

ROAMING THE SEA TOWARDS SALVATION IN *LA QUESTE DEL SAINT GRAAL*

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Abstract: *In order to unravel the multi-layered significance of the sea in La Queste del Saint Graal, of the Vulgate Cycle, the author will emphasise the connections with another famous medieval literary text, namely The Voyage of Saint Brendan. Both these works insist that the sea is the best medium for spiritual revelation, which is the declared target of all the protagonists' peregrinations. The focus of the article is on the complex role of the sea which unites the questers in a mystical brotherhood and, at the same time, isolates them from the rest of the world in order to facilitate a feeling of spiritual introspection.*

These specific features are not restricted to the sea, but a similar role can be ascribed to the Egyptian desert. This comparison, between the Celtic sea and the Egyptian desert, will reveal other meanings of the sea in the two texts. The ambiguous identity of the characters that help the protagonists will be discussed and the magical/mystical features of the world which is the background for the adventures will be analysed. Travelling on the sea becomes in these literary texts not only a test of courage, but also a test of faith, and boarding a miraculous ship is both a confession of Christian devotion and an assertion of the believer's purity and piety.

Keywords: *Arthurian literature, mystical adventure, Celtic Christianity*