll.</td>
<td>4,250 ll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Æad</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Æadlēb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baso</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geolo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fæalu</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The data for Christian poetry are taken from Mead. He estimates all of Old English poetry at approximately 30,000 lines, which is the basis for the number given above for Christian poetry.
2. Ex. 476. "Wæs sæo hwene lyft heolfre geblanden."
3. Including all compounds: brunfæg(4), brūnþwæg(4), sealobrūn(4), brūnþæg(2).
But we cannot assume from a mere numerical increase in color-words that there has been a commensurate growth in appreciation of color. This question involves the relation of the later poems to their sources, as well as other factors concerned in the change. Mead remarks that in the case of red "an obvious convention has decided the choice of the word in many cases in which it occurs." He observes further that while green is generally used in a somewhat conventional way, it does occur in a few passages with real appreciation of its color value.

1. Red.

Red is found only in the compound redsh (red-colored), a word of doubtful meaning used to describe the broken walls of the old city in The Ruin. (10)

In the red group may be included the word blöd (blood) with its compounds and derivatives, and also other words of the same meaning, svētis, dēór, and beolor. These words often suggest red, but it is not always easy to determine whether or not a color effect is intended.

The most vivid sense of color is found in the use of fæb (colored, stained) with the words blöd, dēór, and svēt. The mead hall is stained with blood:

---

1. Mead, 195; 200.
"Donne was beos medo-heal on morgen-tid,
driht-sele drēor-fāh." (B. 484)

"Donne blōde fāh,
hūsa selest heoro-drēorīg stōd" (B. 934).

Armor and sword are described as blood-stained:
"xt pēm āde was ēb-gesyne swāt-fāh syrce." (B. 1110)

"sweord swātē fāh." (B. 1286)

A distinct realization of color appears in the words which describe the sea as colored with blood:
"wxt under stōd
drēorīg ond gedrefed." (B. 1416)

(B, 2138, 1422, 2693.)

Drēorīg and blōdis, both common words for "bloody", are used with color effect in almost every case. (B. 1780, 2789, 989, 2440, 2692.)

2. Yellow.

Yellow is never found as a genuine color-word. Geolo belongs on the border line between "yellow" and "shining". It occurs twice,

1. "Then was this mead-hall in the morning-time,
   Lordly hall, stained with gore."
2. "Since stained with blood
   The noblest of houses drenched in gore stood;"
3. "At the funeral-pile was easily
   The blood-stained sark."
4. "The sword stained with gore."
5. "the water stood under
   Gore and restless."
once (B. 438) in the compound fæloræmi (yellow-shield), and once to describe the linden shields (B. 2610). In both cases the reference seems to be to the natural color of the wood out of which the shields are made rather than to the borders, painted, gilded, or made of bright metal, as some have thought.

 fælu (fallow) deserves a place in the yellow group because in a few passages its suggestion of color is unmistakable, though vague. It is used of the sea (B. 1950; Mand. 46), of gravel-covered roads (B. 916); and of horses (B. 865, 2165). The most vivid sense of color is in the compound varsel fælu used to denote the color of horses (B. 2165), and generally interpreted as reddish-yellow or bay. The adjective fælu is used alone with less definiteness to describe horses as yellow, dun, or bay, with nothing to determine the exact meaning. (B. 865). Fælu ætle (B. 916) are probably roads covered with light yellow sand. The most common use of the word is in connection with the sea:

"syddan hio Offa's flet
ofe fælone flöd be fæder lære." (B. 1949.)

In this passage the word has little significance for visualization, and its use may be determined chiefly by convenient alliteration.

The meaning of the word when applied to the sea is always vague. Werbach says it indicates a green blending into yellow.

1. Pfann., 61, and references.
2. Keller, 73.
3. Cf. ðælæ lîc (fallow flame) Ph., 218; ðælæðsælæ spyr (fallow-hilted sword), Waldon, 166.
4. B.T.:"Mæces ðælæðsælæs by steeds, lit., apple-coloured steeds."
5. Other the dark flood, by her father's command,
7. Werbach, 15.
like the fading leaves of autumn. According to Mead, it suggests a yellowish-green, a common color of the water in the English Channel. Stopford Brooke considers the *fæalwe wēgas* (Wand. 46) as waves that are "fallow, dun-yellow, like withered ghosts of leaves, the frequent color of the sea after storm as seen from the Northumbrian coast." In the passages which refer to the sea, I take *fæalwe* in the meaning of "dusky," especially when the word is applied to the sea in its dark and troubled aspect.

"Sonne onwæcnes eft winelēas guma,

gesihē him biforan fæalwe wēgas." (Wand. 45)

It must have been the gloom and loneliness of the sea that the poet had in mind when he wrote of the friendless wanderer who awakens from his dream of joy to see about him only such things as "make the wounds of his heart the sorer." (Wand. 49).

In addition to these color words, we may include in the yellow group the descriptive word *gold* which in some cases may suggest color, although it generally has reference to brightness or sheen.

*God-lēah* (gold-adorned) probably contains the clearest suggestions of yellow, but even these are slight. It is used of the gold-embroidered tapestries that shine on the walls of Heorot (B. 9941; of the exterior of the hall shining with bright metal on its roof (B. 799, 926); and of the helmet and spear. (B. 2811; Gn. Cott. 22).

1. German *la†t, not lath*. Milms translates the word by *lah* (Milms 36).
3. Brooke, 175.
5. But the friendless man awakes, and he sees the fallow waves.
In three instances a golden banner is mentioned: B. 47, 1021, 2767. There is probably also a vague suggestion of color here. Still the "banner all-golden" in B. 2767 is spoken of a few lines later as the "brightest of beacons." (B. 2777.)

The golden hilt of the sword is referred to (B. 1677), and also the guard of sheer gold (B. 1694). Gold adornments on the sword are mentioned several times. (B. 2191; Sn. Ex. 126; Wald. II. 19).

A common and somewhat conventional epithet applied to the queen is gold-broden (gold-adorned), that is, wearing a crown or circlet of gold.


Brown as a color does not occur at all. The word brun is used only in the meaning of bright or flashing. It is applied once to the helmet (B. 2614), twice to the sword edge (B. 1546, 2578), and once, in the compound sealo-brun (sallow-brown), to the raven. (Finns. 34) When used of the helmet or sword it seems to refer to the brightness of the metal only. In sealo-brun referring to the raven, I take the meaning to be shining. As the raven circles about in that bright sword-light which shines "as if all Finnsburg were afire", the dark feathers may well be described as glossy or shining.

In later English poetry the word occurs also meaning bright or flashing, applied to weapons in general, to the material out of which the sword is made, and even to diamonds: brunum beadonum

1. See Mead, 193, for remarks about brun in Old English poetry as a whole.
II. Colorless Light.

The words that express or imply light and darkness can all be arranged in a single gradation beginning with the most intense brightness, gradually blending into white, through gray into dimness, and ending with black. For the sake of clearness, however, I have divided the series into three parts: gray, brightness, and darkness. The first group contains the words for gray, beginning with those that have most definite reference to the object and ending with words not used primarily for description. In the second group I have attempted to arrange the words that express or imply brightness in a gradation from white to words that mean "shine", "glitter", or "gleam". This grouping cannot represent with any accuracy the intensity of light suggested, except in the case of a few words at the beginning. The same is true of the words for darkness, which are placed in the last group, beginning with black and ending with words that refer to dimness and mist. The indefiniteness with which some of these words are used renders an accurate gradation impossible.

1. Gray.

\(\text{gr}^{\text{a}}\) (gray) is used five times and its compound \(\text{flod}^{\text{ar}^{\text{a}}}\) once.
It is applied to the iron sword (B. 2682), to the spear tipped with gray iron (B. 330), to the iron coat of mail (B. 334), to the gray wolf (Finns. 6; Gn. Ex. III. 151), and to the water which carries with it gray earth (Gn. Cott. I. 30). In every case it is used with definite reference to the object.

Har (hoary, gray) has a wider range of application than græg, and less importance for visualization. In two instances it describes battle armor (Wald. II. 16; B. 2153), five times it is used of a stone (B. 887, 1413, 2553, 2744; Ruin 43), once it refers to the sword (Wald. I. 3), five times to gray hair (B. 357, 1307, 1678, 2988, 3136), and once to the wolf (Wald. 82). The compound ræþær occurs in The Ruin (10) applied to the walls of the ruined city. Har, when used in the meaning of "gray-haired", emphasizes age rather than appearance. This is true even in the case of uþær, very gray (B. 356).

Blæþær, blended-haired (B. 1594, 1791, 1873, 2962), and tæþær, old-haired (B. 608; Seaf. 92), both suggest age through appearance.

2. Brightness.

White is never used literally. The nearest approach to its modern use is the suggestion contained in the word lēmās-staels (foamy-necked), the beautiful epithet used twice of the ship (B. 218, 1909).

1. Some take this as referring to the wood.
2. Considered by some to mean the coat of mail.
3. This may be for hearð (hard), B.B., II., 170.
4. "Gray like the goat." B.T.
20. 

**Blāc** occurs meaning pale. It describes the face of the old man:

"gōmela Scyλfing

hreas hecro blāc" (B. 2488). ¹

"ylde him on færfan, on syn blācæ" (Scaf. 91)²

The word also refers to the flame, the fire-light, which shone in the hall of Grendel's mother:

"blāce lēoman beorhtescīnan" (B. 1517). ³

**HwJi** (white) is never used to denote "white". In the sense of "shining", it refers to the broad wheat fields that shine in the sun (Ch. I. 54), and to the helmet ornamented with bright metal (B. 1448). These are the only instances of its use.

Concerning this word in Old English poetry, Mead says: ⁴ "The word **hwiht** occurs thirty-one times, commonly with a suggestion of brightness or light, though some instances of a literal use of the epithet in the modern sense appear to be unquestionable."

It is common to mention only the sheen or brightness of objects even when there is opportunity for color. The fields are "bright in their blossoming" (Ch. I. 74); wheat fields and millet⁵(?) fields are bright (Ch. I. 53, 55); gold-embroidered tapestries shine upon the walls of Heorot (B. 994).

1. "the aged Scyλfing

   Fell down sword-pale."

2. "old age overtakes him,
   his countenance loses its color."

3. "The brilliant beams brightly shining."


5. Grendon, 174, scīra hersengestra.
The brightness of gold, and other metal called gold, is often referred to in connection with rings (Wids. 74; B. 158), armor (B. 322, 1895, 3140; Ruin 34), and the mead hall (B. 997, 1177, 1199; Ruin 22, 38, 41).

Silver is noticed only once (Ruin 36).

Another word that occurs in a single instance is ísíg (icy), which belongs in this series if it means "shining".

"þær at hýfe stød hringed-stefna, ísíg ond útfús, xþelinges fær." (B. 33).

The translation of ísíg by "shining like ice" is only a makeshift, says Trautmann. He raises the question of a possible relation between this word and ísís (B. 1107) by derivation from a common adjective ísís (ítíð, ítíð) that meant "shining". If ísíg refers to the shining of the ice-covered ship, it stands alone in the poetry here considered as a mention of ice for its appeal to sight. In all other instances the appeal is to the sense of temperature.

Still another isolated example is the mention of clear mead:

"Scencte scTr wered" (B. 496).

This is the only time the appearance of drink is referred to. Food is not even mentioned.

1. "There stood at haven with curved prow shining and ready, the prince's ship."
2. B.B.II., 127."Berichtigungen, Vermutungen und Erklärungen zum Beowulf."
3. ísís íold. Wyatt:"ísís, adj., golden?, costly?, massive?"
4. With the possible exception of ísísþępas, icy-feathered (Seaf.24).
5. "Poured out the clear mead."
The gleaming of light is always noteworthy. A ray of light gleamed forth in the weird hall of Grendel's mother as soon as Beowulf had slain his foe:

"Sword was swātig; séag weorcge gefeh.
Līxta se lēoma, lēocht inne stōd." (B. 1569)

Again, after the fire-dragon is killed, the cave is lighted up by a gleam from the golden banner:

"of dām lēoma stōd,
\[\text{\textendash} hē bone grund-wongan meahte,}
\[\text{\textendash} wzæte giandwītan. ðās ðās wyrmes \textendash}r
\[\text{\textendash} onsōn θniŋ, sc hyne ecg fornam." (B. 2769)

The flashing of the sword is prominent in such kennings as lēoma, the flashing light beam (B. 1570), head leōma, the battle-light (B. 1523), brūd, the fire-brand (B. 1454) At the battle of Finnsburg the "sword-light gleamed as if all Finnsburg were afire". (Finns. 35). Nearer to reality is the gleaming of the sea-cliffs (B. 222).

But of all things that shone, glittered, or gleamed, that which is noticed most is the sun. "Radiant, robed in ether, it shines from the south" (B. 606). It has power over darkness (B. 648).

The bright sun comes gliding over the plain (B. 1802). It is always the radiance, the dark-dispelling power, that is noteworthy. Of the

1. "Bloody the blade: he was blithe of his deed. Then blazed forth light." (Gummere)
2. "so bright its gleam, all the earth floor he easily saw, and viewed all these vessels. No vestige now was seen of the serpent; the sword had ta'ên him." (Gummere)
3. For some remarks concerning the significance of these verbs, see Sievers, "verba des leuchtens, glänzens, scheinens." Beiträge, XII 196-7
eight passages in *Beowulf* that refer to the sun\(^1\) (413, 604, 648, 917, 1572, 1802, 1965, 2072), not one contains any mention of heat or warmth. Only in the *Gnomic Verses* is the heat of summer spoken of, and here also, the brightness of the sun is mentioned:

"Sumor is sun-lit &ost." (Sn. Cott. 7)\(^2\)

In *Beowulf* the coming of spring is said to bring "glory-bright" weather:

"winter ðe beleac

ís-gebinde, of ðæt oner cōm

gēar in ðearðas, swā nē gyt dēg,

þāde syngales sēle bewitig,

wuldor-torhtan weder." (B. 1132)\(^3\)

3. Darkness.

Darkness is mentioned much less than brightness, as the following comparison will show:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of words</th>
<th>Times used.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brightness</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darkness</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The words for brightness include the references to the fire-dragon which are distinctly visual in appeal, eleven in all; but the figures do not take into account the words *brūn* and *gōl*, which would add materially to the list. The darkness series includes all the words

---

1. Excluding passages unmistakably Christian.
2. Summer is most beautiful with the sun.
3. "Winter the waves locked in its icy bond, until came another year in the dwellings, as now still so (for they ever observe suitable seasons) the clear-shining days."
in the group beginning with "black" and ending with "misty". These words I shall now take up more in detail.

**black** occurs but once, when it refers to the raven (B. 1801)

**swart** (swart, black) is the common word for black. It describes the raven (Finnns. 34), the night (B. 167), and also the wood smoke which rose "black over the blaze" (B. 3145) from Beowulf's funeral pyre.

**wan** (wan, black) is used more than any other word for darkness. It occurs eight times. In every case it has associations of gloom or mystery. The flame (B. 3115), the night (B. 702; Wand. 103), the waves (B. 1132, 1374), battle-slaughter (3154), the raven (B. 3024), and the "creatures of darkness" (B. 651), these are all **wan**, in the particular cases here referred to. The flame is dark here because it is the flame of Beowulf's funeral:

"Nu sceal glæd fretan
(weaxan wonna læg) wiçena strengel.' " (B. 3114)¹

The most common of the remaining words in this series are **dæor** (dark), **sæercean** (to darken), **sceadu** (shadow), **nihthelu** (night-helmet), and **mistig** (misty). In almost every case these words have reference to night or to the "night-wandering spirits" who dwelt in the misty moors:

1. "Fire shall devour
and wan flames feed on the fearless warrior."
"Scadu-helma gesceapu scrīfan cwēman." (B. 650) 

"Cōm on wanre niht 
Scrīfan sceadu-genga. (B. 702)"

"[Ato]Æglēca Æhtende wēs, 
deorc dēaþ-scūs, duguþe ond geogoþe, 
seomade ond syrede, sin-nihte hēold 
mistige mōras." (B. 159) 

III. Visual Space.
1. Size.

Things are rarely described with respect to size, especially smallness. The "little knife" and the "little spear" are mentioned in the Ṣbaēs (Ch. II. 6, 11, 15).

Largeness is referred to more frequently. In Heorot there is a large band of warriors,—"No small band of Weders and Danes," says the Beowulf poet with characteristic understatement. The ship that stood on the shore is described as "sea-wide", that is, spacious. Beowulf's mound is large:

1. "Night-wandering spirits came advancing 
   Dark under the clouds."
2. "Came in wan night 
   The shadow-goer stepping."
3. "The terrible demon harassing was 
   The dark death-shadow the old and the young, 
   Caught and entrapped them; in constant might held 
   The misty moors."
"in bǣl-stede beorh þone hēan,
micelne ond mōrne, swā hē manna wæs
wigend mearā-fullost wide geond eorðan." (B. 3097)

In the case of the fire-dragon the exact measurement is given:

"Së wæs fiftiges fōt-gemearces
lang on legere." (B. 3042)

Other creations of the imagination are described with vagueness.

The sword of the giant race is "greater than any man else to the
war-play was able to bear" (B. 1590). The size of Grendel and
his mother is indefinite:

"micle mearc-stapan mōras healdan,
ellor ġāstas; ārā ēāer wæs,
þæs þe hé gewislicost gewitan meahton,
ideœ onlīces; ēāer earm-sceapan
on weres mǣstum mǣc-lǣstas træd,
nȳfne hē wæs mǣra þonne ænig man ðēor."

---

1. "On the place of the pyre the lofty mound,
Mickle and mighty, as he of men was
The most worthy warrior through the wide earth,"

2. "He was fifty feet in his full measure,
Long as he lay."

3. "Mickle mark-steppers holding the moors,
Spirits of elsewhere: one of these was,
As they most certainly might then perceive,
A woman's form: the other one wretched
In the likeness of man his exile trod--
Except he was greater than any man else--"
2. Form.

Descriptives of form are comparatively common, but not varied. Practically all can be placed in one of the three classes, high, broad, and curved or twisted. The words for "high" are heah and stēap.

Heah is used most commonly in connection with the mead hall: hēan hūsē (B. 116); hēah bofu (H. W. 7); hēah-sele (B. 647). Also B. 1962, 1984, 713. The wall (Wand. 98), pinnacles (Ruin 23), and the roof (B. 983) are likewise high or towering. No doubt alliteration accounts in part for the use of heah in some of these instances, but clearly not in all.

The mead-hall itself stands upon a hēah-stēap, that is, a high-place (B. 285).

Stēap (battle-steep) is used twice of the helmet. The exact meaning is doubtful. Miss Keller¹ follows Lehman's² interpretation of it as a probable reference to the long pointed helmet composed of one piece of metal. (B. 1245, 2153)

The meaning of stēappe rōd (B. 2566), towering shield, is also a matter of conjecture. It may refer either to the shape or position of the shield.

The high sea (Seaf. 34; Wand. 81), high mountains (B. 222; M.C. 30), and steep, stony cliffs (B. 1409, 2213) naturally form no small part of the nature descriptions.

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Together with these are other aspects of nature described by the epithet broad: broad barley fields (Ch. I. 54), the broad marshes (B. 223), the broad sea (B. 507), the wide-stretching shore (B. 1965), and the wide sea-bottom of the monster's abode (B. 1551).

Broad shields (B. 325) are probably the oval shields, larger than the more common round ones.

Characteristic for its suggestiveness, is Grendel's "glove", which hung "wide and wonderful":

Glōf hangode
sīd ond syllīc, searo-bendum fa-st;
sīlo was ordoncum eall geórywed
dēofles cræftum ond dracan fellum." (B. 2085)

The only small object referred to as "broad", is the gem which "shall stand on the ring high and broad" (Gn. Cott. 22).

The spacious ship is described as sǣ-geáp, that is, sea-wide (B. 1896), one of the few words that suggest comparison at all. The same ship is also described as sīd-fērne, wide-bosomed (B. 1917), an epithet used earlier also (B. 302).

In addition to the words for high and broad, there are some that mean curved, coiled, or twisted. Hündan gold—gold in rings or coils—is frequently referred to, although it contains little significance for form, since it is the treasure-giving itself that is important, as showing the generosity of the giver, or the valor of

1. See Pfann. 63.
2. "His glove was hanging,
Wide and wonderful, in cunning bands fast;
It was all wrought with curious skill
With devil's craft and dragon's skins."
the one rewarded with the rings of gold. (B. 1193, 1382, 3134; Wand. 32; Mids. 129).

**Wunden stelna** and **wunden-bals** may have reference to the curved prow of the ship, which is the usual interpretation. (B.220, 298). It is possible that they refer to the prow strengthened by a covering of linked iron.

**Wunden-mæl** (wound sword) describes the sword with winding ornaments (B.1531).

Form is indicated clearly in the words that describe the fire-dragon: **rēb-bogen** (B.2827) and **gebogen** (B.2569), both referring to the fiery serpent as twisted or coiled. The latter is especially vivid:

"Gewāt cā byrnende gebogen scrifan." (B.2569)

Other descriptives of form are **nearo, entse, celled,** and possibly **wægel.** **Nearo** and **entse,** both meaning narrow, are used in the same passage (B.1409-10) to describe the dangerous paths traveled by Beowulf and his companions in search of the abode of monsters.

**Celled,** used of the shield, is explained variously as round, embossed, curved, or oval. Of these the last seems most probable.

A doubtful word, but interesting, is **wægel** used to describe the moon in the single instance it is mentioned:

"Nū scynē þes mōna waegel under wolcnum." (Finns. 7)

1. "Rent he then burning advancing in curves."
2. See Pfann. 63.
3. "Now shines the moon, Full 'neath the clouds."
The best interpretation is "full". It seems significant that the moon, whether "full" or not, shines beneath the clouds at this particular time, just preceding "sad deeds". The poet is leading up to the description of the battle by the mention of several concrete details.

3. Distance.

Distance, like size and form, is vague. Such expressions as "seen from afar", "gazed afar", and "widely perceived" are characteristic. Once distance is mentioned in "measure by miles", but this is not much more definite in suggestion than the more general expressions.

The guard of the haven

"fūs ong fardo feor wūtode." (B.1916)^1

Beowulf's burial-mound

"sē wēs hēah ond brād,
(wēg-lidendum wīde ē[e] syne." (B.3157)^2

"Lāstas wūron
after wald-swāpum wīde ēgesīne (B.1402)."^3

"Wēs ēg wyrmes wīg wīde ēgesīne." (B.2316)^4

1. "Longing had gazed afar on the ocean."
2. "which high was and broad  
   For the sea-goers to see from afar."
3. "The foot-tracks were  
   On the forest-paths widely perceived."
4. "The worm's war-power widely was seen."
"There was bloody track of Swedes and of Geats,
The slaughter of men widely observed."

2. "It is not far hence
In measure by miles that the sea stands."

3. "Sometimes the warrior the joy of the harp,
The play-wood touched; sometimes sang a song
True and sorrowful."
The only descriptives of tone are the words for loud and clear, and these occur in only three instances:

(1) The voice is described as both loud and clear:

"Donne wiht Scilling scifran reorde
for uncrum sigedryhtne song ahōfan,
hlūde bi hearpan hleōbor swinsade." (Mids. 103)\(^1\)

This is the song of which many men, who knew what was right, said they had never heard a better song. (Mids. 105-107).

(2) The joyous music of Heorot, which Grendel heard day after day before his attack upon the hall, sounded loud. There was music of the harp and clear song of the minstrel:

"Þat hē dōgora gehwām drēam gehīrde
hlūdne in healle; þær was hearpan swēg,
swutol sang scopes. (B.88)\(^2\)

(3) Upon Beowulf’s return, after he has slain Grendel, there is again joy in Heorot, and the minstrel sings with clear voice:

"Scop hwīlum sang
hādor ān Heorot." (B.496)\(^3\)

Alliteration is probably the most important factor in the choice

1. "When I and Skilling for our conquering lord With clear voice raised the song, loud to the harp, The sound was music."

2. "That he on each day the sound of joy heard Loud in the hall: there was harp’s sound, Clear song of the minstrel."

3. "Sometimes sang the minstrel With clear voice in Heorot."
of these words for loud and clear. Still I believe the poets wanted not only alliteration, but the idea as well, for in each of these cases the sound of the music is significant.

Figurative expressions are common: The sword sings a greedy war song (B.152); Grendel's cry of despair when his arm is torn off, is a "terror-song" (B.786) and a "victory-less song" (B.787); the horn sings a ready war song (B.1424); it is the singing of the war horn that the wonderful sea animals hear (B.1432).

II. Noise.

Noises are chiefly those of the sea, of the mead-hall, and of battle.

The terrible rolling of waves (Seaf. 6, 44), the roaring of the sea (Seaf. 18), the dashing of the boat against the cliffs (Seaf. 8), the beating of the tempest on the stony cliffs (Seaf. 23), the sound of the sea-birds (Seaf. 19-24), these are all heard clearly in The Seafarer. The beating of the tempest against the rocks is mentioned in The Wanderer also (101).

No sound of the water is referred to in Beowulf. The expressions "blæþblæan"¹ (B.1373, 1593, 1620) and "blæþæþun"² (B.1434, 2412) appeal to sight rather than hearing. In Beowulf and The Battle of Finnsburg, the sounds are those of the mead-hall and battle. The mead-hall (B. 767, 770, 1317; Finns. 30) is said to resound with the struggles and fighting that take place. Sound is introduced in these instances for its own sake. Even the earth resounds in Beowulf's fight with

1. Blending of waves.
2. Strife of the waves.
the fire-dragon (B.2558). In battle, shields crash (B.2259), burnies ring (B.327), boar-images on the helmets clash (B.1328), and there is the noise of victorious warriors (B.664). Beowulf's fingers crack in his struggle with Grendel (B.760). All of these references to sound reveal vivid imagination.

Once only is the sound of voice mentioned in speech. When Beowulf approaches the hoard of the fire-dragon, he

"Lēt ðā of brōostum, ðā hē gebolgen wēs, weder-Geata lēod word út faran, stearc-heort styrmde; stefn in becōm heaðo-torht hlynnan under hārne stān; hete wēs onhrēred, hord-weard oncnīow mannes reorde." (B.2550)

Whether the poet is seeking alliterative expression or not, in this emphasis upon Beowulf's voice, the effect he produces is right.

Figurative expressions occur here as in the musical terms. The yelling spear is spoken of twice (Ch.II.9; Wids.128). In this expression alliteration may be an influence again. In battle, the shield answers the spear (Finns.7). Birds speak to each other (B.3024).

Noises are described as "loud" in only two instances. The elves or witches who were supposed to be responsible for the "sudden stitch", were loud in their noise, "when over the hill they rode" (Ch.II.1)

1. "Let them from his breast, since he was enraged, The Wærdgæsts' prince his words go forth, The strong-hearted stormed: his voice came in, In battle clear-sounding, neath the hoar stone. Strife was stirred up; the hoard-keeper knew The voice of a man."
"Thunder is loudest", say the *Gnomic Verses* (Gn. Cott. I. 4).

A mingling of sounds occurs in the description of Beowulf's funeral pyre:

"swōgende lēg

wōpe bewunden (wind-blond ġelæg)." (B.3145). ¹

The poet has a purpose in the introduction of the last clause, which goes deeper than alliteration. Effective contrast, for the sake of emphasis, occurs in other instances than this.

SMELL.

Odor is never mentioned. This is not surprising in poetry which refers to flowers or vegetation only in connection with large fields, seen at a distance "bright in their blossoming." There is, however, in one instance an indication of scent. This concerns the fire-dragon, who "snuffed" over the stone:

"stone ðā xfter stāne, stearc-heart onsand
feōndes fōt-lāst." (B.2268)²

TASTE.

Three qualities of taste occur: sweet, salt, and bitter. Of these, sweet represents the most vivid imagery:

1. "the crackling flame
   Mingled with mourning (the wind-roar was still)."

2. "O'er the stone he snuffed. The stark-heart found footprint of foe." (Sunnere)
"ne næfre swānas swētna međo sæl forgyldan." (Finns.39)¹

"ne swēte forswelgan ne sār gefēlan." (Seaf.95)²

"Salt" is used only as an epithet applied to the sea: Seaf.35; B.1989; H.W. 4; Gn. Cott. 45.

The only use of "bitter" is figurative, referring to sorrow (Seaf.54).

PRESSURE.

The sword is commonly referred to as "hard" or "hard-edged": Nids. 120; B.540, 1288, 1490, 1566, 1574, 2036, 2509, 2638, 2987, 2829.

It is also geardhard, hardened by being plunged into water (B.1033); and hardened by battle gore (B.1460).

Burnies (B.551, 1553) and the war-arrow (B.1435) are hard; the boar-images on the helmet are "iron-hard" (B.1112); and shields are geardbeards, hardened by rain (B.1435).

Hard is used figuratively referring to the "grip of the earth" (Ruin 8).

The hard hand grip is twice mentioned:

"Ic hine hrædlícce hardan clammum" (B.963)³

"Þurh hœstne hād heardum clammum" (B.1335)⁴

Sharp, the only other sense-epithet of pressure is applied to the sword "cutting and battle-sharp" (B.2708). In the sense of

1. "Never did youths sweet mead better pay for."
2. "To drink the sweet nor experience the sorrowful.
3. "I quickly him with hardest grips."
4. "In a powerful way by your hard grips."
keen, it is used of the shield-warrior (B.287). It also describes the sharp bones of the fire-dragon (B.2691).

_Eiteren-styrle_ (B.1746)\(^1\) is probably of Christian origin.

**TEMPERATURE.**

1. **Cold.**

In a few passages the feeling of cold is very intense, but aside from these, there are remarkably few references to cold, ice, or snow.

The Seafarer feels his feet bound by chains of frost as he keeps watch at night (Seaf.10-11). He speaks of the ice-cold sea (Seaf.14), and the ice-cold wave (Seaf.118), and notes the icy-feathered starn (Seaf.24). The world was enchained by frost (Seaf.32). Hail fell upon earth; it was the coldest of grain (Seaf.33).

The Wanderer endures frost and snow mingled with hail (Wand.48), while he rows over the rime-cold sea (Wand.4).

Beowulf and Breca in their swimming-match were together in the sea during the coldest of weather. Beowulf relates:

"Dā wit ætsonne on sæ wāron
If mihta fyrst, cp þat unc flōd tōdrāf,
wæo weallende; wederæ cealdost,
ntpande niht ond norðan wind,
heado-grim ondhwearf; hrēo wāron yþa." (B.544).

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1. Sharp shaft.
2. "Then we two together were in the sea
The space of five nights, till flood apart drove us,
The swelling billows, coldest of storms,
Darkening night and the north wind
Boisterous and fierce; rough were the waves."
These are the most vivid experiences with cold. More or less figurative are the references to winter as "slaughter-stained" (B.1128), and as locking "the waves in its icy shackles" (B.1134). The figure of locking or binding occurs also in the Snomic Verses (Ex.73-75); and in The Wanderer (102).

A significant expression is the "morning-cold spear" (B.3021), although the exact meaning is considered doubtful. 1

The Snomic Verses characterize winter as the coldest of seasons (Cott.5), while spring is the frothest; it is longest cold (Cott.6).

Cold is used with unpleasant associations in describing the habitation of monsters (B.1261, 1363); in the expression "winter-cold wretchedness" (Deor 4); and in the description of the "dwelling drear" with its cliffs of rock "berimed with storm" (W.C. 47).

II. Heat.

The only references to the heat of the sun occur in the Snomic Verses. Here the sun is described as hottest (Cott.7), and summer as hot with the sun (Ex.78). "Warm" occurs once (Ex.111) in connection with summer.

In The Ruin, hot streams and hot baths are mentioned in lines that are somewhat obscure (44, 45, 39, 41).

Beowulf contains no references to heat except in connection with the dragon in the episode of Sigemund, the fire-dragon, and battle-gore. (Battle gore: B.849, 1667, 1423, 1615; Dragon: B. 897; Fire-dragon: 2522, 2547-49, 2558, 2605, 2691, 2697, 2781, 2819). It is the heat of the dragon that causes more terror than does the appearance of the fiery monster.

1. Summere, The Oldest English Epic, 152.
References to heat that are more or less figurative are: Wænd. 66; M.C. 37; Seaf. 10.

KINAESTHETIC.

Weight and strain are mentioned or implied in a few cases only. The linden shield is twice referred to as læht (light): Gm. Ex. II. 95; Ch. II. 7. A suggestion is probably contained in the word habban, to raise (B. 656).

Heavy burdens were carried. Beowulf swam with the head of Grendel and the hilt of the large sword, a mighty burden (B. 1625); Wiglaf bore treasures to his wounded lord, which, too, were a mighty burden: æácen-burðan (B. 3091). The head of Grendel was carried by four men with difficulty: earlorælge (B. 1636). The fire-dragon carried into his mountain cave a part of treasures that was heavy, hard to carry: hard-fyrde (B. 2245).

PAIN.

Pain is scarcely mentioned except in connection with the suffering of Grendel. The pain of the monster is referred to repeatedly for emphasis upon his suffering: B. 737, 815, 962, 975.

On the other hand, the pain which men endure, is referred to only for its emphasis upon bravery. Beowulf, surrounded by the flame of the dragon, "endured distress" (B. 2594). The loyal Wiglaf saw his lord oppressed by heat (B. 2605) and came to his aid:

"ne hédde hē þæs heafolán (ac sīo hand gebarn mōdiges mannas, þær hē his mæges healpe)." (B. 2697)¹

¹"He cared not for his head, but the hand burned of the brave man, where he helped with his strength."
Beowulf was wounded. Blood-stained he fell to the ground; but raised himself again, although his wound "touched him close" (B.2974-76). His wound began to swell, so that he soon perceived that in his breast poison welled (B.2711). He spoke of his wound, his "deadly pitiful" wound (B.2725), but it was not the pain he referred to. He spoke of his wound because by it he knew that he had spent the time allotted of the "joy of earth" (B.2725). Although sick with deadly wounds, he could still have joy because he had lived a worthy life. He had been brave, loyal, and true (B.2732-2740).

"Ic þæs ealles ðæg feorh-bennum sōoc gefēan habban." (B.2739)

GENERAL ORGANIC SENSATIONS.

Among references to the general organic sensations, are two instances of hunger: One refers to the hunger of the gray wolf (Gn. Ex. III.150); the other to the hunger of the seafarer (Seaf.11), which took away the man's courage.

The bodily state of an emotion is often given as an indication of that emotion, whether of anger, sorrow, or joy. When Beowulf heard of the evil caused by the fire-dragon his "breast within swelled" with gloomy thoughts, such as were not usual to him (2331). Hrothgar could not restrain his "breast-welling" (B.1877). The old warrior's breast "swelled within" when he remembered his youthful prowess in battle (B.2115).

1. "I for all that, with deadly wounds sick, now joy may have."
CONCLUSION.

Appeals to sight are most frequent (313). Color occurs in the words for red and yellow: red in the compound reðdþah (1), which may have reference to brightness rather than color; and yellow in the words sgeolo (2) and sealu (6), which also suggest light or darkness in some cases. In addition to these color-words, the descriptive words blood (32) and gold (37) are sometimes used for color effect. Blue and green are not found.

Words for colorless light—gray (4), brightness (22), and darkness (16)—are very common. Gray occurs with comparative frequency (25); the shining or gleaming of light is very prominent (62); and darkness takes a strong hold on the Anglo-Saxon imagination (41).

Size, form, and distance are generally indicated by the words for large (10), high (25), broad (17), and far (22), and such expressions as "widely perceived" (4).

Appeals to hearing are frequent (117) and vivid. Music (71), the sounds of battle (14), of the mead-hall (11), and of the sea (8), are all heard clearly.

In addition to sight and hearing the other senses represented are: smell, by an indication of scent (1); taste, by the words sweet (2), salt (4), and bitter (1); pressure chiefly by the epithet hard, used of the hard-edged sword (13); temperature by a number of instances in which the feeling of cold is intense (9), and by references to the heat of the sun (3), of battle gore (4), and of the fire-dragon (8); the kinaesthetic senses by the mention of heavy burdens (4) and of the light linden shield (2); and pain
mainly by the suffering of the monster Grendel (4).

While sense-impressions are not sharply or scientifically
distinguished, appeals to the senses are used by the poets in artistic
ways that are altogether modern, for effective contrast and other modes of
control of mood. Evidently, even as early as Beowulf, poetic art was
not a new thing, but a highly developed art.
TABLES.

The following tables contain all the material collected for Sight and Hearing. In the case of the other senses I have aimed to include all the references in the discussions.

The purpose of the tables is to show the amount and kind of material as a whole, and in the different sections; and to indicate, when possible, the use of the words by designating the objects to which they apply. The meaning given is not intended to supply general definitions, but simply to show the meaning I have adopted in the instances cited.

The arrangement follows the general plan of the discussions. Under Hearing the words in each division are arranged alphabetically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>References</th>
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## II. Colorless Light

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**Miscellaneous**

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### III. Visual Space

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## 52.

HEARING.

### 1. Tone

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<td>awrecan</td>
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<td>B.2108</td>
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<td>ĝalan</td>
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<td>Grendel's cry</td>
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<td>war-horn</td>
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<td>ġid(d)</td>
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<td>ġleo-mann</td>
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### I. Tone (Cont.)

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